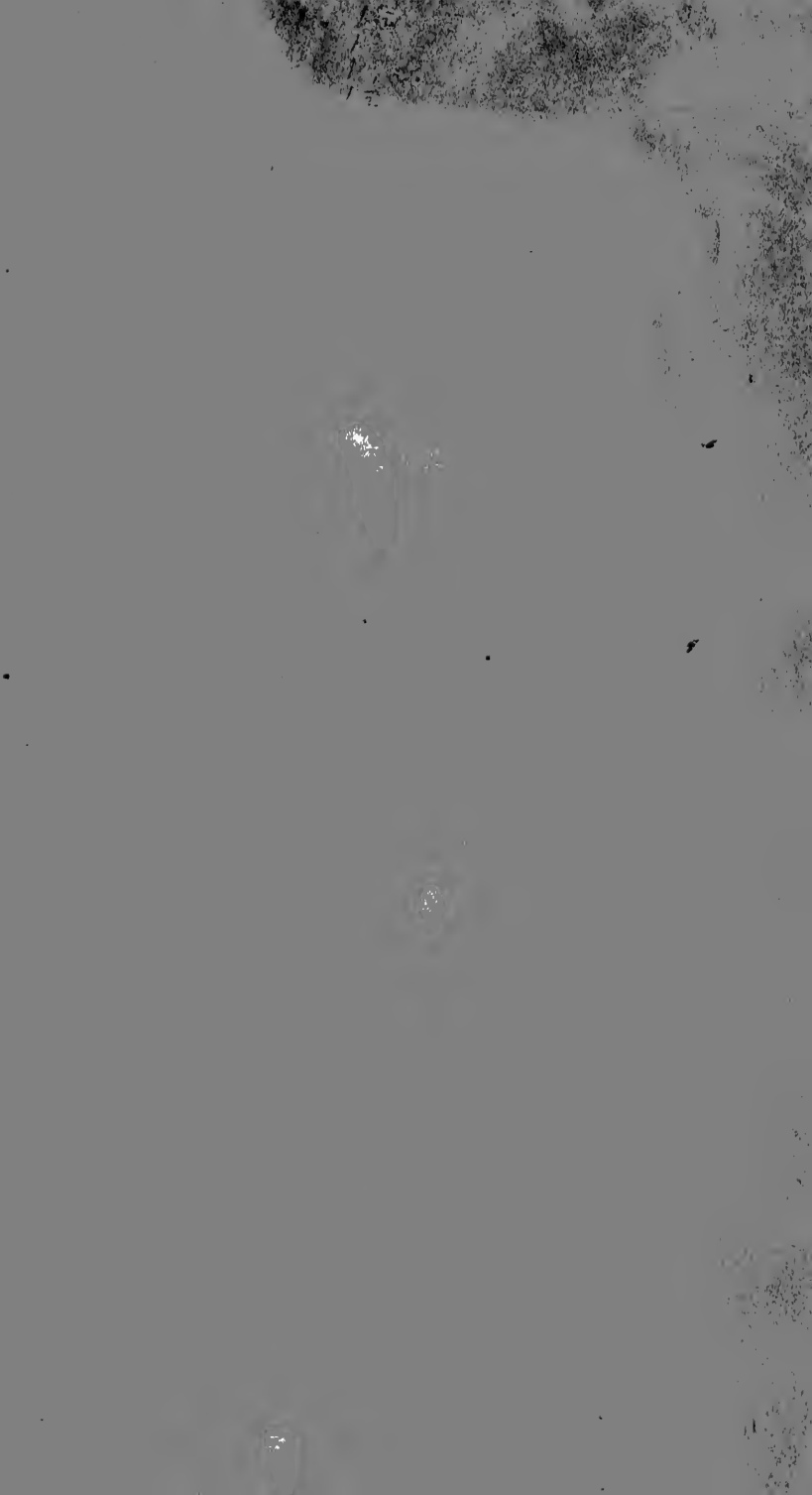




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COURSE OF LECTURES

DEBORAH RUTH AND HER MOTHER

BY MARY HUNTER, D.D.

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VOL. VI

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HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS,

IN A

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CONTAINING

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DEBORAH, RUTH AND HANNAH.

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COMPLETE IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. VI.

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.——JOHN viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.——REVELATION i. 8.

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1795.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF KING GEORGE THE THIRD

The first part of the reign of King George the Third was distinguished by the peace and tranquillity which reigned in Great Britain. The king's personal conduct was highly respected, and his affection for his people was universally acknowledged. The administration of justice was improved, and the laws were more strictly enforced. The commerce of the country flourished, and the arts and sciences were encouraged. The king's private life was equally exemplary, and he was beloved by his subjects.

However, the peace was not to last. In the year 1763, the Seven Years' War ended with the Treaty of Paris, which gave Great Britain the dominion of Canada and the western part of Florida. This victory was a great triumph for the British, but it also brought a new era of difficulties. The French and Spanish colonies in North America were discontented with their masters, and they sought to break their allegiance to France and Spain, and to ally themselves with Great Britain. This led to the American Revolution, which began in 1775.

The king's conduct during the American Revolution was highly criticized. He was accused of being too lenient towards the rebels, and of not doing enough to support the British cause. However, it is clear that the king was not the cause of the Revolution, and that the blame for it should be placed on the British government and the Parliament. The king's personal life was also affected by the Revolution. He was forced to flee to France, and he spent several months in exile.

The Revolution ended in 1781 with the Battle of Yorktown, where the British army was defeated by the Continental Army. This led to the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which recognized the independence of the United States. The king's reign ended in 1793, and he was succeeded by his son, King George the Fourth.

Printed by R. and J. DODD, in Pall-mall, 1784.

THE HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF KING GEORGE THE THIRD, BY JOHN BAKER, ESQ. VOL. I.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE History of the Patriarchs, from Adam to Moses, inclusively, in five Volumes, was all I intended to give from the Press. The favourable reception with which that Work has been honoured, induces me to hope that it may have been useful; and encourages me to comply with a request repeatedly made, that I would publish, at least, the subjects of this Volume, they having been peculiarly acceptable from the Pulpit. Being an attempt to delineate the *female* character, from real examples, it may, perhaps, have the merit of interest with readers of that sex. And if it shall, in any degree, serve to maintain their importance, and to promote their improvement, society will have gained somewhat from the publication. I respectfully submit it, such as it is, to the public judgment.

BETHNAL-GREEN-ROAD, }
12th August, 1792. }

H. H.

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Judg. iv. 4, 5.—*And Deborah a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el in Mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.*

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Judg. iv. 21—23.—*Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened*

fastened it into the ground : for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. So God subdued on that day Jabin, the king of Canaan, before the children of Israel.

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Judg. v. 1—5.—Then sang Deborah, and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings ; give ear, O ye princes : I, even I will sing unto the Lord ; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel. Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.

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Ruth i. 14—18.—*And they lift up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is*

is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods : return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God : where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

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Ruth i. 19—22.—So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them ; and they said, Is this Naomi ? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara : for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty : Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me ? So Naomi returned, and Ruth, the Moabites, her daughter-in-law with her, which returned out of the country of Moab. And they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.

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History of Ruth.

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Ruth ii. 1—3.—And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech ; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth, the Moabites, said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean

glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

LECTURE XI.

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Ruth ii. 4.—*And behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you; and they answered him, The Lord bless thee.*

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Ruth ii. 5—17.—*Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, I pray you, let me glean, and gather after the reapers amongst the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered*

ed and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband : and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord ; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thy handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her, At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers : and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not. And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned : and it was about an ephah of barley.

L E C T U R E XIII.

History of Ruth.

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*Ruth ii. 19—23. and iii. 1.—And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. And Ruth, the Moabites, said, He said unto me also,
Thou*

Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest, and of wheat-harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law. Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

L E C T U R E X I V .

History of Ruth.

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Ruth iv. 13—17.—So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age. For thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

L E C T U R E X V .

History of Hannah, the Mother of
Samuel.

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1 Sam. i. 1—8.—Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of Mount Ephraim, and his name was

was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Toku, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city yearly, to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions. But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion: for he loved Hannah; but the Lord had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord; so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?

L E C T U R E XVI.

History of Hannah.

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1 Sam. i. 9—18.—So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drank. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of Hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth.

Now

Now Hannah, she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drank neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

L E C T U R E XVII.

History of Hannah.

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1 Sam. i. 19—23.—And they arose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about, after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. But Hannah went not up: for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide forever. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

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L E C T U R E XVIII.

History of Hannah.

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1 Sam. i. 24—28.—*And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth; he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.*

L E C T U R E XIX.

History of Hannah.

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1 Sam. ii. 1—10.—*And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord: mine horn is exalted in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies: because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased; so that the barren hath born seven: and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh*

maketh rich : he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory : for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness : for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces : out of heaven shall he thunder upon them : the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth ; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

L E C T U R E XX.

History of Hannah.

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- I** Sam. ii. 18—21.—*But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband, to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home. And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.*

L E C T U R E XXI.

History of Hannah.

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- I** Sam. ii. 12—17, 23, 24.—*Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial : they knew not the Lord. And the priests' custom with the people was, that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came*
while

while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand: and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot: all that the flesh-hook brought up, the priest took for himself: so they did in Shiloh, unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burned the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest: for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently: and then take as much as thy soul desireth, then he would answer him, Nay, but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons: for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to transgress.

LECTURE XXII.

History of Hannah.

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1 Sam. ii. 26.—*And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord and also with men.*

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L E C T U R E I.

GENESIS ii. 18.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him.

THE holy scriptures always exhibit the most simple and the justest view of every subject which they treat. And what subject of importance to man do they not treat? The God who made us what we are, formed man after a model, destined him for a special situation, and to fulfil a specific purpose. His faculties, his relations, his duties, his demands, his delights, were all, from the beginning, present to the eye of his Creator; and a corresponding arrangement and provision were made by Him, who seeth the end from the commencement, and who exactly adjusts all, according to number, weight and measure.

The perfection of the works of God, is a beautiful and gradual progress toward perfection: from inanimate to vegetative, from vegetative to animal, from animal to rational nature; each approaching to, bordering upon each, but every one circumscribed by a boundary which it cannot pass, to disturb and con-

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found the province of another. The scale of being, as to this globe, was complete when God had "created man in his own image." But social existence was not perfect till it pleased God to draw man out of solitude, by making him "an help meet for him." This simply, yet clearly, unfolds woman's nature, station, duty, use and end. This raises her to her *proper* rank and importance, and instructs her how most effectually to support them; this forbids her to aspire after rule, for her Maker designed her as "an helper;" this secures for her affection and respect, for how is it possible to hate or despise what God and nature have rendered essential to our happiness. If the intention of the Creator, therefore, is attended to, the respective claims and duties of the sexes are settled in a moment, and an end is put to all unprofitable discussion of superiority and inferiority, of authority and subjection, in those whose destination, and whose duty it is, to be mutually helpful, attentive and affectionate.

The female character and conduct have frequently presented themselves in the course of the history of the Patriarchs. And indeed how can the life of man be separated from that of woman? Their amiable qualities and praise-worthy actions have been occasionally pointed out, and unreservedly, though without adulation, commended: their faults and follies have been, with equal freedom, exposed and censured. But in the instances referred to, female conduct has undergone only an accidental and transient review, in detached fragments, and as supplementary to, or producing influence on, the conduct of man. The pencil of inspiration, however, having introduced persons of the gentler sex into its inimitable compositions; and these not always thrown into the back-ground or placed in the shade, but sometimes springing forward into the light, and glowing in all the brilliancy of colouring, I have been induced, with trembling steps, to follow the heavenly guide; and to follow up the fainter sketches of a Sarah, a Rebekah, a Rachel, a Miriam,

Miriam, with the more finished portraits “of Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth,” “Ruth the Moabitess,” and “Hannah,” the mother of Samuel the prophet. In order to introduce these with greater advantage, I mean to employ the present Lecture, in giving a general delineation of the female character, as it is represented in the passage now read, and as being the purpose and act of the great Lord of nature, “an help meet for man.” Every creature was intended to yield help to man: the flower, with its beauty and fragrance; the tree, with its nutritious fruit; the animal tribes, with all their powers of ministering satisfaction to the senses or to the mind. Adam surveyed them all with delight, saw their several characters in their several forms, gave them names, observed and glorified his Creator’s perfections displayed in himself, and in them. But still he was alone amidst all this multitude; the understanding was employed, but the heart wanted its object: the tongue could name all that the eye beheld, but there was no tender, sympathetic ear, to which it could say, “how fair, how lovely, how glorious is all this that we behold!” “For Adam there was not found an help meet for him.” The want of nature is no sooner perceived by the great Parent of man, than it is supplied; the wish of reason is no sooner expressed than gratified. Paternal care and tenderness even outrun and prevent the calls of filial necessity. Adam has felt no void, uttered no complaint, but “the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him.” And with God, execution certainly and instantaneously follows design. “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of

man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife : and they shall be one flesh."* How completely suitable an helper God provided for man in a state of sinless perfection transcends imagination, much more description ; all that is lovely in form, all that is graceful in manner, all that is exalted in mind, all that is pure in thought, all that is delicate in sentiment, all that is enchanting in conversation. This felicity was made subject to alteration ; this harmony was not to continue perfect ; but the original intention of the Creator was not to be defeated, no, but even in a state of degradation, difficulty and distress, as in a state of purity and peace, it was still the destination of Providence, that woman should be "an help meet" for man. In what important respects we are now to inquire.

The first and most obvious is, as his counsellor and coadjutor in bringing up their common offspring. Education, on the part of the mother, commences from the moment she has the prospect of being a mother ; and the care of her own health is, thenceforth, the first duty which she owes to her child.† From that moment too she becomes in a peculiar sense "an help meet" for man, as being the depositary and guardian of their most precious joint concern. How greatly is her value now enhanced ! Her existence is multiplied, her

* Verse 21—24.

† The instructions given to the wife of Manoah, and mother of Sampson the Nazarite, (Jud. xiii. 4.) "Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine, nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing," are not merely arbitrary injunctions, adapted to a particular branch of political economy, and intended to serve local and temporary purposes ; no, they are constitutions of nature, reason, and experience, which unite in recommending, to those who have the prospect of being mothers, a strict attention to diet, to exercise, to temper, to every thing which, affecting the frame of their own body or mind, may communicate an important, a lasting, perhaps indelible impression to the body or mind of their offspring. A proper regimen for themselves is, therefore, the first stage of education for their children. The neglect of it is frequently found productive of effects which no future culture is able to alter or rectify.

her duration is extended. A man-child is at length born into the world ; and what helper so *meet* for the glad father in rearing the tender babe, as the mother who bare him. There are offices which she, and only she, can perform ; there are affections which she, and only she, can feel ; there are difficulties which she, and only she, can surmount. Nature has here so happily blended the duty with the recompense, that they cannot be distinguished or separated. In performing every act of maternal tenderness, while she tends and nourishes the body of her infant, she is gradually and insensibly forming his mind. His very first expressions of look, voice and gesture, are expressions of the important lessons which his mother has already taught him, attachment, gratitude, a sense of obligation and dependence. Hitherto she is the sole instructor, and “ a stranger intermeddleth not with her joy.” The dawning of reason appears ; the solicitude of a father awakes ; what a task is imposed upon him ! Who is sufficient for it ? But he is not left to perform it alone. The Lord God has provided him “ an help meet for him,” one prompted by duty, drawn by affection, trained by experience, to assist him in the

Delightful task ! To rear the tender thought,
 To teach the young idea how to shoot,
 To pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind,
 To breathe th' enlivening spirit, and to fix
 The generous purpose in the glowing breast.

THOMSON. Spring, 1148.

In the more advanced stages of education, after the pupil is removed from under the maternal wing, of what assistance to the father, of what importance to the child, are the delicate ideas, and the tender counsels of a wife and virtuous woman ! Read “ the words of “ king Lemuel, the prophecy which his mother taught him,”* and judge whether a mother may be an useful “ help” in instructing a son, a grown son, and

* Prov. xxxi. 1—9.

and that son a prince. In truth, the mother's influence over the child, as it begins earlier, so it is of much longer duration than the father's. The son, having become a man, or approaching to that state, begins to feel uneasy under the restraints of paternal authority; he longs to shake the yoke from off his neck; he pants for independence—he must obtain it. But what ingenuous young man ever felt a mother's yoke galling, or longed for emancipation from the silken fetters in which her gentle fingers had entangled his soul? In the perfection of understanding, in the plenitude of power, in the self-gratulation of independence, to her milder reason he still submits, her unassuming sway he readily acknowledges, and, independent on all things else, he feels he cannot do without the smiles of maternal approbation, the admonitions of maternal solicitude, the reproofs of maternal tenderness and integrity.

Whatever be the dispositions, whatever the faculties of the child, whether earlier or later in life, the business neither of father nor masters can proceed wisely and well, without the co-operation of the mother. Who knows so well as she, the road to the understanding, the road to the heart? Who has skill like her, to encourage the timid and repress the bold? Who has power and address like a mother's, to subdue the stubborn and confirm the irresolute? Who can with such exquisite art draw out, put in motion, and direct ordinary or superior powers; place goodness in its fairest and most attractive light, and expose vice in its most hideous and forbidding form? In the case of those persons who have unhappily grossly deviated from the path of virtue, how many have been stopped, converted, brought back, by considerations of maternal feelings—shame, and sorrow, and regret; and by the recollection of early lessons, and principles, and resolutions. Having been “trained up, when a child, in the way wherein he should walk,” the man calls

calls it to remembrance in old age, approves it, returns to it, and “ departs from it” no more.

In educating the children of her own sex, the mother seems to be more than “an help meet” for man. The trust chiefly, if not entirely, devolves on her: and where could it be deposited so well? The knowledge she has of herself, experience of the world, and maternal affection, are all she needs to qualify her for this arduous undertaking. A mother only can enter into the feelings, and weaknesses, and necessities of a young female, entering on an unknown, varying, tempestuous, dangerous ocean; for she remembers how she herself felt and feared, what she needed, and how she was relieved, and assisted, and carried through. And to a mother only can a young female impart the numberless, nameless anxieties which every step she takes in life necessarily excite. When she converses with her mother, it is only thinking aloud. A mother’s conduct is the loveliest pattern of virtue, and the hope of a mother’s applause is, next to God’s, the most powerful motive to imitate it. The superiority of female to male youth in respect of moral, whatever be the case as to intellectual improvement, is clearly deducible from the larger share which the mother has in the education of the one, than of the other. And the more liberal and enlarged spirit of the times we live in, procuring for the female world a more liberal and rational education, is daily evincing to what an equality of intellectual endowment they are capable of rising, and thereby of, in all respects, fulfilling the design of the Creator, who said in the beginning, “ I will make for man an help meet for him.”

I now proceed to mention a second most important respect, in which it is the obvious intention of Providence that woman should be “an help meet” for man, namely, the care and management of his worldly estate.

In a paradisaical state man *did* not, and in, what is improperly called, the state of nature, he *could* not
long

long continue. In the former, there was labour, imposed not as a burden or a punishment, but bestowed as a privilege and a source of delight. The help of woman enhanced the value of that privilege, and improved that delight: and even in paradise, the attention of Eve to the disposal of the fruits of his labour, must have been to the man, an exquisite accession to the pleasure of enjoying them. The arrangement which her taste and care had made constituted the charm of the repast. In a state of uncultivated nature, the subsistence of the day is man's object. He has no idea of "much goods, laid up for many years." But the society and assistance of his rude companion are necessary to give a relish to "what he took in hunting;" and "the burden and heat of the day," he cheerfully encounters, in the prospect of the refreshment and repose of the evening; and even the hut in the desert exhibits the accomplishment of the Creator's purpose, woman "an help meet" for man, managing his scanty portion with discretion, and doubling it by participation.

As the state of society advanced, new ideas of property must have been produced. The labour of to-day began to look forward; "to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow." The care of posterity arose. Permanency must be given to possession. The earth and its produce are parcelled out, men "call their lands by their names," "house is joined to house, and field added to field." But could man do this alone? No. In vain have his labour and skill provided "bread enough, and to spare," unless the woman's prudent attention manage that sufficiency, and lay up that surplus, for the evil day which may come. No man ever prospered in the world, without the consent and co-operation of his wife. Let *him* be ever so frugal, regular, industrious, intelligent, successful—all goes for nothing, if *she* is profuse, disorderly, indolent, or unfaithful to her trust. *His* farm prospers, his barn is filled with plenty, "the floors are full of wheat, the
fats

fats overflow with wine and oil," his cattle increase, he is waxing rich. His neighbour's commerce thrives, his plans were well laid; Providence smiles; the wings of every wind are wafting to his door gold, and silver, and precious things. The talents of a third are procuring for him reputation, and distinction, and honour, and wealth. How came they all to fail? Who opened the door, and let poverty rush in as an armed man? The thing speaks for itself. The design of Heaven is defeated; the parties were "unequally yoked;" the "help" found for these men, was not "an help meet" for them. Skill, was counteracted by carelessness; the fruits of diligence were scattered about by the hand of dissipation; the labours of a year perished in the sitting of an evening; "by much slothfulness the building decayed, and through idleness of the hands, the house dropped through."

But "O how good a thing it is, and how pleasant," when the gracious intentions of God and nature are fulfilled! With what spirit and perseverance does a man labour in his vocation, when he knows that his earnings will be faithfully disposed, and carefully improved! With what confidence will he resort to his farm, to his merchandise, fly over land, over the seas, meet difficulty, meet danger, if he has the assurance, that he is not spending his time and strength for nought and in vain; that all is well and safe at home; that indulgent Heaven has crowned all his other blessings, with that of "an help meet for him," a discreet manager of his estate, a fellow-labourer with him, from interest, from affection, from a sense of duty, in "doing justly," in seconding the goodness of Divine Providence, in making fair provision for the time to come, in "providing things honest in the sight of all men!" I conclude this branch of my subject, with a portrait drawn by the pencil of inspiration; may Heaven propagate the resemblance.

"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely

safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants ships, she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meet to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are cloathed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry: her cloathing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her cloathing: and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.”*

A third respect in which God intended that woman should be “an help meet” for man, is the care of his health, and every thing connected with it; his tranquillity of mind, his temper, his character and reputation: without which the greatest bodily vigour will quickly

* Prov. xxxi. 10—31.

quickly decay and sink, and life will cease to be a blessing.

It is pleasant to have a companion in solitude, an assistant in labour, a fellow-partaker in joy. But human life contains varieties painful, as well as pleasant. Sorrow, and pain, and solicitude, and disappointment enter into the history of man : and he is but half-provided for the voyage of life, who has found an associate for his happier days only ; while for his months of darkness and distress no sympathizing partner is prepared, no " help meet " is found. The provident care of the Almighty meets every wish and want of man ; and in bestowing upon him a companion for youth, a sharer in felicity, a partner in property, he was securing for him, at a distance, a friend in age, a solace in affliction, a partner in want—" a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

If a man's worldly estate, whether it be much or little, is wisely managed, one foundation of health and comfort is laid ; and she who is thus habitually employed, may be considered as administering a perpetual medicine or cordial to her husband. But no prudence of foresight can ward off the attack of disease, or prevent the stroke of calamity ; affluence cannot purchase release from pain, nor tenderness cool the fever in the blood: But the sufferer is not left destitute. There is one ear into which he can pour out all his heart ; there is one hand ever ready to relieve him ; " one life bound up in his life." And as enjoyment derived all its relish from participation, so misery loses all its anguish in the bosom of sympathy and kindness. The spirit of penitence is inferior only to unfulfilled innocence ; and next to the blessing of unimpaired health, and uninterrupted comfort, is the consolation of sickness alleviated, and comfort restored, by the gentle language and engaging offices of love. What shall I say ? Is there not, perhaps, in the restoration of repenting guilt, and in the suspension of woe, by the assiduity of affection, a peculiar

liar satisfaction, and a delight, which perfect innocence and perfect health could not possibly have known?

The regular temperature of a man's *body* is, however, only one ingredient in the cup of health. "An help meet for him" will be anxious to preserve a sound *mind* in a sound body; will endeavour to prevent or to dispel painful reflection; will remove disquieting objects; will present smiling images; will watch the ebbing and flowing of passion, will bear and forbear, and, like the best of beings, "will overcome evil with good."

She will likewise consider herself as entrusted with the care of his good name. *His* reputation is *her* brightest ornament; his honour is her joy, and crown of rejoicing. If he is disgraced, she is degraded. Every instance of misconduct in her, she knows, glances at him; and therefore to support his dignity is a powerful motive with her to act wisely and well. She reflects, that not only by gross deviations from duty in the wife, does the husband suffer in character, but that levity, indiscretion, carelessness in her, are an imputation upon his understanding, and, in the opinion of the world, incessantly upbraid him with the choice he has made, of "an help meet for him." As she would therefore compassionately nurse his body in pain and sickness; and prudently study and watch his temper, amidst the conflict of contending passions, so, to approve herself what God and nature meant her to be, she will guard his fame, the life of his life, "as her precious eye," and thus, in every thing relating both to mental and bodily health, to private comfort and public estimation, "she will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life."

But there is somewhat still dearer, still more sacred to a man than children or property, than health or reputation, somewhat which, neglected, forfeited, lost, it "will profit him nothing to gain even the whole world;" and in the securing and promoting of which,
who

who is so qualified to minister and assist as her, whom the Father of mercies gave him, to be "an help meet for him?" I mean,

IV. The salvation of the immortal soul. This is indeed a personal concern; an interest which cannot be transferred or communicated. The good-will of another cannot impart it; the remissness of another cannot defeat it: to God, his great Master, here, every man standeth or falleth, for "every one must give account of himself to God." But is it not obvious, that example, that reason, that co-operation, possess a mighty influence toward promoting or obstructing personal piety, growth in grace, meetness for the kingdom of heaven? Is the man impressed with the worth, with the danger of his own soul; does he feel "the powers of a world to come;" is his mind turned to devotion; is the love of God shed abroad in his heart? How will such impressions be fixed and strengthened, by endeavouring to communicate them to a beloved object, and by receiving back the impression, heightened and improved, from that object? How much more exalted and affecting is a sense of divine goodness, when it is beheld embracing more than one! when it is seen conferring immortality, eternity, on virtuous human affections! what a live coal applied to devotion, when the solitary *my* Father and *my* God, is changed into the social *our* Father and *our* God! How is the hope of glory ennobled, extended, animated, by the prospect of participation! "Here am I, Holy Father, with her whom thou gavest me, to be *an help meet for me*. We were one in interest and affection; one in the faith of the gospel, and the practice of piety; our prayers ascended in one stream of incense, and every gift of thy providence and grace was multiplied and sweetened to each by being bestowed on the other. Sweet were our labours of love to our joint offspring; sweet our united efforts to improve the bounty of our common parent; sweet the sympathies of kindred hearts, in sickness and in health,

in

in sorrow and in joy, in good and in bad report; but sweeter far the consolations of religion, the prospect of *life and immortality brought to light by the gospel.*" We come together to "*receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls* ; as, through grace, we have been made helpers of each other's faith, let us be, eternally, helpers of each other's joy."

Is the man, unhappily, dead to all sense of religion; swallowed up of time and sense; is his great, or only inquiry, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, wherewithal shall I be clothed?" Or, more wretched still, is he delivered over "to commit iniquity with greediness," "and to glory in his shame?" What are the most likely means of awakening him to reflection, of reaching his conscience, of melting his heart, of changing his conduct? Preaching is vain, he turns "a deaf ear to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely:" prosperity fosters pride and forgetfulness of God; adversity only hardens him the more; reason is perverted, passion has acquired the ascendant, the power of habit predominates: but the Lord God has provided "an help meet for him." When public instruction and foreign reproof have failed, the mind is still accessible. The unaffected, unostentatious charm of genuine female piety is felt and understood, and becomes efficacious; the silent, unupbraiding regret of conjugal tenderness supplies the place of a thousand arguments, and forces its way to the heart; "the effectual fervent prayer" of a gracious woman "availeth much;" the "believing wife" draws to the Redeemer, with the cords of love, "the unbelieving husband;" she becomes the blessed instrument of "converting the sinner from the error of his way, she saves a soul from death, she hides a multitude of sins," and, in the noblest sense of the word, approves herself "an help meet" for man.

In all these important respects, the original design of Eternal Wisdom, in the formation of woman, is plain and palpable. To have fulfilled one branch of duty,

duty, and even to have excelled in it, is no exemption from the obligation of the rest. The duties of life and of religion run in a series, one is linked with another, supposes it, cannot be separated from it. To no purpose are children well educated, if through the indolence, folly, or vice of parents, they are launched into the world in doubtful, dishonourable, embarrassed or distressful circumstances. What is it to me, that my fortune is prudently and frugally managed, if my person is neglected, my temper trifled with, my reputation sacrificed, "my good name filched from me?" And what is the acquisition of a world, at the expense of my soul?—

Let it be understood and remembered, that every word which has been said of the obligation laid on woman, as "an help meet" for man, applies, with at least equal propriety and force, to man, as the helper and friend of woman. Does he possess superiority of any kind? It is evidently intended not to oppress, but to support. His greater strength is given for her protection; his more vigorous or profound powers of thought are designed to be her instructor and guide. Whatever advantage, real or apparent, each may have above the other, Providence clearly wills to be employed for the comfort and benefit of the other. A contention of mutual affection, beneficence, forbearance, forgiveness, is the only strife which nature, reason and decency permit to this state and relation.

We proceed to illustrate female utility and importance in social life, by certain noted examples from the sacred record. May God smile on every attempt to communicate useful truth. Amen.

History of Deborah.

L E C T U R E II.

JUDGES IV. 4, 5.

And Deborah a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

THE unremitting attention paid by a wise and gracious Providence to the affairs of men, affords equal matter of wonder and gratitude, with the astonishing power and skill displayed in the first formation of this great universe. Let us suppose the care of that Providence for a little while suspended, and the world left to itself. Who is not shocked in looking forward to the probable, the certain consequences of that remission? Behold instantly the bars of the vast abyss burst asunder, and "hell itself breathing forth destruction to mankind." Behold the prince of the power of the air reigning and raging without control. Behold chaos and ancient night resuming their murky empire, and darkness covering the face of the deep; earth and air confounded; nature convulsed by the fury of contending elements, unrestrained by law; universal confusion and wild uproar prevailing.

Alas,

Alas, it is not necessary to state the supposition so high. To conceive the wretchedness of mankind, deprived of the constant, superintending care of Heaven, it is needless to let loose the demons of the bottomless pit; it is needless to unbridle the fury of the ocean, or to assist the roaring winds in blowing up the fire into a hotter flame. Under the *slightest* alteration of the established order of things, all nature languishes. Remove, for a moment, the all-ruling, all-supporting hand of the great Father of the universe, and lo, *this* fair and fertile region is overwhelmed with an inundation, and *that*, is burned to one pumice-stone, by the force of celestial or subterraneous fire. Here arises, a race all males, like the fabled generation of warriors which sprung from the serpent's teeth, armed at all points for mutual destruction and slaughter; and there, a nation of timid, defenceless females, inviting violence and insult. But under that uninterrupted divine superintendence all goes on well; there is no schism in the body; every thing is found in its place, every thing performs its function. The exactest proportion between male and female births is preserved; the robusiter frame is still found united to the stronger mental faculties; the delicacy of the feminine form indicates, to the very eye, the softer, gentler qualities of the spirit which inhabits it; and nature assigns to each the limits of duty, and the sphere of usefulness and exertion.

But the great God is pleased to make himself known, not only by general conformity to established laws, but by occasional deviation from them. That the sons of men may know, it is according to his high will, that all creatures are, and think, and act.

The history, which this evening comes under our review, exhibits a new thing in the annals of human nature; asserts the sovereignty of the Most High over all persons and events; places the female character and importance in a new, a striking, and a respectable point of view; and thereby admonishes the one

sex to think of their own natural general superiority with deference, affection and honour to the manly excellencies of the female mind, when cultivated by a proper education, directed to a worthy object, and roused into exertion by a great and worthy occasion. Hitherto we have seen wise and good women, in the retired vale of domestic life, their proper and peculiar sphere; Sarah co-operating, in the duties of hospitality, with her venerable lord; Rebekah refreshing the weary traveller and the thirsty camel with water from the well, as they went on their way; Rachel and the seven daughters of Jethro tending their father's flocks, and making them to lie down under the shade at noon; Miriam leading the festive dance and song, in celebrating the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the triumphs of Israel; and Rahab giving shelter to the persecuted spies, and providing for the safety of her father's house.

But we are now to contemplate female genius and talents forcing their way to public observation, and to everlasting renown: eclipsing masculine sagacity and fortitude; the inspirer and the example of generous patriotism and martial prowess. We are to contemplate feminine warmth and eagerness, under the influence of prophetic inspiration, and blended with the dignity and integrity of the judgment seat; female spirit, giving breath to the bloody trumpet of war, directing the movements of the embattled host, waking into sacred, poetic rapture, and adapting the joyful strains of victory, to the musical sounds of the living lyre.

Israel had now enjoyed a blessed repose of fourscore years; and are again corrupted by ease and prosperity. Their national character and conduct, are a striking representation of those, of many individuals, whom we are daily meeting with in the world; who are capable of bearing neither prosperity nor adversity; whom it is impossible to serve or to save; who by their perverseness or folly, are perpetually

ually undoing the kindest designs, and counteracting the most vigorous efforts of their friends in their behalf, and whom, at length, friends are constrained to abandon in despair. Well has Nehemiah, their countryman, described this character, and displayed the patience and long-suffering of God, in that recapitulation of their history, addressed solemnly to Heaven, in the ninth chapter of his book; "And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards and olive-yards and fruit-trees in abundance. So they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. . Nevertheless, they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations. . Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them favours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore ledest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them; yet when they returned and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven, and many times didst thou deliver them, according to thy mercies; and testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them; and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear. Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. Nevertheless, for thy great mercies sake thou didst not utterly consume

them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God."*

If we are to judge of the atrocity of the offence committed on the occasion before us, from the severity of the punishment, the length of its duration, and the violence of their oppressor, we must conclude it to have been uncommonly grievous: for the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, part of whose formidable host consisted of nine hundred chariots of iron; and who for "twenty years together mightily oppressed the children of Israel." Calamity is peculiarly oppressive, when it is embittered with the reflection, that it might have been prevented; that it is the native fruit of our own doings: and with finding the wretched associates of our guilt the wretched partakers of our woe.

Hope seems quite extinguished in Israel. Not one man of common spirit, in the course of twenty years oppression, appears awakened to a sense of his country's wrongs, and generously prompted to hazard his life in removing, or avenging them. But the cause of the church of God is never to be despaired of. Its emblem is, "the bush burning, but not consumed." Its motto, "cast down, but not destroyed." And whither are our eyes, at this time, directed to behold the favour of a sinking country? Behold the residue of the Spirit is upon the head of a woman; the sacred flame of public spirit, smothered and dead in each manly breast, yet glows in a female bosom; and the tribunal of judgment, deserted by masculine virtue and ability, is honourably and usefully filled by feminine sensibility, discernment, honesty and zeal. "And Deborah a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time."† She was a wife and a mother in Israel, and such a wife is a crown to her husband, such a mother, the glory and pride of her children; but her great, her capacious soul embraced more than her own family, aimed at the happiness

* Neh. ix. 25—31.

† Judges iv. 4.

nés of thousands, sweetly blended public with private virtue. Is it unreasonable to suppose, that the discreet and wise management of her own household, first procured her the public notice and esteem: and that the prudent deportment of the matron, passed by a natural and easy transition into the sanctity of the prophetess, and the gravity and authority of the judge? Certain it is, that the reputation which is not established on the basis of personal goodness, like a house built upon the sand, must speedily sink, and fall to pieces.

Hitherto, we have seen only “*holy men* of God speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” But the great Jehovah is no respecter of persons or sexes: “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he sheweth unto them his holy covenant.” The simple dignity of her unadorned, unassuming state, is beautifully represented: “She dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el, in Mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.”* Behold a female mind exalted above the pageantry and pride of external appearance; not deriving consequence from the splendour of her attire, the charms of her person, or the number of her retinue, but from the affability of her manners, the purity of her character, the sacredness of her office, the impartiality of her conduct, the importance of her public services; not wandering from place to place, hunting after a little empty applause, but sought unto of all Israel for the eminency, and extensive utility of her talents and her virtues. Her canopy of state was the shade of the palm-tree, her rule of judgment the law and the testimony of the living God; her motive, the inspiration of the Almighty; her aim and end, the glory of God and the good of her people; her reward, the testimony of a good conscience, the respect of a grateful nation, the admiration of future generations,

* Judges iv. 5.

tions, the smiles of approving Heaven. What are, compared to these, the ermined robe, the ivory sceptre, the chair of state, the glittering diadem!

But alas! what availeth the most upright and impartial administration of justice, among a people enslaved in the extreme, groaning under a foreign yoke, holding liberty, property and life, by the wretched tenure of a tyrant's caprice? The ardent soul of Deborah aspires at nothing short of a total emancipation of her bleeding country from these inglorious chains. And like a true prophetess of the living and true God, she engages in this noble and generous enterprise, not with the zeal of an enthusiast, not in an idle, inactive reliance on supernatural assistance; but in the honest confidence of a good cause, the diligent use of the most promising means, and ultimate dependence on the blessing of Him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his will."

The character of this illustrious heroine, grows upon us as we proceed; and exhibits a picture of female excellence, to which her own sex may look with emulation and honest pride, and ours, with admiration and esteem, unmixed with envy. An ordinary woman, in her place, and possessed of her advantages, would probably have aimed at the sole reputation of having delivered her country. But when a military operation is to be set on foot, for the attainment of this end, with the modest reserve becoming her sex, she satisfies herself with advising only. When the sword of Israel is to be drawn, let it be wielded by manly hands; let Barak come in for a share of the danger, the labour, and the praise. She is to be the directing head, and he the active hand. But what was the broken strength of two of the least of the tribes of Israel? What were ten thousand men to carry on offensive war against a power which could employ nine hundred chariots of iron as part of his force? What must have been the number of infantry that corresponded to this formidable armament? For
such

such a handful of men to appear in arms, was to provoke their own fate, not to serve their bleeding country; it was to rouse their haughty oppressors into more violent rage and cruelty, not to attack them with a probability of success. The force called for by the prophets, by divine appointment, was thus small, that the glory of all, in the issue, might be ascribed solely to God: and it was thus great, to teach mankind, that, as they hope to prosper, their own exertions must co-operate with the influence of over-ruling Providence.

Such was either the general despondency that prevailed in Israel at that dark period, or such the general confidence reposed in Deborah, that Barak accepts the commission given him, and consents to head the forces of his country into the field, under the express condition that their prophets and judge would be his companion and directress in the warfare. To this she yields a cordial assent, and cheerfully engages to take part in all that regarded the public service, whether counsel or resolution were needful to carry it on. She would not, could it with propriety be avoided, become a leader in arms, but feels no reluctance, is conscious of no fear, when attending the captain of the Lord's host into "the valley of decision." It is pleasant to observe how the manly virtues, properly modified and corrected, may be adopted into the female character, not only without giving offence, but so as to communicate the highest satisfaction and win approbation; and how, on the other hand, the softest of the female graces, may, without sinking the manly character, without exciting contempt, become a shade to the boldest, hardiest masculine qualities. Courage has been reckoned an attribute peculiar to men; but it is easy to conceive it so raised, and so expressed, and so exerted, as to be not only pardonable in, but highly ornamental to, woman. "A hen gathering her chickens under her wings," is a picture not only of maternal tenderness, but of the most undaunted intrepidity.

“ A bear bereaved of her whelps,” is not more fierce and more fearless. A mother defying the danger of the pestilential air which she inhales from her smitten child; a mother flying as a lioness on the brutal wretch who dared to crush her little darling; how dignified, what a noble creature she is! A tender virgin stirred up into holy indignation at hearing her absent friend traduced by the tongue of malevolence, forgetting herself for a moment, to repel the barbarous insult. O it is a disorder so lovely, that it almost deserves to be stamped with the name of virtue. To see Deborah quitting her seat under the palm-tree, to attend Barak to the top of Mount Tabor, when the enemies of her God and of her country are to be engaged and subdued; what heart does not catch fire from her heroic ardour! what tongue can withhold its tribute of praise!

While Deborah, without hesitation, agrees to accompany Barak to the high places of the field, by virtue of the spirit of prophecy which was upon her, she informs him that the glory he should obtain, was to suffer considerable diminution, not only by her participation of it, but also by the communication of it to another woman, for whom Providence had reserved the honour of putting the last hand to this arduous undertaking. Indeed this seems to be a crisis, in the history of human nature, at which Providence intended to exhibit the powers of the female mind in all their force and all their extent; intended to represent the sex in every situation that can create esteem, inspire love, command respect, or awaken terror. The united spirits and achievements of Deborah, and Jael the wife of Heber, seem to comprehend the whole compass of the feminine character in its more extraordinary feelings and exertions; and in the displaying the conduct of these two individuals, rouse our attention to the whole sex, as the most warm, steady and affectionate of friends, or the most formidable, dangerous and determined of enemies.

But

But we must not bring forward both at once. We conclude with a reflection or two, on what has been suggested from the history of Deborah.

I. It exposes the folly of despising or undervaluing any description of our fellow-creatures in the lump. All national reflections are founded in ignorance and folly; and the despisers have often paid dear for their insolence and presumption. The illiberal abuse so indiscriminately poured upon the gentler sex; is of the same nature. It generally comes from men something worse than the worst part of womankind. The truly sensible, and the truly brave, entertain far better and far more just sentiments of female utility and importance in the scale of being; and are ever disposed to ascribe to female capacity and worth, more than female modesty and wisdom are disposed to assume, or even to receive. No *good* man ever wished to see the female character undervalued or degraded; and perhaps very few *good* women have ever violently coveted stations and employments which belong peculiarly to men. But as nature delights in producing variety, as well as uniformity, it is not to be wondered at, if we sometimes meet with men more silly, timid and frivolous; than the most insignificant of the other sex; and on the other hand, women as daring, as enlightened, as magnanimous, as public-spirited as the first among mankind. The rivalship, however, and competition of the sexes, is altogether ridiculous and absurd. Each has its distinct, and both have their conjoined dignity and usefulness—and mutual concession is the truest wisdom in the one and in the other.

But, II. however weak and contemptible the instrument were in itself, from the hand that wields it, it becomes mighty and respectable: and the history before us becomes, and that not darkly, a typical representation of the gospel of Christ, which was “to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” Pride and self-sufficiency smile at the idea of a female prophet;

prophet, a female judge, a female poet, a female politician, a female warrior; and yet, in truth, women have filled all these offices, with credit to themselves, and with satisfaction to the public. And “who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind?” In the honoured list of those who “through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens,” female names too stand recorded with commendation and renown. And “what hast thou, O man, but what thou hast first received?” —“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

III. As the great Ruler of the world never can want an instrument to save, so he is always provided with instruments to punish. “He is wise in heart and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered?” The haughtiest of monarchs is at length constrained to “praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” “By a strong hand and stretched-out arm,” Pharaoh is at length compelled to “let Israel go.” “Humble” then “thyself,” O man, “under his mighty hand.” “Be wise now, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth, serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”

The next Lecture will carry on the history of Deborah, in connexion with that of Jael. I conclude the present, with calling on the female part of my audience to bless God, that while he has carried some of
their

their sex, through the most arduous employments, most eminent stations, and most hazardous enterprises, not only with safety, but with applause, he is pleased, in general, to put their talents and their virtues to a trial less severe; and let them remember, that after all which has been, or may be said, in praise of the few who have acted wisely and well upon the public theatre, to the generality, "the post of honour, is a private station."

History of Deborah.

LECTURE III.

JUDGES IV. 21—23.

Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: (for he was fast asleep, and weary) so he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

WHEN we consider how frequent, how violent, and how sudden are the transitions from condition to condition in human life, pride appears to be a mystery of folly, below contempt. To behold a rational being assuming consequence on an empty, unmeaning title; or from the possession of a little wealth, that bird of passage, eternally on the wing; or from beauty and strength, which accident or disease may blast in a moment, and which the lapse of a very few years certainly will impair; to behold a man putting confidence in princes, or feeding on the applause of a multitude; to hear him saying to himself, "Soul, take thy rest; thou hast much goods laid up for many years." "My
mountain

mountain standeth strong; I shall never be moved." All this is calculated to excite derision, not resentment; and when reason and experience ponder what the end may be, anger sinks into pity. Not only is frail man every moment at the mercy of a Being, almighty to save and to destroy; but the proudest and mightiest is every moment in the power of the weakest and meanest of his fellow-creatures. The tongue of the wretch whom thou despisest, may ruin thy reputation for ever. The crawling insect in thy path is armed with deadly poison against thy life. That nodding wall threatens to crush thee to pieces. Arm thee at all points, as well as thou canst, malice or hatred, envy or revenge will still find some part unguarded; and, bleeding to death, thou shalt find thou wert not invulnerable.

Those who are distinguished by their rank, their abilities, or their virtues, attract the notice of many observers, and create to themselves many open and many more secret enemies. The history of Sisera, the captain of the host of Jabin, king of Canaan, is a striking illustration of most of these remarks. In him, we see a man rendered insolent by success, intoxicated with prosperity, betrayed into disgrace through confidence of victory, the dupe of confidence in his own strength, and then the victim of confidence, equally unwise, in the fidelity and attachment of a stranger. We behold him in the morning, advancing to the unequal conflict at the head of a mighty and hitherto invincible host; in the evening, a bleeding corpse, fallen ingloriously by the hand of a woman.

Deborah, the prophetess of Israel, having transfused the patriotic ardour of her soul into Barak, not only directs him what he should do, but offers herself as the companion of the expedition which she had planned. With ten thousand men of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali under his command, Barak takes possession of Mount Tabor, meaning to act only on the defensive, till Providence should point out an occasion of acting to advantage. The rashness and impetuosity of

Sisera

Sifera soon presented him with such an opportunity. Enraged to think that an enemy so often discomfited, so long oppressed, so broken by calamity, should presume to make head against their lordly masters, he collects the whole of his vast strength, and invests the mountain, determined to crush the puny insurrection at one blow.

The sagacious judge, and divinely inspired prophetess of Israel, observes the season to be favourable, observes that the unwieldy army of the Canaanites was ready to fall in pieces by its own weight, that their vain confidence was destroying them, and that, above all, Heaven was propitious. She gives the signal of attack, and lo, "one chases a thousand, and ten put ten thousand to flight." The cause was of God, and it prospers: and the mighty hand and out-stretched arm of Jehovah, once more asserts Israel into liberty.

Whatever praise is to be ascribed to the conduct of Barak on this occasion, and to the intrepidity of his little army, it is evident, from some expressions in the song of praise, composed in celebration of the victory, that the defeat of the Canaanites was in part, at least, miraculous. "They fought from heaven." "The stars in their courses," it is said, "fought against Sifera." By "the stars" some interpreters understand "the angels of God," who are sometimes designed by that name. Josephus takes the words in a different sense, and affirms, that an extraordinary storm of rain, mixed with hail, blinded the eyes of the Canaanites, and drove back their darts upon their own heads. The Rabbins, with still less appearance of probability, allege, that certain constellations of a pestilential influence, consumed the army of Sifera, burnt them up with thirst, and drove them for refreshment to the brook Kishon, where they were met in a languid, enfeebled state, by the troops of Deborah and Barak, and put to the sword. The expedition from first to last, was without controversy conducted and crowned by the hand of Providence. But the narration of the event,

event, on the sacred page, is too general and concise, to enable us to pronounce with confidence, where the province of human sagacity and valour ended ; and where the interposition of Heaven began.

However it were, the victory was complete ; the enemy was totally routed and put to the edge of the sword ; the commander in chief alone escapes the universal carnage of the field ; and he, who a little before had nine hundred chariots of iron at his disposal, sees himself stripped of all, and is constrained to consult his safety by flight. A prince without subjects, and a general without an army, shrink into poor, wretched, solitary individuals, the more to be pitied, from the giddy height whence they have fallen.

The history drops the myriads which composed the army of Sisera, into a silent grave ; and pursues the sad tale of the unhappy man himself up to his tragical death. Seeing his army slaughtered and put to flight, and himself in danger of falling into the hands of triumphant Israel, he alights from his chariot, and flees away on foot. “ How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished ! ” What a sad reverse, within the compass of one short day ! And to such reverses, human life is eternally liable. The greatest of uninspired bards has put this passionate exclamation in the mouth of a dethroned monarch of our own country, addressing himself to his few wretched attendants, the poor remains of his departed state :

Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
 With solemn reverence ; throw away respect,
 Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,
 For you have but mistook me all this while :
 I live on bread like you, feel want, taste grief,
 Need friends :—Subjected thus,
 How can you say to me—I am a king.

SHAKESPEARE.—King Richard II.

Behold the mighty Sisera weary and faint with thirst, without one, of so many thousands, to assist or comfort his

his flight, seeking refuge from his pursuers in the tents of an allied power, Heber the Kenite.

By looking back to the book of Numbers, chap. x. we find that Hobab, the son of Raguel or Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, had left his native residence, to attend the camp of Israel as their guide through the wilderness, and had been persuaded by Moses, his brother-in-law, to cast in his lot among that people, upon a solemn assurance, that, on their settlement in Canaan, he, and his family, and descendants, should share in the fruits of victory, and obtain a portion in the land promised to the children of Abraham. This accounts for our finding them established, at such a distance of time, in the border of Kedesh Naphtali. On the invasion of the country, however, by Jabin, king of Canaan, we find them observing a strict neutrality. "There was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber the Kenite."* In the confidence of this, Sisera betakes himself to the Kenite for protection; and is received by Jael, the wife of Heber, with every mark of humanity and respect, due to a great man, and a friend, in distress. She brings him milk to quench his thirst, covers him carefully up in her own tent to repose himself from the vexation and fatigue of that disastrous day, and to conceal him from the pursuit of Barak. She promises inviolably to keep secret the place of his concealment; and relying on that promise, weary and worn out, he falls into a profound sleep. Jael avails herself of his defenceless situation, and seizing such arms as were at hand, a hammer and one of the pins or nails used in stretching out the tent, she transfixes the head of the unhappy sleeper as he lay along, and with redoubled blows fastens the bleeding temples to the ground.

Such was the inglorious end of a man, on whom that morning's sun had risen with a smiling aspect; who awoke from sleep in the possession of all that royal

* Verse 17.

al favour could bestow, all that sovereign power could compel, all that flattering hope could promise. Of the motives which could impel Jael to such a deed of horror, we have no information. Her conduct, we know, is celebrated in the Song of Deborah in terms of the strongest approbation ; which obliges us to conclude, that there are circumstances in the story, which the Spirit of God has not thought proper to disclose. The great Jehovah needs not a vindication of his conduct, from the labour and ingenuity of a wretched, ignorant mortal. He has but to discover a few little particulars, which are as yet hid from our eyes ; and then, what now confounds and overwhelms our understanding, becomes clear and intelligible to the meanest capacity. Instead, therefore, of vainly and presumptuously attempting to reconcile this action of Jael with the laws of morality, which, by the glimmering light we have, is impossible, we shall make a few observations on the history, of a general and practical nature. And

I. We repeat, what has been already suggested, “that human reason is a very incompetent judge of divine proceeding.” We know so little, so very little of the system of nature ; our own constitution is such an inexplicable mystery to ourselves ; we meet every where so many difficulties, contradictions, defects, redundancies ; at least we take upon us to think and call them so, as must lead us to this conclusion, that, either the work of God is imperfect ; or that we cannot find out him and his work unto perfection. Now the little reason we have cannot hesitate an instant in choosing its side of this alternative. And if we confessedly are unqualified to judge of that which is less, dare we presume to pronounce concerning that which is greater. If the volume of nature, spread open to the perusal at once of our senses and our reason, present many things not only hard, but impossible to be understood, can we deem ourselves qualified, or entitled to explain, to justify, or to arraign the

more dark and mysterious ways of Providence? And which is the greater pride and presumption, that which is forever "charging God foolishly," or that which sets itself up, as the bold interpreter and assistant of eternal wisdom and justice? Observe

II. An obvious reason, why these difficulties are permitted in the frame of nature, the conduct of Providence, and the revelation of the grace of God. It is, to form us to submission, to exercise our patience, to fix our attention, to whet our industry, to repress our boldness, to increase and confirm our confidence in God. It is a mark of respect to superior wisdom and virtue, not always to require an explanation, but to repose implicit trust in known goodness and integrity. A wise man in the consciousness of his own rectitude, disdains to acknowledge the obligation of clearing up his conduct to every prating meddler, who may think proper to call him to account; and who has neither a right, nor a capacity to judge of his motives. And shall we withhold from our Maker that decent respect which we so cheerfully pay to a fallible, imperfect fellow-creature? Shall we refuse to take the God of truth upon his word? Shall we think it much if in some cases he exact belief, without his vouchsafing to assign a reason? "Why dost thou strive against him? He giveth not account of any of his matters."* Our sacred bard has sublimely expressed this noble sentiment, drawn from the volume of inspiration. Considering the divine providence under the image of a vast sealed-up book, chained to the eternal throne, containing the character, the revolutions, the destination of angels and men, but closed to the inspection of every created eye. We observe,

III. That it is doing the grossest injustice to the wise and righteous Governor of the world, to suppose him in every point approving the person, or the conduct by which he carries on his great designs. Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar are styled the servants of God, though

* Job xxxiii. 13.

though the one knew him not, and the other openly defied him. The rod which he condescendeth to use, for the chastisement of disobedient and gainfaying children, when their reformation is accomplished, he often breaks and dashes on the ground. Every instrument he employs must necessarily partake of human imperfection; but it follows not that he is pleased with imperfection. The devices of Satan himself shall in the issue redound to the glory of God, as “the wrath of man must praise him;” but that wrath is hateful to his nature, and those devices his wisdom counteracts, and his justice condemns. We are not therefore to mistake the patriotic ardour of a female Israelitish bard, for the calm, the merited applause of the God of mercy and truth. I can easily conceive the person, whom national partiality, resentment or gratitude would celebrate in strains of admiration, to be regarded with abhorrence by the Father of mercies, the avenger of falsehood, the refuge of the miserable. And while Israelitish Deborah, in the heat of her zeal, makes the eulogium of a woman so unlike herself, and styles Jael, the wife of Heber, who murdered her sleeping guest, “blessed above women,” why may not a christian Dorcas, a woman of mercy and humanity, “a woman full of good works, and alms deeds,” under the mild and gentle influence of that religion which she believes, feels and practises, reprobate the cruel and perfidious act, and its author, in terms of the severest indignation? Indeed, the conduct of Jael, considered by itself, is a horrid complication of all that is base and detestable in human nature; an infamous violation of sacred truth; a daring infringement of the law of nature and nations; a flagrant breach of the laws of hospitality, which the most savage natures and nations have respected as sacred; the vilest degradation of her character as a woman; the most barbarous exhibition of a little mind, enjoying the triumph over unsuspecting credulity, and defenceless

misery. “Curfed be her anger, for it was fierce, and her wrath for it was cruel.” Obferve,

IV. Into what dreadful extremes we impetuoufly rufh, when the radical principles of our nature are once subdued. Time muft have been, that the idea of fhedding the blood of another, would have chilled the blood in Jael’s veins. What muft it have coft her, to overcome the timidity, the tenderness, the compaffion of her fex ! But being overcome, lo, each gentle, feminine paffion is lulled afleep ; and frantic zeal, or demoniac revenge alone is awake. Ah me, what beaft of prey fo favage and unrelenting, as a human being deftitute of pity ! Ah me, how eafily the beft things degenerate into the worft ! Of what importance is it, to guard againft the firft deviation from the fimple and direct path ! Who can promife for himfelf, that he fhall flop, return, and regain the right road, when he pleafes ? Obferve,

V. That the rarity of the instances, the peculiarity of the fituations, and the fingularity of the fpirit and conduct, apparent in the female characters here brought into public view, forbid, by more than a pofitive law, female interference in matters of bufinefs and of government. Believe me, my fair friends, it is not ftripping you of your juft importance, it is increafing and fecuring it, to fay, the fhade is your native, your proper ftation : it is there you fhine, it is there you are ufeful, it is there you are respectable. Your heart and your understanding affent to the truth of it. Is there a woman among you, who would not prefer in obfcurity, the affection of her husband, the attachment and gratitude of her children, the eftimation and refpect of her friends, to all the public fplendour of Deborah’s magifterial power, and prophetic fpirit ; to all the blufhing, empurpled honours of Jael’s more than mafculine refentment ? It is not your want of talents for government we difpute ; it is the fuitablenefs of government to your talents, your natural difpofitions, your real honour and happinefs.

ness. A wise and good woman never can desire to become the object of universal admiration, nor the subject of every one's discourse. If you aim at so much, depend upon it, you will loose something of what you have, and what is infinitely better than all the incense of flattery, than all the sonnets of a thousand poetic swains. In the history of our own country, the reigns of two female sovereigns shine with conspicuous lustre. They were periods of great national prosperity and glory. But the weakest of women would not surely thence infer, that the sceptre ought always to be committed to female hands. With all due deference to the memory of an Elizabeth and an Anne, and the general felicity which their administration diffused over the land; Great-Britain can look with pride and exultation to a Queen, whose personal glory and virtues far exceed theirs. Not a sovereign indeed, but a partner of the throne: who shines in reason's eye, because she affects not to shine; reigns over willing hearts, because she disclaims all rule; is great and blessed among women, because she nobly sinks the princess in the woman, the wife, the mother and the friend.

We encroach no farther on your patience, by extending our observations on the subject. And the rather, as a review of the song of Deborah, composed on this memorable occasion, will, if God permit, bring it again before us, and place female genius in our eye, in a new, and not unpleasing point of light; uniting poetic and musical skill to fervent devotion, heroic intrepidity, and prophetic inspiration. A combination how rare, how instructive, how respectable!

History of Deborah.

L E C T U R E I V .

JUDGES V. 1—5.

Then sang Deborah, and Barak, the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings ; give ear, O ye princes : I, even I will sing unto the Lord ; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel. Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.

TO some it is the gift of Heaven, to perform actions worthy of being recorded ; to others it is given, to preserve the memory of illustrious actions, in writings worthy of being read. To both, the world is under great obligations, and gratefully permits the historian or the poet, to divide the palm with the hero, or the sage, whom they celebrate. To the writer, perhaps, the more ample share of praise is due. The achievements of valour and strength are local and temporary. They benefit but a few, and quickly spend their force. But the historic and poetic page, more durable, more diffused, and more conspicuous than monuments of brass and marble, is an universal and a perpetual blessing.

ing to mankind;—conveying to distant nations and latest posterity harmless pleasure blended with wholesome instruction.

On a favoured few has been conferred the combined glory of acting nobly, and writing well; of serving their own day and generation with credit to themselves and advantage to their country, and of transmitting useful information to regions remote and generations unborn. On the list of those illustrious few, stands with distinguished honour, the name of Deborah, the judge, the prophetess, the sweet singer of Israel; and it is with exultation we observe the most dignified, arduous and important stations of human life filled with reputation by a woman: a woman, who first, with resolution and intrepidity, saved her country in the hour of danger and distress, and ruled it with wisdom and equity; and then recorded her own achievements in strains which must be held in admiration, so long as good taste and the love of virtue exist in the world.

Having with veneration and respect attended to the equitable decisions, and the oracles of truth which flowed from the lips of the female seer and sage, who sat under the palm-tree in Mount Ephraim; and accompanied the undaunted heroine to the top of Mount Tabor, and the ensanguined plains washed by the river of Kishon; let us listen with wonder and delight to the lofty strains of the female bard, and join our voices in the burden of her song.

This sublime poem is the most ancient that exists, two excepted, namely, that which celebrates the miraculous passage through the Red Sea; and the sweetly swelling notes of the dying swan of Israel. It is two hundred and thirty-four years later than the former, and one hundred and ninety-four years than the latter of these sacred compositions; but it is four hundred and ten years older than Homer, the great father of heathen poetry. From its high antiquity therefore, were there nothing else to recommend it to notice, it

is most respectable; but from its antiquity and the very nature of poetical composition, it must of necessity be, in some respects, involved in difficulty and obscurity. This we pretend not wholly to clear up or to remove. Instead then of making an attempt in which we should probably, perhaps certainly fail, we shall satisfy ourselves with pointing out a few of the more obvious and striking beauties of a piece, which all will allow to contain many and shining excellencies.

The inscription of this hymn of praise, first challenges our notice. "Then sang Deborah, and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying."* In exhibiting the character and conduct of this truly estimable woman, the feminine delicacy and reserve are never dropped. As a ruler and a prophetess she is introduced, under her relative character of the wife of Lapidoth. As the leader of armies to battle, and leader in the musical choir which celebrated the victories of her country, she is represented as the companion and coadjutrix of Barak, the son of Abinoam. She was undoubtedly the first woman of her own, perhaps of any age; but her consequence, in place of being diminished, is increased and supported by the blending of private, personal worth and ability, with the relations of social life, those of wife, mother and friend.

Adam might exist a little while in paradise, before Eve was formed, but nature and reason and religion, all seem to declare, that woman can neither comfortably nor reputably subsist, separated from that side whence she was originally taken. Who will deny, that the superiority in point of discretion and understanding is frequently on the side of the female? But a woman forfeits all pretension to that very superiority, the moment she assumes or boasts of it. Whether, therefore, it were Deborah's own good sense, and female modesty, which preferred appearing in a connected,

* Verse 1.

ned, to appearing in a solitary state, though more flattering to vanity; or whether the Spirit of God, in representing the most elevated of female geniuses in the most elevated of situations, thought proper to point her out as connected and dependent; the same lesson of moderation, diffidence, delicacy and condescension is powerfully inculcated: and her sex is instructed where their true dignity, safety, honour and comfort lie.

The time is marked, when this triumphant anthem was first composed and sung. "On that day." It had been a day of danger, anxiety and fatigue: a day of vengeance upon the insulting foe, a day of mutual congratulation and rejoicing; but ill had Israel deserved such a victory, and shamefully had Deborah improved it, if either the emotions of joy or of revenge had excluded those of gratitude and love. The tongue of Deborah, like the pen of a ready writer, dictates "acceptable words" to the thousands of her people; she cannot think of repose, till the evening sacrifice of praise be offered up, and from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. The day which the arm of Omnipotence had distinguished by wonders of mercy, must not be concluded without songs of deliverance. From "the confused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood," the soul turns with holy joy, to the acknowledgment of that "right hand and holy arm which had gotten them the victory:" and in one solemn "praise ye the Lord" bursting at once from every tongue, every redeemed Israelite calls upon himself and upon his fellow to give unto JEHOVAH the glory due unto his name.

Here the song naturally begins, by this it must be supported, and in this it must terminate. All creatures, all events point out "Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end." "Praise ye the Lord."

But, religion is "a reasonable service." The divine essence we do not, we cannot know; "the invisible things of God," even "his eternal power and deity,"

deity," are to be discovered only "by the things which he has made," and the things which he doth. Here then the spirit of praise immediately fixes, and the recent interposition of a gracious Providence rises instantly into view: his "avenging of Israel," in which Jehovah is acknowledged as at once just and merciful: just, in recompensing tribulation to them that troubled his covenanted church and people; merciful in giving his troubled people rest.

Vengeance; the vengeance of God! Fearful thought! but oh, it is sweetly relieved, by the reflection, that the right of executing vengeance, is claimed by the God of mercy, with awful propriety, as his own. This dreadful thunder no arm but his own must presume to wield; "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." If I must be punished, "let me fall now into the hand of the LORD, for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." The only vengeance permitted to man is a vengeance of kindness and forgiveness; the only coals which he must scatter, are the coals of the fire of love. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink:—" "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."*

The voluntary actions of the people in "offering themselves" to fight their own battles, are with singular beauty ascribed to the wisdom and goodness of God who has the "hearts of all in his hand," and can "turn them which way soever he will." He who could have saved by miracles, will save by means. If there be a spirit of concord to resist the common enemy, it is of the LORD. If internal dissension aid the enemy

* Matt. v. 44, 45.

enemy without, we behold a righteous God infatuating those whom he means to destroy.

Having thus simply proposed the glorious subject of her praise, "the sweet enthusiast" prepares to unfold and amplify it. She throws her eyes over the face of the whole earth: views all nations and their potentates, as interested in the glowing theme; and summons an admiring world to listen to her song. "Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes: I, even I will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel."* What so delightful to a grateful and affectionate heart, as the enumeration of benefits received! What benefactor once to be compared with the Giver of all good, "the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good gift, and every perfect!"

Having proposed her theme and summoned her august audience, the divine poetess seems to pause for a moment, as if awed by the presence of such a splendid audience, and overwhelmed with the magnitude of the task she has undertaken, and with renovated strength, aims her flight, like the eagle, up to her native skies. The deliverance of that day, brings former wonders of mercy to mind; and "God, the same yesterday, to-day and forever," is seen and adored in all. Instead of expatiating on the goodness of the Most High in strains addressed to the "kings and princes" whom she had called to attend, she rises at once to "JEHOVAH'S awful throne," loses all sense of created majesty, and loses herself in the contemplation of infinite perfection. "Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel."†

The former part of this animated address probably refers to that passage in the history of Israel which we have

* Verse 3.

† Verse 4, 5.

have in the book of Numbers, chap. xx. relating to the passage of Israel through the land of Idumea, which was humbly and peaceably solicited, and unkindly refused. Of this, some particulars might have been preserved by tradition to the times of Deborah; though not admitted into the sacred canon, and suggested to her the lofty expressions which she here employs in celebrating the praises of Israel's God. Though he would not permit them to force a passage by the sword; through the country given to the posterity of Esau their brother, yet in guiding them round the confines, of Idumea, in the majestic symbol of his presence, the pillar of cloud and fire, the great God might, by some sensible tokens, make Edom to know, it was not from want of power, but of inclination, that he led his people in a circuitous course. The language of the prophets, divested of its bold figurative dress, is simply this, "The wonders of this day, O Lord, recall and equal the greatest wonders of ages past. We have seen the stars in their courses fighting against our enemies, as our fathers of old saw mountain and plain, heaven and earth, giving testimony to the presence and favour of the God of Israel. The field of Edom and the vale of Kishon are equally filled with the glory of the Lord. We recognize in the hand which has discomfited the host of Sisera, the same almighty power which restrained the Idumean, and conducted our ancestors, if not the nearest, certainly the best road to Canaan."

The latter part of the address evidently refers to the awful solemnity with which the law was given from Mount Sinai; in which all nature, without a figure, bare witness to the presence and power of nature's God. "The earth trembled, the hills melted like wax," the face of heaven was covered with blackness of darkness, lightning flashed, the hoarse thunder roared, the louder and more dreadful voice of the Eternal drowned its tremendous sound, men's hearts fail them for fear, Moses quakes.

What

What matter of joy to Israel, that he who of old had thus revealed his fiery law, that day, that very day had come riding on the swift wings of the wind for their salvation! To fix these emotions of rising gratitude and wonder, the bard dexterously and imperceptibly slides into a review of the recent distress and misery of her unhappy country; distress yet fresh in every one's memory, misery out of which they were just beginning to emerge: and she takes occasion to pay a just tribute of respect to the memory of a great man, whom God had honoured to be the instrument of redemption to an oppressed people.

Those who are themselves the most deserving of praise, are ever the most liberal in bestowing it, where it is due. It is a slender and contemptible merit which seeks to shine by obscuring, concealing, or diminishing the worth of another. Deborah is but the more estimable, for the frank and unreserved commendation which she confers on departed or contemporary virtue and talents. "In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the high-ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways. The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel."* What a melancholy picture have we here of a ruined, wretched country? By means of oppression, all intercourse is interrupted; commerce is languishing to death; life and property have become insecure: every thing dear to man is at the mercy of a haughty tyrant; ever exposed to the ravages of a lawless band of armed ruffians: the scanty and dejected inhabitants tremble at the sound of their own feet, at the sight of their own shadow; behold them skulking from place to place, stealing through by-ways, to carry on a starved and precarious traffic; suffering much, and fearing worse.

Ah, little do we reflect, living at our ease, enjoying the blessings of mild and equitable government, "sit-
ting

* Verse 6, 7.

ting every one under his vine, and under his fig-tree, while there is none to make us afraid :” little do we reflect on the misery and tears of myriads of our fellow-creatures oppressed, and there is none to help them ; whose cry incessantly rises up to heaven, but rises in despair. Think what multitudes of the bold and hardy Africans are yearly driven or trepanned into servitude, through the violence or craft of their own countrymen, or, through the more fierce and unrelenting principle of European avarice, which has reduced slavery to a system, has invented an article of commerce which God and nature abhor, and concur to prohibit ; and what is the subject of the infamous, impious traffic ? the souls and bodies of men.

Who can turn his eyes, without weeping tears of blood, to the fertile soil, the clement air, and the simple, harmless inhabitants of the eastern world, and observe the gifts of nature perverted into a curse, the goodness of Providence thwarted by the cursed lust of power, or more cursed lust of wealth, and the patient, uncomplaining Asiatic, perishing for hunger, in his own luxuriant domain : and the Ganges disgorging millions of fetid corpses into the ocean, the corpses of wretches who died for lack of food, to purchase for a still greater wretch an empty title, and a seat among the lawgivers of the wisest, most polished and humane of the nations of the western world.

Look to the thin and scanty remains of the populous and prosperous nations of the southern hemisphere, and a land whose veins are gold, and its mountains silver, of which Spanish cruelty and avarice have been constrained to make a desert, in order to secure the possession of it. Behold the sullen, dejected native trampling under his feet gold and diamonds, which he dare not put forth his hand to touch ; and reproaching Heaven with heaping upon him, in its anger, treasures which have attracted, not the pious zeal and attention, but the infernal rage, of men who nevertheless dare to call themselves christians.

Behold

Behold yet again—No, I sicken at the horrid prospect—and will no longer encroach upon the feelings of humanity, by exhibiting the more than savage barbarity of systematic cruelty and oppression. God of mercy, put a speedy end to these horrors! assert thy offspring into liberty, the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Let us return to the sweet mistress of Israelitish song; I see her warm, and rise into native, conscious worth and importance: and honour the lovely pride, the honest vanity of the female patriot. “The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.”* If ever there were ability, if ever there were services, if ever there were an occasion, which could warrant self-praise, it was the ability, the public services of Deborah, and the glorious occasion on which she wrote and sung. Shew me such exertions for the public good, and let a man, let a woman be as vain as they will, and let affected humility and self-denial say what they will, it is an honourable and laudable ground of glorying, that God has made us the means of conveying happiness to others. But occasions of doing justice to eminent, public female worth so seldom occur, that I must reserve to myself the pleasure of accompanying this great woman, this more than princess, through the remainder of her song, in another Lecture.

—Men and brethren, we are furnished with a much more noble subject of praise—a subject which angels delight to celebrate in celestial strains—a subject which carries us back into the eternal counsels of peace “before the world was,” which carries us forward to the grand consummation, when “time shall be no longer;” when “the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads:” when “they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Need I point out the era, christians, and the spot, and the performers,

* Verse 7.

performers, and the audience, or repeat the words of the lofty theme?—"There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."* Here are celebrated, not the transient interests of a petty tribe, the momentary triumph of the oppressed, and the downfall of the oppressor; not events which have long ago spent all their force, and left no trace behind; but the broad, unbounded, permanent interests of mankind; the triumph of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge;" of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding:" events which extend their influence into eternity. We celebrate "the praises of Him, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light"—of God, who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."†—Of "Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen:"‡ Of Him "who, through death, has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil." The burden of the christian's song is, "Salvation," salvation begun, going on, ready to be accomplished. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms

* Luke ii. 8—14.

† John iii. 16.

‡ Rev. i. 5, 6.

doms of our Lord, and of his Christ ; and he shall reign forever and ever.”*

The song of Deborah exhibits awful distinctions between man and man, between nation and nation ; presents a mystery of Providence, which human understanding endeavours in vain to trace : in the song of the redeemed of the Lord, all distinction is abolished ; it presents a mystery of grace which “ angels desire to look into ;” it is in full harmony sung, by those who have “ come from the east and from the west, from the south and from the north, and have sat down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God :” where the spirit of this world finds no place, and its differences are absorbed of the “ spirit of love : where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free ; but Christ is all, and in all.” Let these reflections be practically improved, in conformity to the apostolic exhortation, by our daily learning to “ put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another—and above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.” Amen.

* Rev. xi. 15.

History of Deborah.

LECTURE V.

JUDGES V. 12, 13.

Awake, awake, Deborah : awake, awake, utter a song : arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam. Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people : the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty.

IT is natural for man to look forward to futurity ; and to derive a part, at least, of his felicity and importance from the estimation in which he is to be held by posterity. He knows that his body must soon die, and his connexion with the world be dissolved ; but he flatters himself with the fond hope, that his name may survive his ashes, and that his memory may be cherished and respected, though his person be lost in the grave, and sink into oblivion.

When this anticipation, and desire of immortality, serve as a stimulus to virtuous exertion, and call forth wisdom and goodness, honourably to fulfil their day, the love of fame is a respectable principle in the individual, because it becomes a blessing to mankind. But to wade to the temple of fame through a sea of blood ; to extract “ the bubble reputation ” from widow’s tears and the groans of expiring wretches, is worse than contemptible ; it is detestable, it is monstrous.

And,

And, whatever national partiality and prejudice may have done, reason and humanity will always regard such characters as Alexander and Cæsar with abhorrence, strip them of their ill-earned glory, and stigmatize their names to the latest generations, as the enemies of mankind.

The spirit of patriotism, in other respects noble and excellent, is here faulty, pernicious, and worthy of the severest censure. It encroaches on the sacred rights of loving kindness and tender mercy. It encroaches on the more sacred prerogatives of high Heaven. It would make the God of the spirits of all flesh, a party in the quarrels of two petty states, and force the great interests of an universe to bend to the caprice, the pride, the ambition or revenge of some paltry prince. Hence, the literary monuments of all nations, exhibit a narrow, illiberal, ungenerous, impious spirit. The warlike genius of Rome acquired the ascendant over her rival Carthage. The literary genius of that gallant people assumed the superiority of course; and *Punic* perfidy, barbarity and cowardice, became the subject of proverbial apothegms, historical records, and poetical rhapsodies. But suppose, for a moment, the scales changed, and the fate of Carthage preponderating, and we should have had this whole picture reversed; and *Roman*, not *Punic* faithlessness, cruelty and cowardice had been the burden of the song, and the object of detestation. While *our* notes of triumph rend the vault of heaven, cross that brook, look forward from the summit of that little hill, where we are celebrating victory with all the insolence of success, and erecting the monumental column to prosperous valour, and nought is to be seen, but sights of woe, no voice is to be heard, but that of lamentation and despair; while angels, from yonder sphere, look down with pity and concern, such as angels feel, on both the victor and the vanquished. "The broad eye of one Creator, takes in all mankind: his laws expand the heart;" and the "Te Deum," which angels sing

with rapture, is, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.”

We must carry these ideas with us as a corrective to the vehemence of poetical enthusiasm, and learn still to distinguish between the rapturous praise and censure of a female patriot, and the calm, equitable, unbiassed applause or condemnation of unerring wisdom and eternal justice. In the picture of human nature here suspended before our eyes, we behold it, as it is, not what it ought, in all respects, to be.

Deborah having proposed her subject, in plain and simple terms, in the second verse, and summoned the princes and potentates of the earth to listen to her song, as if the whole world were interested in the event she was about to celebrate, she presents to them an object supremely worthy of their attention and reverence, namely, the great JEHOVAH marching in awful state before the armies of his people, and delivering to them his dreadful law from Sinai, while universal nature bears witness to the presence of the Creator and Lord of all. “The earth trembling, the mountains melting, the powers of heaven shaken.”

From thence she turns a weeping eye to the recent miseries of her yet bleeding country, and summons her compatriots to gratitude and joy, for the deliverance of that day, from the recollection of the cruel restraints under which they so lately lived, and the calamities which they endured: and she rises into holy rapture at the thought, that a gracious Providence had not only wrought salvation for his people, but made her the blessed instrument of effecting it. But in recalling the memory of former evils, in order to awaken holy joy, she fails not to trace those evils up to their proper source, in order to excite holy sorrow and contrition; “They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?”*

The

* Verse 8.

The great object of the prophets is, to impress this everlasting and unchangeable truth, that sin is the ruin of any nation, and that salvation is of the Lord. The moment a new god is set up, behold a new enemy is in the gate. That instant the idol is pulled down, the hope of Israel revives. The poetic question of Deborah, “was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?” expresses the highest degree of political dejection and distress; and represents the insulting foe, as not only filling all their borders with present consternation; but also, undermining all their hope for the time to come; stripping them of every kind of armour both for defence and attack; to such a degree, that not one man, out of forty thousand, was furnished for the field.

A Jewish Rabbin * has given a turn somewhat different to the words of the text, and not an absurd one. “Has Israel chosen new gods? then was war in the gates. Was there shield or spear seen among forty thousand?” that is to say, “From the time that Israel made choice of strange gods, they were under a necessity of maintaining war in their gates; or, of supporting a standing army for defence against the inroads of their enemies. But now that you offer yourselves willingly to the Lord, and put away the strange gods which are among you, see whether you have any need of shield or spear against the most formidable and numerous hosts of foes, against the thousands and forty thousands of Canaan? No, JEHOVAH himself is your shield and buckler, he fights your battles. Heaven and earth combine to destroy the adversary, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, the river Kishon swallows them up.”

“My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the Lord. Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way. They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places

* Sal. Jarchi, page 64.

places of drawing water ; there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord ; even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel ; then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates." * That we may enter into the true spirit of the patriotic bard, let us suppose, what it is apparent she has in view, namely, severally to address the various orders and descriptions of men, whereof the Israelitish state was composed, and who had each a peculiar, as well as a common interest, in the salvation which they celebrated. She begins with her companions in the warfare, who, roused by her exhortations, and a sense of their country's wrongs, had cheerfully offered themselves to this laborious and hazardous service. " My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the Lord." † They best knew how little was due to human skill and valour, how much to the gracious and powerful interposition of Heaven ; let them, therefore, lead the band, and ascribe unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name. She next turns to the civil governors and judges of the land, and invites them to continue the song. " Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way." ‡ Such was the simple state in which the rulers of Israel travelled from place to place, administering justice. The ideas, in her address to them, are tender and pathetic, and may be thus extended, " Alas ! my associates in government, it was but yesterday, that we were rulers without subjects, judges without a tribunal, and without authority : the lives and property of Israel were not secured and protected by law, but were at the disposal of a foreign lawless despot ; and your progress through the land in the exercise of your high office, was checked and overawed by a licensed banditti. Let us rejoice together, that government has reverted to its channel ; the highways are no longer blocked

* Verse 9—11. † Verse 9.

‡ Verse 10.

blocked up, and therefore no longer unoccupied. Place your thrones of judgment where you will, in the gate, in the highway, the communication is open, there is none to make you afraid, the enemies whom you have seen, you shall see them no more again forever."

Her next address seems to be made to the shepherds of the lately oppressed country. "They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water; there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel; then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates." * They are represented as trembling at the found of their own feet among the pebbles of the brook, lest thereby they should awaken the attention of their rapacious masters; they are afraid to drive their flocks to the watering place, lest they should expose themselves and their harmless fleecy charge, to the cruel shafts of the archer, ever on the watch to gall and annoy them. But now, there, even there, in the very scene of their sorrow and misery, where the rustling of a leaf durst not be heard, they shall break out together into singing; there, free from sorrow, free from fear, "shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts to the inhabitants of the villages in Israel." Finally, she calls upon the inhabitants of the villages, the husbandmen and vine-dressers, to add their voices to the swelling band, on recovering their tranquillity, on being restored to the felicity of labouring for themselves, and saved from the mortification of seeing lazy, insolent strangers devouring the fruit of their painful toil, and repairing, as before, in happier days, to their own gates, to their own judges for justice and judgement. Thus we hear, as it were, the tuneful choir gradually increasing in number, the peasant taking up the song which the shepherd had put into his mouth, the shepherd following the magistrate,

* Verse 11.

trate, the magistrate the foldier, till all Israel becomes one voice, one heart, one soul, to celebrate the high praises of God. Faint representation of that more glorious consummation, that purer triumph, that more auspicious day, that inexpressibly more important salvation, to which the believer in Christ Jesus looks in hope.

The voice of this universal chorus having ceased, a solemn pause of some moments seems to ensue; when the divinely-inspired poetess awakes to new rapture; and the harmony of myriads of joyful voices subsides into the melody of one simple strain. "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."* What genuine touches of nature have we here, what simplicity, what pathos, what sublimity! She seems to regret her exhausted powers; her spirit is still willing; she cannot bear to cease so soon from so divine an employ; she starts into fresh enthusiasm. Having put words of praise into the mouths of a whole saved people, she takes up her own peculiar strain; "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song:" And then, turning to the companion of her victory, excites him to make a public display of the wonderful trophies of that wondrous day; "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." Exhibit them in chains, who had forged chains for the hands and feet of Israel; lead them captive, who led in captivity the free-born sons of God; shew triumphantly the spoils of them that spoiled thee; "the prey taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered;" them that "oppressed thee with their own flesh, and drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine;" a righteous "God contending with them, who contended with thee." "Thou son of Abinoam." She rouses her noble colleague to excel in praise, as he had excelled in counsel and courage, by one of the most powerful motives
of

* Verse 12.

of human conduct, the honour of his father's name and family. Let the names of Barak and Abinoam be transmitted, hand in hand, with respect, to the latest generations; let the world know that on Abinoam a gracious Providence conferred the distinguished honour of being the father of the father of his country.

It is not ancestry, it is not country that can bestow celebrity on a deedless name, on an idle or worthless character; it is illustrious virtue, it is superior wisdom, it is useful ability that confers nobility, true nobility on families, and celebrity on countries. Contending cities claim the honour of giving birth to Homer. Strip Athens of her renowned sons, and she sinks into a mass of rocks and sand. How would the heart of Abinoam glow with delight, as often as the sound of his name reached his ears, in connexion with that of a son whom a grateful country acknowledged, and celebrated with songs, as its saviour!

In the 13th verse we see the low and reduced state of Israel again brought into view, to prepare for a fresh discovery of the power and goodness of God, and to exhibit in another point of light, the solidity, strength and security of his church, "out of weakness made strong," "waxing," in a moment, "valiant in fight, turning to flight the armies of the aliens." "Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty."* In two striking particulars, this gracious interposition of Heaven is emphatically pointed out. "He made him that *remaineth* to have dominion. It was not the *strength* of Israel which God employed in crushing the "nobles" and pride of Canaan, it was not by opposing force to force, skill to skill, that Providence decided the contest; but by a scattered, broken remainder; but by a dispirited handful, that durst not trust themselves in the plain against the enemy, but by an unarmed rabble whom Sisera held in contempt, that Jehovah trampled

* Verse 13.

pled the glory of Jabin in the dust; as by a cake of barley bread rolling down upon a tent and levelling it with the ground.

To set the divine sovereignty in a still stronger light, Deborah suggests, but not in the spirit of self-confidence, that when God did appear for his people, he did it not, by kindling martial ardour and resentment in manly bosoms, by putting the machine in motion in the usual way; but by creating a new thing in the earth; by endowing a woman with more than manly sagacity and resolution; by making a woman the life and soul of a sinking nation; that God himself might have the undivided praise. “The Lord made me have dominion over the mighty.” Is it not somewhat remarkable, that Deborah is only once described as the *wife* of Lapidoth? whereas Barak is repeatedly, both in history and in song, brought forward as the *son* of such a father. Is it to mark the base degeneracy of Israel at this period? all masculine virtue extinguished, and importance sunk; the only trace of the existence of the man, that he was the husband of such a woman? The repetition of this relation therefore may have been omitted, because it would have reflected reiterated disgrace upon the one, without adding much to, perhaps somewhat detracting from, the glory of the other. Whereas the blazoning of a son’s praise, instead of detracting from, is the most gratifying addition to, a father’s honour.

In the passage which follows, the prophetess goes with a poetical and prophetic enthusiasm into a detail of the distinguishing characters, of the several tribes of Israel, according to the part which they had taken, or neglected to take, in the cause of their country, at this trying crisis, which at present I shall simply quote, with a single remark; and then conclude. “And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheep-

sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? for the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.”* This is the third time that prophetic inspiration has presented us with the discriminating features of the sons of Israel, and of the tribes which descended from them, at three different periods, and in very different situations—Jacob on his dying bed, Moses on the wing to ascend Mount Nebo, and Deborah on the defeat of Sisera. The comparative view of Israel at these distant periods seems to me a subject of curious, pleasant and not useless disquisition, and I mean to devote the meditation of a particular evening to it.

The season † arrests us now, and demands a series of reflections suited to winter, and change, and decay, and death. The past rushes upon our memory and affections in an impetuous tide. The future still presents the same impenetrable curtain to our eager eyes. We go on fondly planning; and after a thousand proofs of vanity, return to treasure up for ourselves vexation of spirit. But we shall be relieved at length, and ere long land on that shore where fear and hope are no longer. If permitted to enter on the commencement of another year, we shall endeavour to improve that kind indulgence, by endeavouring to suggest reflections suited to the occasion. If permitted to advance to a second sabbath in a new year, we shall attempt to resume our accustomed pursuits: If to any, this be the last opportunity of the kind, the solemn farewell is now taken. And kind is that Providence which does not always let us know when we are saying “finally farewell;” which permits the bitterness of death to pass before we are sensible it is come. Woe, woe, woe, to the man who is punished with

the

* Verse 15—18.

† The last day of the year.

the foresight of the evil that is coming upon him. The exploits of a Deborah and a Barak now live only in the page of history ; their song is now to be found only in a few measured words, whose rythm is lost, whose sense is obscure, whose spirit is evaporated. But, my friends, we have this day been commemorating * an event which will never sink in oblivion, never spend its force, never lose its importance. We have this day been carrying on, keeping up the song, which the enraptured shepherds of Bethlehem caught two thousand years ago from a choir of the heavenly host, which is ever pleasing, ever new ; let us again resume it, and teach it to our children. “Glory, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Blessing and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.” Amen. Hallelujah !

* In the participation of the Lord's supper.

History of Deborah.

L E C T U R E VI.

JUDGES V. 20, 21.

They fought from heaven: the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon: O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

IN turning over the hallowed page of inspiration, and contemplating the various revolutions of human affairs which it unfolds, we seem transported to a superior region; we behold the earthly ball rolling round beneath our feet; we witness the birth, the progress, the dissolution of nations; we learn to correct the prejudices of education, and our narrowness of conception; we no longer ignorantly admire, nor superciliously despise our fellow-creatures; we adore the great Father and Lord of all, who "has of one blood formed all nations of men to inhabit upon the face of the whole earth," and "whose kingdom ruleth over all." From that elevation, we observe with humble acquiescence and holy joy, the designs of eternal Providence, maturing, and executing themselves; the individual passing away, but the species permanent; states and kingdoms changing their form, their spirit, their character; but human nature the same under every government, in every climate, under every sky. We behold regions, and periods, and nations rising in-

to notice, into eminence, into importance, by the talents, the virtues, the address of one man, of one woman; and returning again to obscurity and insignificance, through a defect of wisdom, of public spirit, of exertion.

The history of perhaps no nation exhibits such striking and instructive variety of character and event, as that of the posterity of Abraham. It is interesting in itself, and it is closely connected with the general interests of mankind. That people, through a dispersion of near two thousand years, have preserved an existence. Hated, despised and persecuted by all other nations, they remain unextirpated; a monument at once of the vengeance and of the care of Heaven: and unequivocal intimations; from the oracles of truth, hold them up as the objects of eternal Providence, in events of superior magnitude, yet to take place.

We have followed the successive changes which they underwent, with successive emotions of astonishment, exultation, indignation and sorrow. And we find them, at the defeat of Sisera and his host, in a situation highly critical and interesting. The prophetess Deborah in this celebrated song, goes into a comparative delineation of the respective merit and demerit of the several tribes; and thereby enables us to estimate the particular character of each, at different eras of their political existence. Jacob on his death-bed, and Moses on the wing to depart, in his valedictory address, present us with a similar opportunity; of which we are now to avail ourselves, in the two-fold view of extending a little our pittance of knowledge of human nature, and increasing our admiration of, and dependence upon, the Divine Providence.

In the dying benediction of Jacob, Judah, his fourth son, and the tribe which should spring from him, make a most conspicuous figure. The spirit of prophecy employs every image expressive of power, greatness, plenteousness and duration, to represent the future eminence and superiority of that tribe. In all the
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musters which were made of the people during the forty years wandering in the wilderness, and in the distribution of place and station according to divine appointment, in their encampments and removals, we still find Judah excelling in number and strength, and occupying the post of honour. But Moses takes leave of that tribe, with a very slight degree of notice; and in the song of Deborah their name is not so much as mentioned, nor is any allusion made to any exploit of theirs, in celebrating the triumph of that eventful day. Indeed the spirit and pre-eminence of Judah seems to have been gradually on the decline, from the days of Caleb, who conquered and dispossessed the sons of Anak; till they were revived, maintained and extended under David and Solomon. And, for several centuries, we find this prerogative tribe, which was destined to the lasting honours of royalty and rule, sleeping in oblivion and unimportance with the insignificant tribe of Simeon, which hardly ever achieved any action, or produced any personage worthy of being remembered. Of so much consequence is one man in a tribe, in a nation, in a world.

But the person and tribe the most distinguished in the prophecy of Jacob, and the blessing of Moses, are also the most distinguished in this triumphant anthem, Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob, raised by the destination and interposition of high Heaven, to power and precedency over his elder brother. To the exertions of this branch of the house of Joseph, in conjunction with those of Zebulun and Naphtali, the victory now by the blessing of God obtained over the armies of Canaan was chiefly to be ascribed. The spirit of their father Joshua, dead in so many other of the tribes of Israel, is alive in them, and happily is propitious to the common cause.

A severe censure of the conduct of the two tribes and a half beyond the river, is more than insinuated; it is brought directly forward. They are represented

as totally lost to all public spirit, and wrapt up in cold selfishness and indifference. Jordan was a kind of defence to them from the Canaanitish foe, and the cries of their oppressed brethren beyond the river are drowned in the more interesting bleatings of their own flocks. The same spirit of selfishness is represented as pervading the tribes who inhabited the sea coasts, Dan and Asher, and who, subsisting by trade, and absorbed by the love of gain, steeled their hearts to the feelings of sympathy and humanity. Drawing their supplies from the ocean, they forget they have a country; and under the influence of one domineering lust, all the better claims of the human heart, are suppressed and silenced. They pursue their merchandize, as the others attended to their sheep farms, regardless what their wretched countrymen meanwhile endured. "For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches."*

Such is the general view of the state of Israel at this period, which the words of Deborah convey. The import of many of the expressions which the prophetess employs to convey her feelings on this occasion, we pretend not to understand or to explain. Is it any wonder that in a poetical composition upwards of three thousand years old, in a language so little studied, referring to a history of which the outline only is drawn, there should be many things difficult to be understood? This much is evident upon the face of it, that Israel at that unhappy period exhibited a spectacle, bearing but too near a resemblance to what our own times† have seen dreadfully realized.

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* Verse 15—17.

† Great-Britain embroiled with France, Spain, Holland, America, and an armed neutrality.

A whole host of foes, a world in arms, combined to work the downfall of a sinful, devoted country. Internal discord, the extinction of public virtue, the dominion of bare-faced iniquity—but, the arm of the Lord is revealed, and salvation is wrought.

The picture which the poetess draws of the desperate state of Israelitish affairs is truly affecting; and is a happy preparation for a display of that unexpected and astonishing relief, which had just turned their sorrow into gladness. Judah lulled asleep in listless inaction, without exertion, without existence; a fourth part of the national force, on the other side Jordan, careless, tending their flocks; another fourth devoted to their private traffic; the sword of judgment in the feeble hand of a female; confederated kings threatening their utter extirpation; enemies numerous, “strong and lively, and hating them with a cruel hatred;” what power can dissipate the gathered storm? That power which says to the roaring ocean, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” “They fought from heaven: the stars in their courses fought against Sifera.”* Behold, all nature engaged in the cause of Israel’s God. The heavenly host first take up the quarrel; angels, legions of “angels that excel in strength:” “the least of whom could wield these elements.” The most powerful and splendid parts of inanimate nature feel the alarm, and join their influence; “the stars in their courses.” The earth quickly hears the heaven; the waters swell and rage; Kishon increased, most probably, by the recent dreadful tempest which had fallen from the air, rises suddenly upon them, and, like the Red Sea of old, swallows up, as in a moment, the enemy and the avenger.

There is a singular force and beauty in the repetition of the name of the river, with the addition of the epithet “ancient.” It is natural for men to value themselves on the antiquity of their country, and its

cities. It is the fond term which, in the honest pride and exultation of our hearts, we affix to our own land ; it seems to confer additional dignity and importance ; we associate in the idea, the valour and success of former times ; we feel our hearts attracted as to a common parent ; filial affection and brotherly love revive at the sound. In the enthusiasm of pious and poetical inspiration, she bestows animation and passion on the flood ; she represents it as rising in pride and joy, and overflowing its banks, to serve the cause of ancient friends, lying under the rod of insolence and oppression. And the period pathetically closes, with the prophetess, in a single word, apostrophizing herself as the honoured, happy instrument of co-operating with intelligent and animated nature in trampling pride and cruelty into the dust. “O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.”

I have already anticipated much of what I had to say, on the subject of the glowing eulogium which Deborah pronounces on the conduct of “Jael, the wife of Heber.” Permit me only to repeat, that in order to our fully adopting the sentiments of the Israelitish poetess, we must be acquainted with many circumstances of the case, which the conciseness of the sacred history enables us not to discover ; that there is a singularity in the whole conduct and occasion of the business, which forbids it to be drawn into a precedent, and pleaded in ordinary cases as an example or an excuse ; that we are to distinguish carefully betwixt the poetic ardour and enthusiasm of a female bard and patriot, and the calm, unimpassioned praise and censure of sound reason, or the deliberate approbation of the God of truth, mercy and justice. We know certainly that God cannot love nor commend perfidy, cruelty or revenge. But he justly may, and often does employ the outrageous passions of one great offender to punish those of another. And that through ignorance, prejudice, or wilful misconception, the wisest of men are
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very incompetent judges of the ways and works of the Almighty.

The winding up of this sacred poem, suggests the most satisfactory apology for the conduct of Jael, and accounts at the same time for the warmth of the strains in which Deborah celebrates that conduct. It is the horrid use which conquerors usually made of victory, to which I allude. The wretched females of the vanquished people fell a prey to the brutal lust of the victors. This was a case so common that "the mother of Sisera and her wise ladies" are represented as so lost to feminine delicacy and compassion as remorselessly to exult in the thought of portioning out the virgins of Israel to Sisera and his soldiers, as the mere instruments of a brutal pleasure; as an article of horrid booty for the lawless plunderer. "The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey, to every man a damsel or two? to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?"* Now, may we not suppose both Jael and Deborah animated with a holy indignation against the intended violators of their sex's modesty and honour, and with a holy joy, on the defeat of their ungracious purpose? May we not innocently suppose a mixture of virtuous female spirit inspiring what the one acted and the other sung? Our pity for the fallen warrior, and his untimely, inglorious fate, must of course abate, when we consider that a righteous and merciful Providence, by whatever means, shortened a life, and stopped a career, which threatened the life, the virtue, the happiness of thousands.

In personifying the character of Sisera's mother and her attendants, Deborah presents us with a happy imitation of a passage in the song of Moses on the triumphant passage of the Red Sea; where the poet insinuates himself, by a bold figure of eloquence, into the councils of Pharaoh, overhears their formidable resolutions, and in the close of the scene, rejoices in seeing their counsels, once so much dreaded, turned into foolishness, by the grace and power of Heaven. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters."* So here, Deborah brings in the matrons of Canaan as anticipating the fruits of victory, prematurely enjoying the triumph of the subjection of the Israelitish damsels to their own pride, and the pleasure of their warriors; and she inspires the gratitude and joy of her fair countrywomen, by gently hinting at the dreadful hazard which they had run. This too, of course, diminishes our concern for the cruel disappointment which the mother of Sisera endured, looking and looking, from her window, but still looking in vain for him who was never more to return; expecting and expecting that lingering chariot, which the ancient river Kishon had long ere now swept down its stream: flushed with hope, only to make calamity more bitter. And let that hope be forever blasted, which could be accomplished only by what humanity shudders to think of.

Having thus enjoyed self-gratulation, and called forth the grateful congratulations of her delivered country, and with heroic ardour trampled on disappointed lust, insolence and ambition, she now aims a nobler flight. The world and its transitory interests and employments disappear. The throne of God meets her enraptured eye. Private, personal, national animosity are no more: all, all is lost in the higher, unlimited,

* Exod. xv. 9, 10.

unlimited, unchanging interests of the divine glory. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." This is but a prophetic enunciation of what needs must be. After one revolution has obliterated another, one mortal interest swallowed another up—after the distinctions of Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, bond and free are lost and forgotten, the honours of the divine justice and mercy shall flourish and prevail. They that are afar from him, of whatever other name or description, shall perish; and the workers of iniquity shall be destroyed.

But the pious leader of the heavenly theme, as if unwilling to shut up her song with an idea so gloomy as the awful displeasure of the great God against his adversaries, relieves herself and us, by taking up the more encouraging view of the favour of Jehovah to his friends, and thus she fervently breathes out her soul; "But let them that love him, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

Next to the great Lord of nature himself, who is,

————— to us invisible,
Or dimly seen, in these his lowest works;

MILTON.

that glorious creature of his power, the sun, is the most striking and impressivè of all objects. And poets of every description have enriched and ennobled their compositions by allusions to the glorious orb of day, "of this great world the eye and soul," as the brightest inanimate image of Deity here below, the fountain of light, the dispenser of vital warmth, the parent of joy. The inspired sacred writers have likewise happily employed it to represent the most glorious animated image of God in our world, a wise and good man "going from strength to strength;" shining as a light in a dark place; silently, without expectation of return, without upbraiding, in an unceasing revolution of diffusing happiness; aiming at resemblance to his Creator

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tor by becoming a god to his fellow-creatures. It is thus that Deborah concludes her song; with a warm effusion of faith, and hope, and desire, that righteousness might abound and increase, that good men might be in succession raised up, each in his day a light to his country, to mankind; "going forth as the sun in his might," from lustre to still higher lustre, from usefulness to usefulness, without diminution and without end. By the same simple but powerful imagery the wise man represents the progress of true goodness; "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And Wisdom itself by a similar suggestion animates the zeal and supports the industry of those who were to teach his religion to the nations of the earth; "Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

To the whole is affixed an historical note, short indeed, but highly interesting and important; "And the land had rest forty years." This is the noblest eulogium of Deborah, the most honourable display of her talents and virtues. If there be feelings worthy of envy, they are those of this exalted woman, on reflecting that God had honoured her to restore liberty and peace to her country; and to establish such a system of administration of justice, of civil government, of military discipline, and of religious worship, as preserved the public tranquillity for forty years. How effectually may every individual serve the community! Of what importance, then, is every, the meanest individual! How lasting and how extensive is the influence of real worth! There is one way in which every man may be a public blessing, may become a favour of his country—by cultivating the private virtues of the man and the Christian.

I proceed to illustrate the female character, its amiableness, usefulness and importance, in persons and scenes

scenes of a very different complexion ; in the less glaring, but not less instructive history of RUTH, the Moabitess, and Naomi, her mother-in-law ; happy to escape the scenes of horror and blood which are the subject of the remainder of the history of the Israelitish judges.

History of Ruth.

LECTURE VII.

RUTH i. 1—5.

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-Judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons, and her husband.

THE perpetual vicissitude that prevails in the system of the universe, and in the conduct of Providence, is adapted to the nature, and conducive to the happiness of man. The succession of day and night, alternate labour and repose, the variations of the changing seasons lend to each, as it returns, its peculiar beauty and fitness. We are kept still looking forward, we are ever hovering on the wing of expectation, rising from

from attainment to attainment, pressing on to some future mark, pursuing some yet unpossessed prize. The hireling, supported by the prospect of receiving the evening's reward, cheerfully fulfils the work of the day. The husbandman, without regret, perceives the glory of summer passing away, because he lifts up his eyes and "beholds the fields white unto the harvest;" and he submits joyfully to the painful toil of autumn, in contemplation of the rest and comfort he shall enjoy, when these same fields shall be white with snow. It is hunger that gives a relish to food; it is pain that recommends ease. The value of abundance is known only to those who have suffered want, and we are little sensible what we owe to God for the blessing of health, till it is interrupted by sickness.

The very plagues which mortality is heir to, have undoubtedly their uses and their ends: and the sword may be as necessary to draw off the gross humours of the moral world, as storm and tempest are to disturb the mortal stagnation, and to chase away the poisonous vapours of the natural. Weak, short-sighted man is assuredly unqualified to decide concerning the ways and works of infinite wisdom; but weak, labouring, wretched man may surely repose unlimited confidence in infinite goodness.

During the dreadful times when there was no king in Israel, the whole head was so sick, the whole heart so faint, the whole mass so corrupted, that an ocean of blood must be drained off, before it can be restored to soundness again. Not only one rotten limb, but the whole body is in danger of perishing, and nothing but a painful operation can save it. The skilful, firm, but gentle hand of Providence takes up the instrument, cuts out the disease, and then tenderly binds up the bleeding wounds. Relieved from the distress of beholding brother lifting up the spear against brother, from hearing the shouts of the victor, and the groans of the dying, we retire to contemplate and to partake of the noiseless scenes of domestic life; to observe

serve the wholesome sorrows and guiltless joys of calmness and obscurity; to join in the triumphs of sensibility, and to solace in the soft effusions of nature; to “smile with the simple, and feed with the poor.”

The little history on which we are now entering, is one of those which every where, and at all seasons, must afford pleasure and instruction. It is a most interesting display of ordinary life, of simple manners, of good and honest hearts; of the power of friendship and the rewards of virtue. It forms an important link in the chain of providence, and the history of redemption. There is perhaps no story that has been wrought into so many different forms, transfused into so many different languages, accommodated to so many different situations, as the history of Ruth. It is felt, from the cottage up to the palace, by the rustic and the courtier, by the orphan gleaner in the field, and the king's daughter. The man of taste delights in it on account of the artless structure, elegant diction, and judicious arrangement of the tender tale. The friend of virtuous sensibility delights in it, for the gentle emotions which it excites, and the useful lessons which it inculcates. The pious soul rejoices in it from the enlarged, the instructive, the consolatory views of the divine providence which it unfolds. The inquiring and devout christian prizes it, as standing in connexion with the ground of his faith, and contributing to strengthen the evidence, and explain the nature of “those things wherein he has been instructed,” and on which he rests for salvation. Happy the man, who, possessing all these qualities, shall peruse and employ it as a corrector and guide to the imagination, as a support to the spirit, as a light to the understanding, a monitor to the conscience, a guard to the affections, and a faithful instructor to the heart.

The particular era of this story is not marked by the sacred penman, neither has he been directed to affix his name to his precious little work. In general
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it was not in the times of boisterous anarchy and wild uproar, that Boaz cut down his barley, and Ruth gleaned after the reapers. The fruits of the field were protected to the owner by lawful authority, and justice was administered by the elders in the gate.

If we consider that the life of man was now reduced to the common standard, that David was the fourth in order of succession from Boaz, and allow thirty or thirty-five years to be the medium standard of distance from one generation to another, the marriage of Boaz with Ruth will be thrown upon the short administration of his townsman Ibzan, the successor of Jephtha, of which we have only a brief account: "And after him, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel."*

Samuel is generally understood to have written both this book and the preceding, and thereby to have preserved the historical series of events from Joshua to himself, *almost* unbroken; and also the genealogical deduction of succession down to David, in whom the royal line of the house of Judah commenced, *altogether* uninterrupted. And while we behold Rahab the harlot, a woman of Jericho, and Ruth the Moabitess, not only admitted to the rank of mothers in Israel, but mothers of a race of kings, mothers in the line of "Messiah the Prince," we are admonished as Peter was long afterward, on a different occasion, "not to call that common or unclean which God hath purified."

Israel was now enjoying the blessing of good government, but the land is visited with a calamity which no sagacity of government could foresee or prevent, and no human power remove,—with famine. Bethlehem itself, the house of bread, so called from the fertility of the circumjacent fields, sinks under the pressure of this sore evil, and Elimelech, one of the chiefs of his tribe, is, like the most illustrious of his ancestors, driven to seek subsistence in a strange land.

Every land according to its place on the globe has its peculiar climate, soil, production. One is water-

* Judges xii. 8.

ed by the clouds of heaven, another by an inundation of the waters of the earth. Here the rain descends according to no fixed law, either as to season or quantity, there it is measured to a drop, and timed to a moment. On the regularity or uncertainty of these distributions by the hand of nature, or the intervention of Providence, depend the comfort, the very sustentation of human life ; on them depends all the variation of vegetable produce, as to plenty or scarcity, as to greatness, wholesomeness, pleasantness and their contraries. Hence the same country is one year as the garden of God, for beauty and abundance, and the next as the waste howling wilderness ; Canaan now flows with milk and honey, and gives bread to the full, and anon eats up its inhabitants. We hear an offended and a merciful God, by the mouth of the same prophet, reproving and threatening human thoughtlessness and ingratitude in relation to this interesting subject, in these glowing terms : “ She did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal ; therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax, given to cover her nakedness. And I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees, of which she said, These are my rewards which my lovers have given me : and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.” And thus relents the God of grace towards penitent returning children, “ I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel ; and I will sow her unto me in the earth, and I will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy.” Such is the mysterious scale of both mercy and judgment. Thus universal nature is combined in one firm league to oppress

oppress and confound God's adversary. Thus every creature, every event unites in preserving the existence, and promoting the happiness of his repenting, dutiful, obedient children.

Elimelech seeks and finds refuge in Moab, for "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;" and he has given commandment, "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab;" and that one word disarms in an instant national animosity, represses the rage of the lion, quenches the violence of fire. The fugitive of Bethlehem-Judah finds kindness and protection among inveterate enemies; Daniel sleeps secure amongst the fiercest of the savage tribes; and the three children of the captivity walk unhurt in the midst of the flaming furnace.

We see, at first, nothing but one of those instances which every day occur, of the sad reverses to which individuals, families, states are liable; the downfall and distress of an ancient and reputable house, struggling with penury, and forced into exile; but we soon discover, that the eternal eye is fixed on a nobler object, that the hand of omnipotence is preparing the materials and laying the foundation of a more magnificent fabric; that infinite wisdom is bringing low the royal house of Bethlehem, only to restore it with greater splendour.

We have before us at once the cure of pride and of despair. Behold, O man of an hundred ancestors, and of an hundred thousand acres, behold Elimelech, the son of Abraham, poor and despised; the head of the tribe of Judah, a stranger in a strange land, existing through sufferance, supplied through foreign bounty; and remember by what a brittle tenure thy privileges and possessions are held. Consider, child of adversity, whom no man knows, whom no one regards, consider yonder neglected, reduced, extinguished family, and behold from the ashes of the expiring phoenix, an immortal offspring arising, whose flight neither time nor space can limit, and feel thine own importance,

importance, and aim only at high things, and trust in omnipotence for the execution of its own eternal purpose.

In a country and among a people where names were not mere arbitrary sounds, but conveyed a meaning connected with character, with history, with expectation, those of Elimelech, "my God is king," and of his wife Naomi, "the pleasant one," from their peculiar import, must have a reference to certain circumstances in their history which are not recorded. The former might be dictated by the spirit of prophecy, and be significant, without the intention of them who imposed, or of him who bore it, of the future greatness to which the family, through the favour of Heaven, should arise, in the persons of David, of Solomon, and that long succession of princes which finally centered, and was absorbed, in the person of Christ, David's son; yet David's Lord. The particulars of his own story that have reached us, are too few and too general to admit of our discerning any reference or application of his name to his character, office or condition: but we know enough of the character and history of Naomi to justify the suitability of the appellation to her person, dispositions and final attainments.

In the disasters which befall, and the successes which attend certain families and individuals, we behold an apparent partiality of distribution that confounds and overwhelms us. Death enters into that house, passes from couch to couch, spares neither root nor branch; the insatiate fiend never says it is enough. Whatever that poor man attempts, be the scheme ever so judiciously formed, ever so diligently prosecuted, uniformly fails; the winds as they change, the stars in their courses fight against him. The very mistakes of his neighbour turn out prosperously, his sails are always full, his children multiply, his wealth increases, his mountain stands strong. Is God therefore unwise, capricious, partial or unjust? No, but we are blind, contracted,

contracted, presumptuous. We can discern, can comprehend, only here and there a little fragment of his works, we are gone, before the event has explained itself; it requires the capacity, the eternity of God himself to take in the mighty whole of his plan.

The house of Elimelech exhibits an affecting instance of the inequality we have been mentioning. The sad account of famine, of banishment, of degradation, of dependence, is at length closed with death. Disease of body, co-operating with distress of mind, probably the effect of it, shortens his days, and terminating his own worldly misery, dreadfully aggravates the woes of the unhappy survivors. Wretched mother, left to struggle alone with poverty, solitude, danger, and neglect: far from friends, encompassed with enemies, loaded with the charge of two fatherless children, not more the objects of affection, than the sources of anxiety and care! While Elimelech lived, penury was hardly felt as a burden; in exile thou wert always at home; secluded from society, the conversation of one still dispelled the gloom. Thy sons afforded only delight, because that delight was participated in, by him who had a common interest with you in them: but all is now changed, every load is accumulated seven-fold, every comfort is embittered, every prospect is clouded: the past presents nothing but regret; the future discloses nothing but despair.

She seems to have given up at this period all thoughts of returning to her native country, and, making a virtue of dire necessity, attempts to naturalize her family in the land of Moab, by allying her sons, through marriage, to the inhabitants of the country. The sense of the loss she has sustained gradually yields to the lenient hand of time, and to the sweet hope of seeing the house of her beloved husband built up, and his name revived in the persons of his grand-children. Alas, what is the hope of man! the flatterer has been only decoying her into a greater depth of woe; her two remaining props sink, one after another, into the dust;

dust ; all that the eyes desired is taken away with stroke upon stroke ; and, to fill up the measure of a mother's wretchedness, both her sons die childless, and hope expires with them. Now she is a widow indeed, and exhausted nature sinks under the pressure.

It is the opinion of many interpreters, that the premature death of the young men was a judgment from heaven to punish their illegal intermarriage with strange and idolatrous women. It becomes not man to judge ; and we know that God executeth only righteous judgment ; and in wrath still remembers mercy.

Thus in three short lines the sacred historian has delivered a tragic tale that comes home to the bosom of every one that possesses a spark of sensibility. It is a domestic story ; it represents scenes which may, which do happen every day. It admonishes every one in how many points he is vulnerable, how defenceless he is against the thunderbolts of Heaven. It awfully displays the evil of sin, and the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. If such be the temporal effects of his vengeance, how bitter must be the cup which his just displeasure mingles for incorrigible offenders, in a state of final retribution ! How pleasing to reflect that trials of this sort do not always flow from anger, that they are the wholesome severity of a father, that they aim at producing real good, that they in the issue really “ yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.” The darkness of night at length yields to the glorious orb of day, the shadow of death is turned into the morning, and the desolate is as she who hath an husband.

This makes way for the introduction of the heroine of this eventful history ; and we become interested in her from the very first moment. The Jewish writers, to heighten our respect for Ruth, perhaps from a pitiful desire to exalt their own ancestry, make her the daughter of a king of Moab, and as they are never timorous in making assertions, or forming conjectures
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on such occasions, they tell you her father was Eglon whom Ehud slew. It is hardly probable that a prince of that country would have given his daughter in marriage to a needy adventurer who had banished himself from his country through necessity. But of little importance is it, whether she were born a princess or no. Nature has adorned her with qualities such as are not always to be found in the courts of kings; qualities which best adorn high birth, and which ennoble obscurity and indigence; fidelity and attachment; a soul capable of fond respect for departed worth, and living virtue: magnanimity to sacrifice every thing the heart holds dear, to decency, friendship, and religion; magnanimity to encounter, without repining, painful toil and humiliating dependence, in fulfilling the duties of gratitude, humanity, and piety. How eloquent is she when she speaks, how great when she says nothing, how transcendently exalted in all she thinks, speaks and acts! With what divine art, shall I say, is she introduced in the sacred drama? After we have been melted into pity by the calamities of Naomi's family, and seen the widowed mourner sinking under wave upon wave; and the prospect of progeny, the last darling hope of an Israelitish matron, rudely torn from her, lo an angel in the form of a damsel of Moab, a mourner and a widow like herself, appears to comfort her, and makes her to know by sweet experience that he, that she, has not lost all, who has found a kind and faithful friend. What is the sound of the trumpet, and a long train of mute and splendid harbingers, compared to the simple preparation of unaffected nature! Let us wait her approach in silent expectation; and muse on what is past.

—Behold one generation of men goeth and another cometh; one planet arising as another sets, every human advantage balanced by its corresponding inconveniency, every loss compensated by a comfort that grows out of it.

—Behold the purpose of the Eternal Mind maintaining its ground amidst all the tossings and tempests of this troubled ocean, triumphing over opposition, serving and promoting itself by the wrath of man and the malice of hell, out of darkness rising into lustre, “out of weakness made strong,” by the energy of the great first cause, acquiring life, vigour and prosperity from the extinction of means, from the destruction and death of secondary causes.

Attend to the great leading object of divine revelation, to which all refer, to which all are subservient, in which all are absorbed and lost. I will make mention of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; of Moses and the prophets; of Boaz and Ruth. “I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me; behold Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia: this man was born there; and of Zion it shall be said, This man was born in her: and the Highest himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, That this man was born there.” May our names be written in the Lamb’s book of life, among the living in Jerusalem!

The introduction of these personages and events, one after another, were remote steps of the preparation of the gospel of peace. And every person now born into the church of Christ, and every event now taking place in the administration of human affairs, is a little space in the great scale of eternal Providence, and a gradual preparation for the final consummation of all things. Let “thy kingdom come,” O God! Let Satan’s kingdom be destroyed; let the kingdom of grace be advanced, ourselves and others brought into, and preserved in it, and let the kingdom of glory be hastened! Amen!

History of Ruth.

L E C T U R E VIII.

RUTH i. 14—18.

And they lift up their voice, and wept again : and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law ; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods : return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God : where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

THE calm, untumultuous, unglaring scenes of private life, afford less abundant matter for the pen of the historian, than intrigues of state, senatorial contention, or the tremendous operations of the tented field, but they supply the moralist and the teacher of religion with more pleasing; more ample, and more generally interesting topics of useful information, and salutary instruction. What princes are, what statesmen meditate, what heroes achieve, is rather an object of curiosi-

ty than of utility. They never can become examples to the bulk of mankind. It is when they have descended from their public eminence, when they have retired to their private and domestic station, when the potentate is lost in the man, that they become objects of attention, patterns for imitation, or beacons set up for admonition and caution.

For the same reason, the meek, the modest, the noiseless exhibition and exercise of female excellence, occupy a smaller space in the annals of human nature than the noisy, bustling, forensic pursuits and employments of the other sex. But when feminine worth is gently drawn out of the obscurity which it loves, and advantageously placed in the light which it naturally shuns, O how amiable, how irresistible, how attractive it is! A wise and good woman shines, by not seeking to shine; is most eloquent when she is silent, and obtains all her will, by yielding, by submission, by patience, by self-denial.

Scripture, as it excels in every thing, so it peculiarly excels in delineating and unfolding the female character, both in respect of the quantity exhibited, and of the delicacy, force and effect of the design. We have already seen this exemplified, in a variety of instances in the dignified conjugal attachment and respect, in the matron-like, conscious, impatient superiority of Sarah—in the maternal partiality, eagerness and address of Rebekah—in the jealous discontent and impatience of Rachel—in the winning condescension, and the melting commiseration of Pharaoh's daughter—in the patriotic ardour, the prophetic elevation, the magisterial dignity of Deborah, the wife of Lapidath—in the unrelenting firmness, and the daring, enterprising spirit of Jael, the wife of Heber.

Female vice and worthlessness are delineated on the sacred page with equal skill, truth and justice, from the insolence of Hagar, and the treachery of Deliah, down to the implacable vengeance of Herodias, and the insatiate cruelty of her accursed daughter.

Three more female portraits are now presented for our inspection, and our improvement; all expressive of characters essentially different, all possessing features of striking resemblance, all exhibiting qualities which create and keep alive an interest, all copies from nature, all pourtrayed by the hand of him who knows what is in man.

We have witnessed the wretchedness and sympathized in the sorrows of Naomi, *my pleasant one*, reduced from rank and fulness to obscurity and indigence, banished from her country and friends, a stranger in a strange land, robbed of her husband, bereaved of her children; having no protector save Heaven, no hope or refuge but in the peaceful grave. Behold the thrice widowed mourner bowing the head, and hiding the face in silent grief. She is dumb, she opens not her mouth, because the Lord hath done it. The miserable partners of her woe only increase and embitter it. Two young women, like herself widows, childless, comfortless; fondly attached to her, and tenderly beloved by her, because fondly attached to the memory of their husbands; but their mutual affection rendered a punishment, not a pleasure, by the pressure of poverty and the bitterness of neglect. At length she is roused from the stupefaction of grief by tidings from her country, from her dear native city, and a ray of hope dispels the gloom of her soul. She "hears in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread."

In the wisdom and goodness of Providence, there is a healing balm provided for every wound. The lenient hand of time soothes the troubled soul to peace; the agitation of the mind at last wearies it out, and lulls it asleep, and its weakness becomes its strength. Though in misery we cleave to the love of life, and having lost our comforts one after another, we are still enabled to look forward with fond expectation to a new source of joy. And when all temporal hope is extinguished, and reluctantly given up, the spirit as-

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ferts its own immortality, and rests in hope beyond the grave. Naomi is reduced to a melancholy, mortifying alternative; of continuing a poor, deserted exile in the land of Moab, or of returning to Bethlehem-Judah, stripped of all her wealth, all her glory; to be an object, at best, of pity, perhaps of contempt. On this however she resolves, flattering herself that change of place and change of objects may alleviate her distresses.

The two young Moabiteffes, in uniting themselves to men of Israel, had renounced their own kindred and country, perhaps their native gods; and therefore listen with joy to the proposal of their mother-in-law, to return to Canaan. It is the more pleasing to observe this union of sentiment and affection, that the relation in question is seldom found favourable to cordiality and harmony. It furnishes a presumptive proof of the goodness of all the three, and they had indeed a most mournful bond of union among themselves—common loss, common misery; and the heart seems to have felt and acknowledged the ties which alliance had formed and the hand of death had rivetted.

Behold then the mother and her daughters turning their back on the painfully pleasing scenes of joys and sorrows past, unattended, unprotected, unbefriended, disregarded, as sad a retinue as ever wandered from place to place. They are hardly in motion from their place, when Naomi, penetrated with a lively sense of gratitude for friendship so generous and disinterested, overwhelmed with the prospect of the still greater misery in which these dutiful young women were about to involve themselves, from their love to her, and unwilling to be outdone in kindness, earnestly entreats them to return home again, urging upon them every consideration that reason, that affection, that prudence could suggest, to induce them to separate from a wretch so friendless and forlorn, so helpless, so hopeless as herself. To suffer alone is now all the consolation she either expects or seems to wish; the destitute condition
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of these sisters in affliction, is now her heaviest burthen. Indeed the situation of these three female pilgrims has in it something wonderfully pathetic and interesting. There they are upon the road, on foot, with all the weakness, ignorance, timidity, uncertainty and irresolution of their sex; not knowing which way to bend their course, exposed to the craft, violence or insult of every one they met; sinking under the recollection of what they had endured, shrinking from the apprehension of what might yet be before them: attempting to comfort each other, and, in that, every one seeking some slender consolation for herself. Think on the failure of bread; on the failure of money, on the approaches of night, on the natural terrors and dangers of darkness, on the savageness of wild beasts, and the more formidable savageness of wicked men. Think on the unkindness and indifference of an unfeeling world, and the darker frowns of angry Heaven. We are disposed to weep while we reflect on Jacob, a fugitive from his father's house, composing his head to rest upon a pillar of stone, under the canopy of the open sky; at reflecting on Joseph, torn from his father's embrace, sold into slavery, cast into a dungeon; but I find here something infinitely more deplorable. They were men, flushed with youthful spirits, with youthful hope: the vigour of their minds had not been broken down by the iron hand of affliction, their prospects were enlivened with the promises and visions of the Almighty; but these unhappy wanderers have drunk deep of the cup of adversity; their society is worse than solitude, despair hangs over all their future prospects. Stand still and shed the tear of compassion over them, ye daughters of affluence, prosperity and ease, who start at a shadow, who scream at the sight of a harmless mouse, who tremble at the rustling of a leaf shaken by the wind; ye who never knew the heart of a stranger, the keen biting of the wind of heaven, the stern aspect of hunger, the furlly blow, or scornful look of pride and cruelty. Or rather,

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er, weep over them, ye whose wounds are still bleeding, to whom wearisome days and nights have been appointed, who by the experience of misery, have learned to pity and to succour the miserable. May the God of mercy, the friend of the orphan, the judge of the widow, the refuge of the distressed, have mercy upon them, and conduct them in safety to their desired haven.

Which shall we most admire, the generosity and disinterestedness of the mother, or the steadiness, spirit and resolution of the daughters? How pleasurable is strife of a certain kind, the strife of good will, of magnanimity, of gratitude, of piety, of self-denial! The language, the sentiments, are the language and sentiments of nature, they flow from the heart, and reach the heart. "And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you, in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them. And they lift up their voice and wept." *

The good woman herself admits that enough of respect has been paid to filial and conjugal tenderness; she wishes and prays, as a recompense for their kindness to the living, and devotedness to the memory of the dead, more lasting and more auspicious connexions with husbands of their own country. She proposes not, recommends not the affected, constrained, involuntary retirement and sequestration of prudish, squeamish virtue; and they, on their part, assume no unnatural airs of immortal grief; they form no flimsy suspicious vows of undeviating, unalterable attachment; make no clamorous, unmeaning, deceptive protestation of love extinguished, and never to be rekindled, the pitiful artifice of little minds to flatter themselves, and catch the admiration of others. How much more emphatical the silent, unprotesting reply

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* Verse 8, 9.

of Orpah and Ruth! — “She kissed them; and they lift up their voice and wept.” What charming eloquence is heard, is seen, is felt in those tears! Have these lovely damsels less regard for their departed lords, are they more eager to form new alliances, that they say nothing? I cannot believe it. Noisy grief is quickly over, soon spends itself. Sincerity seldom calls in the aid of exclamation, vehemence and vows; but dubious, staggering fidelity is glad to support itself with the parade of woe, and the pomp of declamation.

Their persevering, determined, unprotesting friendship but endears them the more to their venerable parent, and inclines her the more powerfully to resist their inclination, and prevent the sacrifice which they were disposed to make; and again she has recourse to more earnest and tender exhortation, resolved to offer up a noble sacrifice to maternal tenderness in her turn. “And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have a husband also to-night, and should also bear sons; would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters: for it grieveth me much for your sakes, that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.”*

What sweet touches of unsophisticated nature press upon the heart, in perusing this address! beyond the pomp and power of art to reach. Who is not melted at hearing the undissembled wailings of a good and honest mind, mourning for others, not itself; calmly surrendering its own interest in the joys of life, but anxiously desirous to procure and preserve them for those whom she loved as her own soul; nobly resigning that cordial of cordials, virtuous friendship, when it could not be enjoyed but to the detriment of those
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* Verse 11—13.

who felt and expressed it; composed to the prospect and suffering of solitary anguish, provided her amiable children were restored to the rank, affluence and comfort which they so well deserved. How poor and contemptible are the contentions for precedency and pre-eminence, the emulation of fortune and dress, the rage of admiration and conquest, compared to this! How pleasant is it to see an humble fortune dignified and supported by generosity and greatness of mind!

The touchstone is now applied to the affection of the two sisters, and their characters and merits are finally disclosed. Orpah suffers herself to be persuaded; with regret we behold her resolution overcome; we behold her separating from her mother-in-law, with the valedictory kiss of peace, and returning to her country and her gods; and we hear of her no more. But Ruth cleaves to her new choice, unmoved by the example of her sister, or the entreaties of her mother, she persists in her purpose; the desertion of Orpah only knits her heart the faster to her adopted parent, and in words far sweeter than the nightingale's song, she breathes out her unalterable resolution to live and to die with her. How could Naomi find in her heart to make another attempt to shake off so lovely a companion? How delighted must she have been, in yielding the triumph of kindness to a pleader so irresistible! "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." *

The mother is every way outdone, overcome, and contends no longer—to persist farther had been cruelty, not friendship; and thus mutual sympathy and deliberate choice have, under the direction of all-ruling Providence, formed an union dearer than the ties of interest,

* Verse 16, 17.

interest, or even the bonds of nature know : and thus the same breath which extinguishes the fainter spark, blows up the stronger into a purer, brighter flame ; and thus the God who has all hearts and all events in his hand, ever rears a refuge for the miserable, provides a remedy against despair, and extracts a precious essence from calamity, which operates its own cure. “ When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.”* And thus Ruth stands without an equal, without a rival. And how has she gained the glorious superiority over a sister ? By a lofty tone and an overbearing spirit, by the poisoned whisper, and the dark insinuation ; by smoothness of forehead and malignity of heart ? No, but by perseverance in well-doing, and adherence to rectitude ; by modest firmness, and heart-affecting simplicity ; by undissembled affection and unaffected piety. O goodness, how pure, how sincere, how satisfactory are the honours which crown thy head, and dilate thy heart !

It is impossible to tire in contemplating an object so transcendently excellent. In that fair form all the feminine virtues and graces love to reside. We have pointed out some of them ; let us meditate for a moment, on that which is the crown and glory of all the rest. Estimable for her conjugal fidelity, and filial attachment ; great in her voluntary renunciation of the world, and patient submission to poverty, hardship, and contempt ; how superlatively great, how supremely estimable does she appear, arrayed in the robe of unfeigned piety, and triumphant faith in God ! The world may perhaps condemn her for preferring the society, country, and prospects of so poor a woman as Naomi to the friendship of her own kindred, the possessions of her native home, the allurements of present ease and comfort. Had she conferred with flesh and blood, how very different had the decision been ! But the same divine principle which caused Moses to “ re-
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* Verse 18.

fuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ;" and which taught him " to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," determined this amiable creature to withdraw from the companions of her youth, the protection of her father's house, and the religious worship of her ancestors ; and to follow a destitute forlorn widow from country to country, to cast her subsistence upon the care of Providence, and to look for her reward beyond the grave.

Observe these distinct qualities of the religious principle by which she was actuated.

I. It was *deliberate*, the result of reflection, comparison and choice, not the prejudice of education, the determination of self-interest, nor the momentary effect of levity and caprice. Her prejudices, her partialities, her worldly interests were all clearly on the other side. The idolatrous rites of Moab were fascinating to a young mind, not yet beyond a taste for pleasure ; the aspect of the religion of Canaan was rather ungainly and forbidding, and to adopt it implied the renunciation of all that the heart naturally holds dear. When she therefore thus solemnly affirms, " Your God shall be my God," it is in effect saying, " I have counted the cost, I know whom I have believed. I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. I have subscribed with my hand to the God of Jacob. Blessed be the day that I came into connexion with an Israelitish family. It has indeed cost me many tears, pierced through my heart with many sorrows, it is banishing me from my dear native clime, from the endearments of parental affection, from ease, honour and abundance, driving me among strangers, exposing me to struggle with uncertainty, anxiety, necessity, neglect and scorn ; but my resolution is fixed : none of these things move me ; every sacrifice, every loss, every disgrace is infinitely more than compensated by having Israel's God for my God." Which leads to observe a

Second feature of Ruth's religious character; was it *steady* and *persevering*. It might at first have been mere respect for the opinions and practice of the husband of her youth; the mere decency that suited an adopted daughter of Israel; but this had long ceased to be a motive; had it amounted but to this, it had been buried in the grave of her departed lord; but what was at first complaisance and decency, grows up into inquiry, inquiry produces hesitation, and more serious inquiry, this improves into conviction, and conviction is followed by a determination not to be moved or shaken, and she continues stedfast to the end. Her constancy, it must be allowed, was put to severe trials. Orpah has gone back, Naomi carries her expostulation up to importunity, I had almost said, to downright violence; the difficulties and hardships of the way were increasing not diminishing upon her. Had not "the heart been established by grace," so many, such accumulated discouragements, must have subdued the ardour of her spirit, and sent her back after her sister; but she has put her hand to the plough, and must not look back. Observe, she does not attempt to reason, does not oppose argument to argument, but, "being fully persuaded in her own mind," adheres firmly to her point, and argues irresistibly by not arguing at all, and prevails by entreaty. See that your cause be good, my fair friend, persist in it, prosecute it thus, and be assured of the victory.

III. Observe finally, as Ruth's religious principle was deliberate, was steady and persevering, so it was *lively*, *efficacious*, *practical*. We hear nothing of the prattle of piety, nothing of the violence of a young and a female profelyte, no question of doubtful disputation introduced, about places and modes of worship, about Jerusalem and this mountain, nothing of the religion that floats merely in the head, and bubbles upon the tongue; no, her religion is seen, not heard, it "works by love, it purifies the heart, it overcomes the world." It offers up a grand sacrifice unto God,
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the body and spirit, affection and substance, youth, beauty, parentage, the pleasures and the pride of life. Let me see a single instance of this sort, and I will believe the convert more in earnest, than by exhibiting all the wordy zeal of a thousand polemics.

Indeed it is by action that this truly excellent woman expresses all her inward feelings. Her affection to her husband is not heard in loud lamentation over his tomb, but in cleaving to all that remained of him, his mother, his people, his country and his God. Her affection to his mother is not expressed in the set phrase of condolence and compliment; but in adhering to her when all had forsaken her, in labouring for her subsistence, in submitting to her counsel: and her reverence for his God is manifested not merely in adopting the language and observing the rites of Canaan, but in relinquishing forever, and with abhorrence, the gods beyond the flood, and every thing connected with their abominable rites.

Every circumstance of the case and character under review, administers plain and important instruction. And, being a case in ordinary life, Ruth stands forth a pattern and instructor to young persons, in particular, whose situation may resemble her own.

Young woman, you may have married into a strange family. You have, of course, adopted the kindred, the pursuits, the friendships, and to a certain degree, the religion of your husband. It is your duty, and you will find it your interest, to let him and his connexions know, from your general deportment, that you are satisfied with the choice which you have made. Learn to give up your own prejudices in favour of country, of parentage, of customs, of opinions. Unless where the sacred rights of conscience are concerned, deem no sacrifice too great for the maintenance or restoration of domestic peace: As far as lieth in you, "whither he goeth, go thou; and lodge where he lodgeth; let his people be thy people, and his God thy God." You will thereby preserve and secure his affection;

affection; you will harmonize family interests and intimacies, instead of disturbing them: if yours be the better religion, this is the way to bring over to it the man of no religion, or of an erroneous one; and if it be the worse, your relinquishing it, on conviction, will be at once a token of conjugal affection, a mark of good understanding, and a reasonable service toward God.

Have you had, in early life, the calamity of becoming a widow? It is a distressing, a delicate situation. It calls for every maxim of prudence, every counsel of friendship, every caution of experience, every support of piety. If you are a mourner indeed, you are already guarded against affectation; you will find rational and certain relief in attending to, and performing the duties of your station. You will neither seek a hasty cure of sorrow by precipitately plunging into the world, nor attempt an unnatural prolongation of it by affected retirement and sequestration. The tongue will utter no rash vows; the pang of separation will dictate no insnaring resolutions; the will of Providence will be respected, obeyed, followed. Respect for the dead is best expressed by dutifulness to the living.

You have before you an useful example of firmness blended with female softness, of resolution heightened and adorned by sensibility. Lately, like Ruth, you had one who thought and acted for you; one who joyfully endured the burden and heat of the day, that your body and mind might enjoy repose. But now necessity is laid upon you. You must awake and arise to think and act for yourself. And here, as in every case, Nature has annexed the recompense to the duty. The mental powers are enfeebled, and at length destroyed, by disuse and inaction. Exertion invigorates the mind, and composes by directing it. The listlessness of indolence undermines health; the activity of useful employment is the simplest and most infallible medicine for bodily complaints. And the most direct
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road to an honourable and happy second connexion, probably, is, to guard carefully against all vehement expression of either inclination or aversion, on the subject.

All these, however, are merely lessons of prudence, adapted to the life that now is ; and, however important in themselves, unless aided and supported by a higher principle, will constitute, at most, the decent kinswoman, or the respectable sufferer. In Ruth we have this higher principle likewise beautifully exemplified—rational, modest, unaffected piety. True religion fits well on persons of either sex, and in all situations ; but its aspect is peculiarly amiable in a female form, and in particular situations. Youth, beauty and sorrow united, present a most interesting object—a daughter weeping at a parent's tomb ; a mother mourning over “the babe that milked her,” and “refusing to be comforted ;” a widow embracing the urn which contains the ashes of the husband of her youth—in all their affliction we are afflicted, we cannot refrain from mingling our tears with theirs. Let religion be infused into these lovely forms, and mark how the interest rises, how the frame is embellished, how the deportment is ennobled ! The eye of that dutiful child is turned upward, her heart is delivered from oppression, her trembling lips pronounce, “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.” “My Father who art in Heaven !” The mother withdraws from the breathless clay, reconciled to the stroke which bereaved her, “goes her way, and eats bread, and her countenance is no more sad,” for her Maker has said to her, Why weepest thou ? and why eatest thou not ? and why is thy heart grieved ? Am not I better to thee than ten sons ?—The widowed mourner “gives her mortal interest up ; and makes her God her all.”

Young woman, whatever thy condition may be ; whether thou art in thy father's house, or married to an husband ; at home, or in a strange land ; in society,

ty, or solitude ; followed or neglected ; be this thy monitor, this thy guide, this thy refuge—" The love of God shed abroad in thy heart ;" " the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom ;" " the peace of God which passeth all understanding." However easy, gentle, flexible, complying, in other respects, where your religious principles, where the testimony of a good conscience, where your duty to your Creator are concerned, be firm and resolute, " be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Thus shall youth be guarded, and beauty adorned ; thus shall society be sweetened, and solitude cheered ; thus shall prosperity be sanctified, and adversity soothed ; thus shall life, even to old age and decay, be rendered useful and respectable ; and thus shall death and the grave be stripped of all that is terrible in them.

History of Ruth.

L E C T U R E IX.

RUTH i. 19—22.

So they went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them; and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, which returned out of the country of Moab. And they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.

OF the calamities to which human life is exposed, a few only are to be accounted real evils: the rest are imaginary and fantastical. Want of health is real woe; but what proportion do the hours of pain and sickness bear to the years of ease and comfort and joy? Want of bread is real distress, but it is very seldom the work of nature, and therefore ought not, in justice, to be introduced into the list of the unavoidable ills which flesh is heir to. The loss of friends is a sore evil, but even wounds from this sharp-pointed weapon are closed at length, by the gentle hand of time, and the tender consolations of religion.

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Whence then the unceasing, the universal murmurings of discontent, of desire, of impatience? Men fix their standard of felicity too high; and all they have attained goes for nothing, because one darling object is still out of reach; or they groan and sigh under the weight of some petty disaster, which scarce deserves the name; while ten thousand substantial blessings are daily falling on their heads unnoticed, unacknowledged, unenjoyed. Compare, O man, thy possessions with thy privations, compare thy comforts with thy deserts, compare thy condition with thy neighbour's, consider how far, how very far thy state is on this side *worst*, and learn to give God thanks. Repine not that some wants are unsupplied, that some griefs are endured, that some designs have been frustrated, while so many unmerited good things are left, while hope remains, while there is recourse to Heaven. Behold these two forlorn wanderers, widowed, friendless, destitute, and cease from thy complaints, and, stretch out thy hand to succour the miserable.

In the glorious strife of affection, Ruth has nobly prevailed. Impelled by the fond recollection of endearments past, and now no more—prompted by filial duty and tenderness to the mother of her choice, attracted, animated, upheld by the powers and prospects of religion, she composedly yields up her worldly all, takes up her cross, and bears it patiently along from Moab to Bethlehem-Judah. The history is silent on the subject of their journey. It is easy to conceive the anxieties, the terrors, the fatigues, the sufferings of female travellers, on a route of at least a hundred and twenty miles across the Arnon, across the Jordan, over mountains, through solitudes, without a protector, without a guide, without money. But that God who is the friend of the destitute, and the refuge of the miserable, that God who was preparing for them infinitely more than they could ask, wish or think, guides and guards them by the way, and brings them at length to their desired resting place.

These are not the only female pilgrims whom the sacred page has presented to our view, advancing by slow and painful stages to Bethlehem of Judah. Upwards of thirteen hundred years after this period we behold a still more illustrious traveller, and in circumstances still more delicate, on the road from Nazareth of Galilee, to her native city; but not to take possession of the inheritance of her fathers, not to repose in the lap of ease and indulgence, not to deposit the anxieties of approaching child-birth in the bosom of a fond and sympathizing parent; but to know the heart of a stranger, to feel the bitterness of unkindness and neglect; so friendless that not a door would open to receive her, so poor that she cannot purchase the accommodations of an inn, overtaken by nature's inevitable hour, "she brings forth her first-born son in a stable, and lays him in the manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." But through such humiliating circumstances of meanness and poverty, what a display of glory and magnificence was the arm of Jehovah preparing! What an important station do the simple annals of these poor women hold in the history of mankind! What celebrity, in the eyes of all nations, have they conferred on Bethlehem, on their country! How a thousand years shrink into a point, before that God who "sees the end from the beginning!" How the purposes of Heaven are accomplished to one iota, to one tittle! How places and times are determined of Him who saith, as one having authority, "My counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure."

One of the advantages, and not the least, of travelling abroad, is the joy which the thought of returning home inspires; but this is a consolation which Naomi's return is not permitted to enjoy. She brings back no treasures to purchase attention, to command respect, to excite envy. She is accompanied with no husband, no son, to maintain her cause, or cheer her solitude. She brings back nothing but emptiness, de-
reliction

reliction and tears. A great part of her ancient acquaintance and friends are gone, as well as her own family. Those who remain hardly know her again, so much are her looks impaired and disfigured with grief. A new generation has arisen, to whom she is an utter stranger, and who are utter strangers to her. But in a little city, a trifling event makes a great noise. The curiosity of the whole town is excited by the appearance of these two insignificant fugitives; and various we may suppose were the inquiries set on foot, the conjectures formed, the remarks made, the censures passed, on their account. This is the never-failing inconveniency of inconsiderable places. Where there is abundance of idleness, abundance of ill-nature, every man is a spy upon his neighbour, every one is at leisure to attend to the affairs of another, because he is but half occupied by his own. We have here enough of inquiry, enough of wonder, but not a single word of compassion, of kindness, of hospitality; and Naomi might have gone without a roof to shelter her head, or a morsel of bread to sustain sinking nature, but for the industry and attachment of her amiable daughter-in-law!

Base, unfeeling world, that can feast itself on the orphan's tears and the widow's sorrow! See, there they are, every one from his own business, or rather his own idleness, to stare and talk a wretched woman out of countenance; the whisper goes round, the finger points, the scandal of ten years standing is revived, and a new colouring is given to it. Affected pity and real indifference wound the heart which God himself has just bruised; whose husband and children he has taken to himself. The wretched mourner seems to feel it; she bursts into an agony of grief, and thus vents the bitterness of her soul, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty

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mighty hath afflicted me?"* What simple, but what forcible language the heart speaks! She dwells on the minute circumstances of her case, takes up her own name as a theme of woe, changes the fond appellation of parental affection, of parental hope, Naomi, on which Providence had poured out the wormwood and gall of disappointment, into one better adapted to her tragical history. The past presents nothing but happinesses passed away as a shadow; rank, and opulence, and importance gone, gone, never to return. The future spreads a gloom unirradiated by a single gleam of hope. She apprehends no change of things, but the oppressive change from evil to worse.

But yet her misery admits of alleviation. It comes from God, she sees the hand of a Father in her affliction, she kisses the rod, and commands the soul to peace. To endure distress the fruit of our own folly, to suffer from the pride, cruelty and carelessness of a man like ourselves, is grievous, is unsupportable, it drinks up our spirits. But the evil that comes immediately from God has its own antidote blended into its substance; we drink the poison and the medicine from the same chalice, and at the same instant; the one destroys the effect of the other; their joint operation is salutary, is life-giving, not deadly. Was that the voice of God which I heard? Spake it not in thunder? Said it not, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering." It is well; it was the voice of God, and that is enough. I will offer up the sacrifice, I will surrender my dearest delight, I cannot tell how the promise is to be accomplished, consistently with my obedience and submission, but the command and the promise proceed from the same lips; I leave all to him.

From all that we see, Naomi had slender motives, and poor encouragement, to return to her own country; we cannot tell what determined her resolution; it might be a little fit of female impatience, occasioned by

* Verse 20, 21.

by some piece of Moabitish insolence or unkindness ; it might be the mere restlessness of a mind ill at ease, grasping at the shadow of felicity merely from change of place ; it might be the ardent desire of home, of the scenes of childish simplicity, innocence and joy, which in certain circumstances all men feel, and by which the conduct of all is, to a certain degree, regulated. Whatever it were it came from above, it was over-ruled of infinite wisdom, it was, unknown to itself, acting in subserviency to a most important event : and it is thus, that little, unnoticed, unknown powers, put the great machine in motion, produce effects that astonish, and delight, and bless mankind.

The same all-ruling Providence is conspicuous in determining the *season* of Naomi's return. On this hinged all the mighty consequences of Ruth's acquaintance and connexion with Boaz—the birth of kings, the transmission of empire, the accomplishment of ancient prophecy, the hopes of the human race. Had this apparently un consequential journey been accelerated, been retarded, a month, a week, a single day, the parties might never have met. Contingent to men, it was foreseen, fixt, disposed and matured by Him, “ who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.”

Every one observes and records the great incidents of his life. But would you, O man, have rational pleasure, blended with useful instruction, attend to little things, trace matters of highest moment up to their source ; and behold thy fate stand quivering on a needle's point ; and a colour given to thy whole future life, thy eternal state fixed, by a reed shaken with the wind, by an accidental concurrence which thou wert neither seeking nor avoiding ; and rejoice to think that all things are under the direction of unerring wisdom, of all-subduing mercy ; are “ working together for good.”

Does this teach a lesson of levity and inconsideration ? Darest thou to trifle with thy everlasting concerns

cerns because there is a God who ruleth and judgeth in the earth, who doth all things after the counsel of his own will? God forbid. Presumptuously to lead the decrees of Providence, impiously to resist them, or timidly to draw back, are equally offensive to a righteous, a holy and wise God.

We have seen the unhappy Naomi stripped of almost every earthly good; husband, children, friends, means, country, comfort; it is the dark midnight hour with her. No, there is one little lamp left burning, to dissipate the gloom, to prevent despair—the sacred flame of virtuous friendship. No, the sun of righteousness is hastening to the brightness of his arising. The name after all was propitious and prophetic; God brings it about in his own way, and it is “wondrous in our eyes.”

The continuation of this story will carry us on to the contemplation of scenes of rural simplicity, for the enjoyment of which, grandeur might well relinquish its pride, and pomp its vanity and vexation of spirit, and rejoice in the exchange. Let us meanwhile pause and reflect on the history of Naomi as administering useful instruction.

1st. As an admonition never to despair. God frequently brings his people to that mournful spectacle, hope expiring, that he may have the undivided honour of reviving it again, and may be acknowledged as the one pure and perennial fountain of light and life and joy. The condition of Jacob, of Joseph, of Naomi, all preach one and the same doctrine; all proclaim that the time of man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.

2dly. Let us call, let us reckon nothing mean or contemptible which God employs, or may be pleased to employ, in his service. The notice of the King of kings impresses dignity and importance, confers true nobility on the low-born child, the beggar, the outcast, the slave. On them all he has stamped his own image; and their present and every future condition

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is the work of his providence. “It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish:” and if destined to salvation, to what worldly distinction may they not aspire, may they not arrive? Carefully mark the progress of children: study the bent of their dispositions, of their talents: endeavour to put them in the train which nature and Providence seem to have pointed out: attend to what constitutes their real consequence in life, and leave the issue to Him who governs all events.

3dly. Observe how the great Ruler of the universe contrasts and connects great things with small, that he may humble the pride of man, and expose the nothingness of the glory of this world. That forlorn gleaner, and Boaz the wealthy; the exile from Moab, and the resident possessor of the fertile plains of Bethlehem-Judah, seem wonderfully remote from each other. Their condition is as opposite as human life can well present: but in the eye of Heaven they are already one. She is but a single step from being lady of the harvest which she gleans, “an help meet” for its lord, and the sovereign mistress of those servants at whose aspect she now trembles, the meanest of whom she now looks up to as her superior. Childless and a widow, her family, her own children are but three steps from a throne—the throne of Judah and Israel; and in the purpose of the Eternal, “the fulness of time” is hastening to exhibit to an astonished world, in the person of this woman’s seed, “that Prince of peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will perform this.” The period is approaching, men and brethren, when Bethlehem-Judah shall display greater wonders, contrasts more confounding than these.

these. The time is at hand, when another forlorn damsel of the same race, and her outcast babe shall appear in contrast with all that is stupendous, striking, formidable, venerable in heaven and earth, shall rise above all, give laws to all, eclipse all. Behold that "babe lying in a manger, in a stable, because there is no room for him in the inn," controlling the counsels of Augustus, the mighty master of the world; behold him drawing princes and wise men from the east, with treasures of gold, and frankincense and myrrh, to his feet. Behold the face of heaven irradiated, enriched with a new star, to mark the way which led to his cradle: while a multitude of the heavenly host announce in rapturous strains the birth of the lowly infant. Behold "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," "of no reputation;" "in the form of a servant;" "numbered with transgressors;" "obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Behold him "highly exalted;" "leading captivity captive;" "all the angels of God worshipping him;" invested with "a name that is above every name;" "crowned with glory and honour;" "coming in the clouds of heaven!" To him let my knee bow, and my tongue confess. "His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen."*

4thly. In the adoption of Ruth into the church of God, and "the commonwealth of Israel," we have another dawning ray of hope arising upon the Gentile nations. The tide is beginning imperceptibly to rise and swell, which shall at length become an overflowing ocean. "In that seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." That stranger shall be employ-
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* Psal. lxxii. 17—19.

ed in bringing forward the mighty plan to maturity. "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God." "They shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Verily God is no respecter of persons.

History of Ruth.

L E C T U R E X.

RUTH ii. 1—3.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

PROVIDENCE has graciously annexed to honest industry, both respectability and happiness. The purest and most delicious enjoyment that human life admits of, perhaps, is, when a man sits down with those whom he loves, to the temperate indulgence of that refreshment and repose which he has just earned and sweetened with his labour. The greatest, and wisest, and best of men, are ever presented to us, as engaged in virtuous employment and exertion; as deriving health, subsistence, reputation and comfort from the exercise, not the inactivity of their bodily and mental powers: and happily, the scenes in which every man is conversant, seem to him the most interesting of all, his own station the most eminent or useful,

ful, his own pursuits the most important. Hence a certain degree of self-complacency, of self-satisfaction pervades the whole; every one is acting in his own sphere; while infinite wisdom binds all together by invisible or unnoticed bands, and the various members, without knowledge or design, co-operate for the common benefit, and fulfil the great design of Heaven.

Idleness is not more dishonourable, than it is inimical to real felicity. The sluggard at once defeats the purpose of his Maker, and destroys his own peace: and what was denounced against man as a punishment, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," like every other punishment that comes from above, is converted into a blessing; and, as in every other case, the great God is just and merciful at once; just, in imposing on the fallen creature the necessity of labouring; merciful, in rendering the fruit of it so sweet.

But can the inhabitants of a great, commercial, polished *city*, find either amusement or instruction in contemplating the rude and simple manners of ancient times; in listening to the history of the inglorious toils of the husbandman; in tracing the operations of an art, the very terms of which they do not understand; in observing the mean employments of poverty and wretchedness which they only pity or despise? Whether they can derive amusement, or instruction, from such things as these, or not, may not courtly pride be admonished in behalf of the lowly, rustic sons of want and industry, in the words of two sweet singing bards of our own country.

"Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
 Their homely joys, and destiny obscure:
 Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
 The short and simple annals of the poor."

GRAY'S Church-yard.

———"Nor

———“ Nor ye who live
 In luxury and ease, in pomp and pride,
 Think these lost themes unworthy of your ear.”

THOMSON'S Spring.

We have heard the artless tale of Naomi's woe, and Ruth's attachment. We have accompanied the deserted, widowed mother and daughter-in-law from Moab to Bethlehem-Judah, the city of their departed husbands : but alas, all the reception they meet with, is stupid wonder, silly curiosity, or insulting pity. We hear of no kind contention to entertain the stranger and succour the distressed. The season of reaping was come ; but for them no golden harvest waved in the wind, for them no mower was preparing his sickle ; their poverty was but embittered by the sight of plenty diffused around : and the misery of Naomi's fall is dreadfully aggravated, by the prosperity which Elimelech's nearest relations were enjoying.

Of these the most distinguished was Boaz, whom the sacred historian introduces to our acquaintance as “ a mighty man of wealth.” Riches, like every other gift of God, become a blessing or a curse just according to the use that is made of them. Riches are a solid good, when they are received with thankfulness, enjoyed with moderation, and employed in the service of God and of mankind ; but are perverted into a sore evil when they engender pride, and harden the heart, as is too generally the case, when they purchase fuel for the lusts, or are fabricated into a golden image, to become the unworthy object of adoration. Had Boaz been merely a man of wealth, he had not deserved a place in these sacred memoirs ; but though a rich man, he was not slothful in business ; he was a man of humanity, of intelligence, of discretion, of affability : a man that feared the Lord, that did justly, that loved mercy. He was ennobled by qualities which great possessions cannot confer,
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and which do not, with fugitive treasures, fly away as an eagle towards heaven.

Behold the mysterious distribution of the gifts of Providence! The family of one "brother is waxen poor and fallen into decay;" that of the other is shining in splendour, affluence and renown. Hasty and partial views of the divine conduct, are always puzzling and distressful; calm and comprehensive investigation, will ever lead to composure and acquiescence.

What must these helpless women do for daily bread? They sit neglected and forlorn; but despondency will only increase the calamity. Necessity suggests many expedients. While health, virtue and friendship remain, all is not lost; and Heaven frequently permits the current of human felicity to spend itself to the very lowest ebb, that its own hand may be acknowledged in the means which caused the flood to rise and swell again.

The proposal of Ruth to her mother-in-law, discovers in every point of view, a noble and ingenuous spirit, and an excellent heart. She will do nothing without the consent and advice of the venerable matron who was become father and mother, country, friends and every thing to her. Begging is the last miserable refuge of age or infirmity, of disease or sloth; she scorns to think of recurring to it, while she has youth, health and strength to labour, and while there was a field of lawful employment. An ordinary mind in her situation would have vented itself in unavailing womanish lamentations; perhaps in unkind upbraidings of the ancient woman as the cause of all the distress which she endured; would have been for dispatching Naomi up and down among her wealthy relations and towns-folks, to solicit protection and subsistence. No, it is more honourable in her eyes to earn food by her own labour; she conceals the anguish which wrung her own heart, for fear of adding affliction to the afflicted. The season of the
year

year was favourable ; and happily the law of that God, whom she had deliberately taken for her God, had made provision for persons in her destitute condition.

The same bounty which poured the abundance of autumn into the lap of the mighty, had reserved a pittance for the support of the famished and friendless. How the mercy of Jehovah bursts upon us in every dispensation and in every event ! In wisdom he has permitted distinctions of rank and fortune to take place ; in compassion he has taken care to make provision for the wants of the necessitous. So that while industry and pity remain, no one is reduced to absolute despair.

It is with pleasure we recur to the words of the law, and trace that God who “careth for oxen,” much more solicitous about the support and consolation of the miserable part of the rational creation. “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard ; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger : I am the Lord your God.”* And again, “When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest ; thou shalt leave them unto the poor and to the stranger : I am the Lord your God.”† And again, in recapitulating the law in Deuteronomy, “When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it : it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow : that the Lord thy God may bless thee in the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive-tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again : it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not

* Lev. xix. 9, 10.

† Lev. xxiii. 22.

not glean it afterward : it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bond-man in the land of Egypt : therefore I command thee to do this thing.”*

In this law, several remarkable circumstances, tending to illustrate the law of nature in general, and the spirit of the Mosaic dispensation in particular, press themselves upon our notice.

1st. The consideration and recollection of their own and their fathers' misery in Egypt are urged as the powerful motive to pity, to spare and to succour. “A Syrian ready to perish” on the road to Padanaram “was my father.” “A generation of slaves in Egypt were my progenitors, let me therefore commiserate, and receive, and cherish, the forlorn traveller ; let me treat my own captive, bond-man, dependant, with gentleness, and humanity.” Who gives charity ? Not unfeeling wealth, nor giddy dissipation ; but the man who has known want, who once stood in need of a friend, who has been himself succoured in the hour of calamity. Who is it that relents and forgives ? Not cold-blooded, meriteless, constitutional virtue ; but restored, recovered frailty ; goodness which arose the purer and the stronger from having fallen. Who is liberal and generous ? Not the nobly born, the unvaryingly prosperous, but magnanimity nursed on the breast of adversity ; the prince whom native worth, whom conscious dignity, whom the experience of human woe have taught to devise liberal things, to do good, and to communicate. But is hereditary greatness, unvarying opulence, unhumiliated, unmortified success, always cold, selfish, unfeeling ? God forbid. High birth, lineal honours, the accumulating wealth of many generations, sometimes put on their most beautiful garments, borrow lustre from condescension, sympathy and beneficence. Is successful adversity, illuminated obscurity, aggrandized littleness,

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* Deut. xxiv. 19—22.

always merciful, condescending, generous, and humane? O, no: the poor wretch frequently forgets himself; condemns the arts by which he arose, spurns the ladder on which he climbed to eminence and distinction, and tries to make his upstart greatness bear a mimic resemblance to antique dignity, by aping the viler, not the nobler qualities of traditional importance.

Again, 2dly. Observe, the law inculcates pity to the poor and wretched by the most glorious of all examples. "I am the Lord, who had compassion upon you in your misery, who delivered you from the furnace, who drove out the nations from before you, who planted you in the land, who fill thy garner, and make thy wine-press to overflow; and who only ask, in return, a mite or two, for the sons and daughters of affliction, these few ears which thy haste has let fall to the ground, that sheaf which has accidentally dropped from thy car; that little corner of thy field which the sickle has spared, and which that starving creature, by nature thy equal, by providence thy inferior, is waiting to pick up and devour. He is an object of tenderness and affection to me, see therefore that thou neglect him not, that thou defraud him not, that thou distress him not."

3dly. The law plainly supposes that there may be an over anxiety and solicitude about things in their own nature lawful and innocent; which it therefore aims at repressing: it supposes that there may be an eagerness of accumulation which defeats itself, a scattering abroad that produces increase, a withholding of more than is meet, and it tendeth only to poverty; that diffusing, not hoarding up abundance, is the proper use of it.

4thly. The law had a double object in view, the improvement of the affluent, and the relief of the poor. It thus became a mutual benefit, the one was blessed in giving, the other in receiving. The greater blessedness however on the side of the giver, as the blessedness

edness of the Creator is superior to that of the creature. It is as much an ordination of Providence, that "the poor should never cease out of the land," as that "the earth should yield her increase," and the spheres perform their stated revolutions: and while they do exist, the great Lord and Preserver of all things, is concerned to make suitable provision for them. The rich are *his* stewards, and *their* storekeepers: he that gleans his own field to the last ear, is a thief and a robber as much as he who plunders his neighbour's granary; he robs God, he plunders the needy and the destitute, he does what he can to subvert the divine government, he would make the law of charity and mercy of none effect, he bars his own plea for pardon at a throne of grace, he mars the possession of all he has, he cankers his own enjoyment, and affixes his seal to his own condemnation.

5thly. The law particularly describes the objects which it meant to relieve, "the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow." Unhappy Ruth! her title to the wretched offal from the hand of the reaper was but too well established. She united in her own person all these characters of woe. Her melancholy claim to pity and support was fearfully multiplied, and a three-fold burden presses her down to the ground: nevertheless she entreats, as a boon, what she might have demanded, and taken, as a right.

Her trust in, and submission to the direction of Providence sweetly accord with her filial affection and tenderness, and her noble independency of spirit; she is determined to labour, she disdains not to employ the necessary means for supplying herself and aged parent with food, but she leaves the direction of her footsteps to High Heaven; she is in the way of her duty, and deposits all anxiety about the issue in the bosom of her heavenly Father. What a happy mixture of fortitude and resignation! It cannot but prosper.

Having obtained the consent of her mother, who perhaps might have a presentiment of what was ap-
 I 2 proaching,

proaching, behold her up with the dawn, pensive, timorous and slow, advancing to the fields; the country all before her, where to choose her place of toil, and Providence her guide; with the downcast look of ingenuous modesty; the timidity which four misfortune inspires; the firm step of conscious rectitude, and the flushed cheek of kindling hope. By some nameless, unaccountable circumstance, Heaven-directed, she unknowingly bends her course to the field and reapers of Boaz. She has done her part, has made the sacrifices which conscience and affection demanded, has submitted cheerfully to the hardships which necessity imposed, has put herself in the way of relief which her situation pointed out. God is good, and takes all the rest upon himself. He, who ordered her flight to Canaan at the time of barley-harvest, when nature, and Providence, and the law concurred to find her subsistence, orders her path to that field, where every thing, without the knowledge of the parties concerned, was prepared and arranged for the high scenes now ready to be acted.

The order of human procedure generally is from blaze to smoke, from noise and bustle to nothing, from mighty preparation, to feebleness of execution. The divine conduct, on the contrary, is a glorious rise from obscurity into light, from "small beginnings to a latter end greatly increased;" from "the mouth of babes and sucklings he ordaineth strength," and by a concurrence of circumstances which no human sagacity could foresee, and no human power could either bring together or keep asunder, raises a neglected gleaner in the field into the lady of the domain, and a fugitive of Moab into a mother in Israel; a mother of kings, whose name shall never expire but with the dissolution of nature.

At this period of the story, let us pause, and meditate

—On the power which regulates and controls all the affairs of men, who has all hearts, all events in his

his hand, who "poureth contempt upon princes, and bringeth to nought the wisdom of the prudent;" who "raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people; he maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children." Is there a God who "doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth?" then let me never "be high-minded, but fear" always before him, for I am never out of his reach, never concealed from his eye, never sheltered from his justice. Is there a God who judgeth in the earth, in whom the fatherless findeth mercy, to whom the miserable never look, never cry in vain? then let me never sink into despair. I am not too humble for his notice, my disease is not beyond his skill to cure, my wants are not too numerous for his supplies, nor my transgressions beyond the multitude of his tender mercies. Doth not He deck the lily, and feed the raven? a sparrow riseth not on the wing, falleth not to the ground, without my heavenly Father. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped," and "his hand is not shortened, nor his ear heavy, nor his bowels of compassion restrained."

Meditate again, on what ground you have encouragement to ask and to expect the divine protection and favour. Have you given up all for God? Have you good hope through grace that you are reconciled to God through the blood of his Son? Have you a good conscience toward God that you are in the proper use of appointed means? Can you look up with confidence and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest I have not folded my hands to sleep, have not sat down in sullen discontent, have not charged thee foolishly, have not fled to unjustifiable methods of relief. I have not impiously striven with my Maker, nor presumptuously expected a miracle to be wrought in my behalf. I have in much weakness, but in trembling hope, endeavoured

deavoured to do my duty ; and I now, Lord, cast all my care, cast my burden upon thee." Look into the history of divine interpositions. Were they in compliment to the peevish and capricious, were they extorted by the loud lamentations or the secret murmurings of insolence and ingratitude? were they the pillows smoothed by the hand of weak indulgence for the drowsy head of sloth and indifference to repose on? No, but they were the seasonable cordial of parental affection to a fainting child ; the reward which wisdom and goodness bestow on diligence and perseverance ; the indissoluble union which God has established between human exertion and divine co-operation ; they were the recompense of labour and vigilance, the answer of prayer.

Meditate yet again, on the true dignity of human nature, on the true glory of man and of woman also ;— honest, useful employment. It is not idle, luxurious enjoyment, it is not to do nothing, to be eternally waited upon, and ministered unto, to grow torpid by inaction, to slumber away life in a lethargic dream, and to lose the powers of the soul and body by disuse ; but to preserve and promote health by moderate exercise, to earn cheerfulness and self-approbation, by the sweet consciousness that you are not living wholly in vain, and to rise into importance by being somewhat useful to your fellow-creatures. In the eye of sober, unbiassed reason, whether of the two is the more pleasing, the more respectable sight ; and which is, in her own mind, the happier of the two, Ruth laden with the ears of corn which she has toiled to gather, hastening home to the hut of obscurity, to administer food and comfort to old age and sorrow ; or a modern belle, issuing forth under a load of uneasy finery, to imaginary triumphs, and certain disappointment? Who sleeps soundest at night, and who awakes and arises in the best health and spirits next day? I expect not an answer.

The

The thing speaks for itself; and I have purposely forborne to state the case so strongly as I might have done. The virtuous damsel has, in part, received her reward, but a greater and better is preparing for her. The mother and daughter have been arranging their little matters with discretion; and the great God has been preparing his agents, putting his armies in motion; all is made ready, is made to meet, is made to work together, is made to prosper, by Him who sees the perfect man in the embryo, the end from the beginning, the effect in its primary cause, the eternal chain in every series, and in all its extent.

History of Ruth.

LECTURE XI.

RUTH ii. 4.

And behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you : and they answered him, The Lord bless thee.

THE short and simple sentence which I have read, might be made the subject of a volume. I intend to make it at least the subject of a Lecture, and entreat your patient attention to a few of the obvious, but neither uninteresting nor unimportant views which it exhibits, of life and manners, of morals and religion.

Men of different characters, from various motives, and for various purposes, might be supposed to assume the plain, unadorned history of the barley-harvest of Boaz, as an useful and instructive topic of address, and, according to the spirit by which they were actuated, and the end which they had in view, might reason upon it in this manner.

I. The prudent, careful man, would build upon it a system of attention, diligence and economy. "Behold," would he say, "behold Boaz, the wealthy and the wise, in his field, among his servants, seeing every thing with his own eyes, giving his orders in person, taking care that every one be in his own place, and performing his particular duty. The air and
exercise

exercise connected with the operations of husbandry, are conducive to health, to comfort; they promote his interest; they enliven his spirits; moderate labour makes rest welcome. See, his presence is a check upon idleness, upon carelessness, upon discord; it calls forth industry, it creates honest emulation; it reconciles the peasant to his toil, to see the master participating in it. He has brought himself down to the level of the poor labourer, who seems to have risen in proportion. See, nothing escapes his notice, not even a wretched gleaner behind the reapers; he must be informed of every thing; to the minutest circumstance he will judge for himself.

“Young man, set out in life, and conduct your progress, on such a principle, on such a model as this. It is the certain road to affluence, to respectability: you are thereby at once serving yourself, your dependants, and your country. Whatever be thy station, whatever thy employment, let thy heart be in it; let thy time and thy attention be devoted to it. *“Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.” “Be not slothful in business. Let every thing be done in its season; let every thing be done decently and in order.” “The hand of the diligent maketh rich.” “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.”*

“To these might be added innumerable admonitions and arguments; drawn from scripture, from reason, from history, from experience, all tending to demonstrate the wisdom, the utility, the necessity of doing what thy hand findeth to do, with thy *might*; and to prove the folly, the danger, the misery of sloth and inattention. But example is beyond all precept. Survey yonder field; from Ruth up to Boaz; all are busy, all are pleased and cheerful, all are happy. Be instructed, my son, by the prospect; and learn that God, and nature, and reason, have inseparably connected industry and felicity; have made bodily health and inward peace, prosperity and importance

ance to flow from virtuous, temperate exertion, as the stream from its source."

II. The moralist would take up the subject in a point of view somewhat different. "Observe" would he say "the reciprocal duties arising out of the mutual relations of human life. We have them here beautifully exemplified in the relation of master and servant. Besides the more obvious obligations of justice, on the one, in faithfully performing the stipulated labour; on the other, in punctually bestowing the promised wages of the hireling, behold the tacit obligations of mutual affection and benevolence. Obligations founded not indeed upon a written law, but interwoven with the constitution and frame of our nature, and which the man who feels not, acknowledges not, the man who neglects or violates, let his adherence to the letter of the law be ever so close and exact, is a traitor to God and society. Nay, he is a traitor to himself, by cutting off one of the purest sources of his own enjoyment, and at the same time depriving mankind of one of their justest claims.

"Boaz and his reapers meet with mutual cordiality. They give and receive the salutation of peace. He accosts them as a father would his children, not as a task-master would the miserable drudges subjected to his authority. They address him with the kindly and humble familiarity of sons, not the distant timidity of slaves trembling for fear of the rod. They exact the price of their service as a debt; but they receive the gentle language and smiles of their employer as a favour. He expects them to be honest and diligent, for conscience sake; but contentment with their condition, and good-will to him, he thankfully receives, as an unconditioned, extraordinary effort to promote his interest.

"Suppose, for a moment, the temper and character of both changed; and the force of the example will be more clearly understood, and more powerfully felt.

Without

Without supposing any one precept of morality, or dictate of religion infringed, what a different aspect would the field of Boaz wear! Lo, where comes the surly, stately, self-important lord of the manor, surveying in the pride of his heart, his increasing store, looking down on the humble, hardy sons of toil, as mere beasts of burden, designed to minister to his convenience. He vouchsafes them never a word, except perhaps to complain, to threaten, or to upbraid: and then, in fullen silence and state, retires again. The insulted labourers on the other hand, regard him with terror or disgust. The social compact is dissolved between them. No eye welcomed his approach with a smile, no whisper of gratulation conveyed his name from ear to ear, no tongue pronounced "*God bless him.*" The half-smothered execration pursued his withdrawing steps, and he well deserved it.

"What thinkest thou, my young friend, of the picture? Learn from it, that to doing justly, there must be added loving mercy, and walking humbly. Learn, that the duties and felicities of human life consist in numberless, nameless, undefinable little offices, which every one may learn without a teacher, and which every one may, if he will, perform. All have it not in their power to supply the poor, to heal the sick, to succour the distressed. Opportunity does not every day offer, nor ability permit to confer material, essential benefits; but it is in the power of all to express sympathy, to breathe a kind wish. Opportunities every hour, every moment present themselves, and ability never fails of looking pleasantly, of speaking gently and affectionately. And he is a wretch indeed who knows that the unbending of an eyebrow, the utterance of a syllable or two, the alteration of half a tone of his voice, the simple extension of his hand would in a moment relieve a heart overwhelmed with sorrow, wrung with anguish, and yet cruelly withholds so slender, so easy, so cheap a consolation.

"Young

“Young man, if it be thy misfortune to have to struggle with a harsh, ungainly, unbending disposition; the sooner you set out in quest of victory the better. Remember that thy own comfort is involved, beyond the power of separation, with that of thy fellow-creatures. Take care that the *manner* of shewing mercy, or of conferring obligation mar not the *matter* of the benefit. The man who *refuses graciously*, impresses on the heart a more favourable idea of himself, than he who *grants* with harshness, insolence or pride. True goodness considers, together with what is written on tables of stone, what is engraven on *the living tables of the heart*, and from the heart, communicates itself to the forehead, the eyes, the lips, the hand; impressing on the whole the *law of kindness*.”

III. The philosopher will cast his eyes along the group scattered over the plains adjoining to Bethlehem-Judah, and will reflect in a different manner; perhaps thus. “What an endless variety do I observe in the ways and works of the great Creator and Ruler of the universe! Blended with that variety, what mutual relation and dependence! The head, the hands, the feet; the parts which are more noble, and those which are more dishonourable, forming one regular, harmonious body where there is nothing redundant, nothing deficient. Every thing has its use, every thing has its end. Shade imperceptibly softens into shade; light imperceptibly brightens into light. The transitions are so sweet and gradual, that the eye is never offended, nor overwhelmed. It is the same thing in the body social and politic. Every one stands in need of another. The prince and the peasant meet in a certain point. How many things have they in common! How many things to interest and attract each other!

“Look but to that field. The persons are few; and the conditions much fewer. But even there I see the order, the subordination which Providence has established through the whole extent of the vast universe,

verse. There walks the dignified, respectable proprietor of the land, who can trace his title to possession through many generations; exulting in hereditary wealth and honours, without arrogance, vanity or infatigability. Boaz, a prince in his tribe, but a plain man, who knows that he derives his subsistence from the bosom of the earth, who disdains not to mingle with his menial servants, to sit down to a participation of their homely fare, to dip his morsel in the same vinegar, and to lie down to sleep all night in the threshing-floor.

“There the servant who is set over the reapers stirs from ridge to ridge, from company to company, the bond of union between the master and the labourers. Behold him as the trusted humble friend of Boaz, repaying confidence with fidelity; praising the industrious, encouraging the faint, chiding the careless, stimulating the slow. As the sympathizing friend of his less favoured fellow-servants, recollecting how lately he emerged from the same obscurity and subjection, excusing the frailty of nature, covering the faults of thoughtlessness, administering reproof and chastisement with lenity and moderation, bestowing commendation with cheerfulness and cordiality.

“As we descend, a new station, a new character rises into view, the glory and the strength of every land under heaven, the poor, the honest, the manly, the virtuous, the useful, the important part of the community. Not they *who handle the harp and the organ*, but they who put their hands to the plough and the sickle. There they toil, there they sweat, there they sing; there they beguile the fatigues of the day in innocent mirth, and untutored, artless, guileless, unmalignant conversation; and purchase and sweeten the repose of the night, with unoppressive industry, with friendly communication, and pious, un aspiring submission to the pains, the privations, the necessities of their lowly estate.

“These

“ These constitute the numerous, the great and good class of our fellow-creatures; who shine in the eye of reason, of patriotism, of philosophy, of religion. They stand not forth the prominent figures in the piece, but their number, their equality, their want of characteristic distinction, confer upon them the greater value.

“ But ah, there is beneath them, a subordinate rank, which awakens all that is human in us. *They* have health and strength and will to labour; their reward is sure; they support the heat and toil of the day, with the sweet assurance that the thickening shades, that the twelfth hour will bring with them, the payment of their hire, the means of subsistence, of domestic joy, of regulated gratification. But look into the back-ground of the piece, and observe that female, that stranger, that orphan, and her a widow; to work unable, to beg ashamed. She has seen better days. Time was, *the wind of heaven* was not permitted to visit her face too roughly; she was waited upon, and ministered unto; now she is become *the scorn of clowns; or lower still, their pity*. Where is the lowness of condition, from whence it is not possible still to fall! Be what thou wilt, O man, there are some looking up to thee with envy and desire: be what thou wilt, there is still cause to say, “ *God, I thank thee I am not as other men.*”

“ But observe, my young friend,” continues our philosophical monitor, “ all these gradations, and infinitely more than can be pointed out, are links in the great chain of human existence; tear one asunder, and the concussion is felt through the whole. The gleaner, the reaper, the overseer, the master of the household are so many successive steps in the same scale; the most distant not very remote; the nearer hardly distinguishable; all are reduced to the same level before Him, who says to Gabriel, Go, and he goeth, and to the sparrow hovering on the wing, Fall to the ground, and instantly he drops. And again, young man
void

void of understanding, observe, and observe it well, and lay it up in thine heart, how near the extremes of human condition are to one another ! the gleaner after the reapers, is but a step or two from the possession of the whole. Wait but a few days, and she who is liable to be insulted, at best pitied, shall be, in her turn, carefessed, flattered, submitted to : and learn, from the whole, the folly of being insolent, self-conceited, or unkind, unsocial or uncomplying, when the sun of prosperity shineth upon thy tabernacle ; or of being discontented, dejected, careless or mean, when the common ills of humanity overtake thee. That poor inflated creature, who like another Nebuchadnezzar talks in loud swelling words of vanity, of the *great Babylon which he has built*, I once knew a cringing minion, ready to lick the dust from the feet of the man whom he now struts by as if he were a stranger. That poor boy whom he disdaineth to set with the dogs of his flock, is evidently rising into consequence, which is one day to eclipse all the tawdry honours of upstart gentility, and self-assumed importance. My son, derive thy greatness from thyself, from wisdom, from virtue. Take care to adorn thy station, thy possessions, by native goodness. Pitiably indeed is thy condition, if rank, or affluence, or even talents, serve only to render thy folly or profligacy more conspicuous.”

IV. Once more, let me suppose a man of genuine piety contemplating the interesting scene before us, and entering with wonder and delight into the plans of the Eternal Mind. His meditations will flow in still a different channel, he will view the same object through still a different medium. “ Behold,” will he say, “ *how sweet is the smell of a field which Jehovah hath blessed!* happy Boaz, rich in lands and in corn, rich in man-servants and maid-servants, rich in the dutiful and affectionate attachment of thy people, rich in thine own integrity and composure of spirit : but richer far in the favour and approbation of the Almighty : *the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow*

sorrow therewith. Happy family, thus dwelling together in unity; where love is the governing principle, where the fear of God sweetly expresses itself in unfeigned benevolence to man! How can that house but prosper, where religion has established her throne? Look at that happy plain over which the bountiful hand of nature has spread her rich exuberance. *The Lord maketh that wealth.* Behold the patriarchal master: the meanest slave he treats like a child: hearken, the voice of peace and benediction dwells on his lips, distils like the dew. Behold the way to be loved and respected by inferiors. Be to them an ensample of piety, of purity, of charity; bind them to you with cords of love; sweet and faithful, cheerful and efficient is the service of affection. These men will yield obedience not *for wrath only, but for conscience sake*; their heart is in their work; they need no overseer; they will neither be negligent nor dishonest: they know that the eye of God is continually upon them; they know that the interest of the master is their own.

“How happily religion adapts its influence to every relation and condition of life! How it guards the heart alike from *foolish pride* and *impious discontent*, at what bounty has bestowed, or wisdom denied! How it humanizes, dignifies, exalts the soul! How it enforces, extends and refines the maxims of worldly prudence! How it illustrates, binds, and enlivens the precepts of morality! How it amplifies, expands, regulates, brightens the views of philosophy; referring every thing to God, deriving all from him, carrying all back to him again! O man, till thou hast founded thy domestic economy in religion, thou hast not begun to keep house. Let thy possessions be ever so fair, ever so extensive, they want their principal charm, their highest excellence, till the blessing of Heaven be asked and obtained.

“Mark yet again, how *a good man's footsteps are all ordered of the Lord.* In all thy ways acknowledge him,
and

and he shall direct thy paths. Boaz came forth with no farther view than to see the progress of his harvest, to salute his servants, and to cheer their labour by his presence and approving smiles; but lo, Providence has been preparing for him a more enlarged view, has enriched his field with a nobler portion than he had any apprehension of. *Thy ways, my King and my God, thy ways are in the sea, and thy path in the deep waters, and thy judgments are unsearchable.* The great God is working unseen, unnoticed. He is preparing his instruments at a distance, arranging his agents in the dark. Unseen to, unknown by one another, without concert or design, they come forth at the moment, they perform the part assigned them; they speak and act in perfect unison, they accomplish the purpose of the Eternal. Boaz and Ruth, behold them together in the field, remote as penury and fulness, as obscurity and celebrity, as dependence and being depended upon. Nevertheless they meet, and Heaven from above, crowns the hallowed union with her olive."

But might not the pious spirit annex a caution to his exhortation on this subject. "Beware of *taking the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain: Holy and reverend is his name.* Even in blessing it is to be used solemnly, piously, sparingly: who then shall dare to employ it wantonly, needlessly, profanely, impiously, blasphemously? Who shall presume to abuse it, in swearing falsely by it, or in imprecating a curse under that dreadful sanction upon the head of his brother? Avert, merciful Heaven, avert from my guilty, heavy-laden country, the heavy, the bitter curse which this sin deserves! O let not profane swearing, let not wilful deliberate perjury, prove its ruin!"

—Thus have I endeavoured, by assuming several supposed characters, to give life and energy to the simple, rural scene under consideration. It furnishes copious matter of instruction to every teacher, and to

every class of mankind. The careful, prudent man of the world; the moralist; the calm observer; the pious instructor, are all here provided with useful topics of address to their several pupils, according to their several views. The master and the servant, the hireling and his employer, the rich and the poor, here meet together, and are together informed, by more than a code of laws, by plain but striking example, of their mutual relation and dependence, and of the duties which arise out of them, and of the comforts which flow from them. Happiness is here represented as built on the sure foundation of kind affections, of useful industry, of reciprocal good offices, and of the fear of the Lord. Where all these unite, that house must stand, that family must prosper. In proportion as all or any of them are wanting, a partial or total ruin must ensue. Let the apostolic injunctions serve practically to enforce the subject. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."* — "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."† "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith,

* Ephes. vi. 5—9.

† 1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"*—"You yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."† "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."‡

* James ii. 5.

† Acts xx. 34, 35.

‡ Ephes. iv. 28.

History of Ruth.

L E C T U R E XII.

RUTH ii. 5—17.

Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, I pray you let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work,
and

and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine hand-maid, though I be not like unto one of thine hand-maidens. And Boaz said unto her, At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not. And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

THE life of the husbandman is full of labour and anxiety, but it is also sweetened and relieved by many peculiar delights. He must rise early, and often retire late to rest; he is exposed now to the scorching heat of the meridian sun, and now to the unwholesome damps of the night. He has to watch every aspect of the sky, and to guard against the strife of contending elements: and after all his vigilance and foresight, he has frequently the mortification to see the exertions, and the hopes of a whole year, destroyed in an hour. But on the other hand, the very variety which his profession admits of, deceives the toils of it; his life is constantly a life of hope; his health and prosperity flow from the same source; he spends not his strength for nought and in vain; the bountiful parent earth restores the precious seed cast into it with large increase, thirty, sixty, an hundred fold. He has the pleasure of observing the hourly progress of vegetation; of seeing his supplies coming immediately from the hand of Providence. Piety and profit are promoted by the same employments and pursuits, and the sublimest

est truths of religion press upon him in the plainest and most common appearances of nature. Add to all this, the labours of the husbandman are of all others the most essential, the most important to society. Other arts may minister to wealth, to pleasure, to conveniency and comfort, but on this depends the very subsistence of human life; and to the plough and the sickle, the ingenious manufacturer, the pampered citizen and the haughty peer must, of necessity, look for the main ingredient of their daily support.

It was, then, in that happy state of civil society, the scene is laid which is to be the subject of this evening's meditation. It was that joyful season of the year when the ardour of summer was giving place to the milder glory of autumn; when industry was gathering in the produce of hope; when the common occupations of the sun-burnt plain had levelled the distinctions of master and servant; when all was emulation, cheerfulness and joy, that Boaz issued forth betimes to superintend his harvest, and Ruth to glean after the reapers. Her sex, her demeanor, her employment, which bespoke her poverty, attract his notice, and excite his compassion. There are persons, there are countenances, there is a deportment, which strike at first sight, and create an interest which it is impossible to account for. The great hand of nature has in many, perhaps in most instances, engraven on the external appearance, no doubtful or equivocal signs of the internal spirit and character. Ruth presented to the eye of Boaz an undecipherable somewhat which spoke her immediately to be above the level of those common drudges, whose minds their servile condition has degraded; her native greatness shone through the veil that covered it, and naturally led to an inquiry into her situation and connexions. The attention which her figure and occupation at first roused, her history powerfully fixes and confirms. The mournful story of Naomi, and of the Moabitish damsel her daughter-in-law, all Bethlehem-Judah had heard, but not one had stepped forth
to

to acknowledge and relieve them. Boaz himself is faulty here. Had he been informed, as he must, of the return of his nearest relations, and of their wretched flight, he ought to have sought them out, and, unsolicited, to have ministered to their comfort. He is in this respect an instance of what is frequently to be met with in the world; of that calm, unimpassioned goodness which is abundantly disposed to succour distress, when it falls in the way, but is not sufficiently zealous, and vigorous, and active, to go abroad in quest of objects to relieve. But let us not pretend to look down on moderate and ordinary beneficence, till the pure and sublime come more into use. The former neglect of Boaz, and his future zeal, shall but the more redound to the glory of God.

—The short and simple tale awakens a thousand tender emotions in the bosom of the good man. He feels the sad reverses to which families, and states, and all sublunary things are exposed. He sees one branch of his own kindred demolished, extinguished. A woman, a young woman, a widow, a stranger in a strange land, but one step above begging her bread; with a still more wretched mother to sustain by the meagre fruits of her feeble industry. He sees women of condition, his equals, fallen far below the estate of the meanest of his servants and hand-maids. Self-reproach perhaps mingled with compassion, and instantly produced a resolution to compensate past carelessness and unkindness, by all that future sympathy and friendship could bestow. The dialogue that ensues is a beautiful exhibition of the honest simplicity of nature. The characters are supported with a happiness of expression, and displayed with a strength and exactness of colouring, worthy of Him who knows what is in man.

In Boaz which shall we most admire; his prudent attention to his own affairs, his winning condescension to his inferiors, or his pious acknowledgment of God in every thing? In his conduct to the forlorn stranger,

stranger, we see a heart overflowing with benevolence, attending to minute circumstances, out-running the expectations, the very wishes of the person whom he means to oblige. Observe his delicacy; he recommends the solitary helpless female to the society and protection of those of her own sex, and by his authority guards her from the incivility and insults of the other. He aims at soothing her soul to peace; he would have her believe herself at home. The law obliged him to permit her to glean, but he makes a free-will offering of much more; the liquor in the vessels, the food provided for the reapers, all is tendered to her with hearty good will. Ordinary minds feel ashamed at the sight of poor relations, deny them, turn away from them, hide their faces from their own flesh. True magnanimity thinks meanly of nothing but vice, esteems worth, though cloathed in rags, considers the revolutions which affect every thing under the sun, despises not the wretch of to-day, knowing that he may be obliged to change places with him to-morrow. Such an one was the wealthy owner of yonder happy field. The spirit of the matter is diffused, it is felt over the whole extended domain. No jarring string mars their rural harmony, no contention reigns, but the strife, the blessed strife, of mutual affection and attachment.

The character of Ruth opened upon us with singular grace and beauty: it unfolds itself with equal energy and propriety. She discovers from first to last, a soul susceptible of tender and persevering attachment; ready to yield the sacrifice of ease, of rank, of estimation, of every thing, for the sake of enjoying the testimony of a good conscience, and the society that she loved. She discovers a spirit at once sweetly timid and bashful, and nobly resolute and undaunted. She inspires love by her gentleness, meekness and complacency; she commands respect by her firmness, magnanimity and patience. In addressing her mother-in-law, she is all amiable warmth and earnestness;

in replying to the friendly tenders of Boaz, she is all amiable reserve and modesty. In speaking to Naomi her heart flows to her lips, her words glow, her speech is copious and redundant: in answering a man, and a stranger, her words are few, she speaks by looks and gestures, and is then most eloquent when she says nothing.

I behold the effect which youth, and simplicity, and humbleness of mind, and distress have made upon a generous and sensible heart. The artless simplicity of the Moabitish damsel have made a deeper impression than all that cunning and design could have invented to allure affection, and impose on the understanding. Happily the progress of virtuous love advances without the consciousness of the parties concerned; it is at first a mere intercourse of civility, an attention to trifles, an interchange of kind words and pleasant looks. It grows unperceived, it gathers strength by neglect, it has arrived at maturity before it was known to exist, it gave no warning of its approach, and thereby became irresistible. And has the great Author of nature vouchsafed in his word to delineate, in more than one instance, the nature, progress, and effects of this important and necessary passion, and shall we turn away from it with affected delicacy, or take it up and pursue it with indecent mirth? No, if we adopt and imitate the candid, guileless simplicity, and the modest reserve of scripture, we cannot greatly err.

In the case of Boaz and Ruth, it was enchantingly grateful to the former, as highly honourable to the latter, that the decision of the understanding confirmed the judgment of the eyes. He had known, admired and approved the conduct, before he had seen and admired the beauty of the person, and the gracefulness of the behaviour. The charms of wisdom, virtue and piety, superadded to personal accomplishments, what a happy combination; what a foundation of felicity! The latter indeed, will and must fade, but their effect

fect is immortal; the company in which they flourished and brought forth fruit, bestows on them a permanency not their own. How wretched is that female all whose consequence is fled with her bloom; who depended on rank or fortune to command respect; who has lost the admiration and applause of others, before she has begun to acquire the dignity of self-approbation, the only genuine source of public esteem.

The history before us strikingly displays the transition from pity to love on the one hand, from gratitude to love on the other. Compassion in Boaz, sense of obligation in Ruth, excite the same mutual affection in both. It becomes *his* pride and joy to raise her to that distinction and affluence which she so well merited; it is *her* pride and joy to repay the tenderness of her benefactor by every kind office of compliance and affection. She had hitherto pleased herself with the consciousness of having done her duty; she had not hunted after praise; she had discovered no anxiety, taken no pains to publish abroad her own merits; but honour will follow virtue, as the shadow does the substance, and the flight of the one but accelerates the pursuit of the other. And how grateful must it have been even to the modest ear of Ruth herself, to hear her conduct approved, and her qualities celebrated, by the wise and good man who had taken her under his protection, and admitted her to his friendship. The praise which goodness confers on goodness, the praise which a man's own heart and conscience allow to be merited, praise bestowed by one we love and esteem is a feast indeed; it does equal honour, it communicates equal delight to the giver and the receiver; it is an anticipation of the glorious rewards of the faithful, from Him whose favour is better than life. But save me, merciful Heaven, from the commendation which my own mind rejects. Save me from the approbation, the ill-informed approbation of ignorant erring man, while I have just cause to
tremble,

tremble under the apprehension of condemnation and punishment from a holy and righteous God.

The cordial of cordials administered by the hand of Boaz to this truly excellent woman, was his recommendation of her to the care, blessing and protection of the Almighty. It was much to be permitted to pick up a scanty livelihood among strangers; it was much to meet with notice and encouragement from a mighty man of wealth in a foreign land; it was highly soothing to a spirit broken by calamity to be approved and caressed by a great and a good man; but all this was nothing compared to the smiles of approving Heaven, in sweet accord with the serenity and composure of a quiet and approving conscience. How cordially could she pronounce "amen" to his affectionate and pious prayer, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."*

The petition contains a piece of sweet imagery, of which interpreters have given different ideas. "Under whose wings thou art come to trust." The expression, according to some, implies an approbation of her resolution in renouncing the religion of her country and fathers, in forsaking the idol worship wherein she had been educated, and in deliberately joining herself to the Israelites and worship of the living and true God. The words, it is alleged, have an allusion to the Shechinah, the visible glory, the symbol of the divine presence which resided between, or under, the wings of the cherubim which were extended over the mercy-seat. This is, as it were, the point in which all the parts of the dispensation centered, and therefore is employed to denote in brief, all that related to the knowledge, belief and service of Jehovah, in opposition to idolatry.

Others consider it as merely a tender and significant image, borrowed from nature, and frequently employed

* Verse 12.

employed in other passages of scripture, the image of the tender callow brood of the feathered race fleeing, in the moment of danger, for protection, under the shelter of the parental wing. In either case, it marks the providential care, and the sacred security extended to all who seek refuge in the divine wisdom and mercy. No plague shall come nigh the place where they dwell, no evil shall befall them. It unfolds the spirit of a truly good man, disposed to do every thing that humanity dictates, and ability permits, for the relief of the sons and daughters of affliction; but deeply impressed with the belief that without the blessing and favour of Heaven the interposition of man is vain and unprofitable. He refers not to the divine bounty as an exemption from deeds of charity and mercy, but to render his benevolence effectual, and to crown, promote and prosper his kind intentions; to fill up the measure of his liberal design, which, after all, was narrowed and contracted by slenderness of ability.

The effect of the whole upon Ruth is the same which a sense of unmerited friendship from man, and the expectation of blessings from on high, will ever produce on a good and honest heart. As she rises in situation, as she rises in hope, she sinks in humility. "Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine hand-maid, though I be not like unto one of thy hand-maidens."*

This draws from the benevolent lord of the harvest reiterated assurances of regard and sympathy. He again runs over the whole store of the field, lest he should have omitted any particular in his former enumeration; again intimates a cheerful and unaffected welcome to what she could desire, or he had to bestow. In this, if I mistake not, may be seen the farther progress of affection. Ruth gains upon his heart by every word she utters, by every gesture and attitude; and pleases most, from having formed, from pursuing

no

* Verse 13.

no design to please. The greater her diffidence and self-denial, the greater is his earnestness to bring her forward, and to support her. She was by the former order permitted to go at pleasure and serve herself with whatever was in the field for the general use; now, she is invited to join the company where Boaz himself presided; she is fed from his own hand, and her portion is not a scanty one, "she did eat and was sufficed and left." It was thus that Joseph expressed the partiality of his affection for Benjamin his own brother, his mess was five times so much as any of theirs; and thus in artless guise, the growing passion of Boaz for the fair Moabitess declared itself; and thus, not in high-flown rhapsodies of unmeaning jargon, but in little attentions, in petty offices of kindness, the genuine effusions of unsophisticated nature, the generous passion of love, always will declare its existence and quality. Happy, thrice happy banquet, far beyond all the luxury and pride of unwieldy, uneasy, unblest magnificence. There they sit, under the open canopy of heaven, the master, the servants, the stranger, in one group. Their fare is homely, but labour has made it pleasant to sit down, and hunger gives to the food a relish.

But what a superior relish did the morsel of Boaz himself possess! Think what a banquet, to see his numerous family around him, all contented and happy; to give bread to so many, and to receive the ample return of it in their honest attachment, and in the fruits of their industry. What a luxury, to feed a hungry, to raise a sinking stranger! to render gentle services to a deserving object, which humanity inspired, the understanding confirmed, the heart directed, and Heaven approved! What a desert, to reflect that all these comforts flowed from a heavenly Father's beneficence, that thus he was "twice blessed," blessed in receiving, blessed in giving.

The felicity of Ruth was far from being so pure and perfect. She felt the depression of dependence and

and obligation ; obligation which she had no prospect of ever being able to repay. She felt for the anxiety, distress and want of a venerable aged woman, for whom nothing was provided ; who was sitting solitary at home brooding over past calamities, and tormenting herself with apprehensions about futurity. She can hardly swallow her own morsel for grief to think that one more helpless, more feeble, more friendless than herself, wanted the common necessaries of life ; that Naomi was perhaps fasting till she returned, and, worse than fasting, tormented with solicitude about her safety. The sweetest part of the repast to Ruth was the portion she had reserved from her own necessities for the sustentation of her ancient, affectionate, starving parent.

Their frugal simple meal being ended, they rise up, not to play, but to work again, and continue their labour until the evening. A fresh charge is given to the reapers on no account to disturb, or insult the lovely gleaner, and the young men are directed to find no fault with her, gather where she would, even among the sheaves before they were bound up ; and to drop here and there a handful, as if by accident, to render her toil more pleasant and easy, without hurting her honest pride. This injunction could proceed only from a delicate and ingenuous mind. To have made her directly a present of the ears of corn, had been an indignity offered to her poverty ; to scatter them without any apparent design, was effectually to facilitate her labour, and diminish her fatigue, without rendering the burden of obligation too grievous to be borne. The manner of conferring a benefit, it cannot be too often repeated, infinitely outweighs the matter. The comfort of human life, is a combination of little, minute attentions, which, taken separately, are nothing, but connected with the circumstances of time, place and manner, as coming from the heart, as tokens of good-will, possess a value and inspire

spire a pleasure beyond the purchase of gold and rubies.

Think of the heart-felt satisfaction of the amiable labourer, when at the going down of the sun, on separating the straw and chaff from the good grain, and measuring the produce of her patience and industry, she found it amount to so considerable a quantity! Would you make a poor man happy, do not encourage him to beg. Idleness and happiness are incompatible. No, render his toil a little easier to him, teach him to draw his subsistence and comfort from, and to build his dependence upon himself.

And now Ruth's comfort was going to begin; it was hitherto mixed and imperfect—it now flows pure and unrestrained. She has it in her power to relieve indigence, to remove anxiety, to dispel sorrow, to make the widowed heart sing for joy. See with what exultation she produces her store, re-measures her corn, details the adventures of the day, and receives, in communicating joy. This, O virtuous friendship, is thy present great reward! Such, if pride and perverseness prevented not, the felicity which Providence has graciously placed within every one's reach! Let me have some friendly ear, in the calmness of the evening's retreat, to listen to my tale; some sympathetic heart, to participate in my sorrows and my joys, and I care not what hardships I endure, what mortifications I meet with, through the live-long day. Friendship doubles the delights, divides, and thereby diminishes, the cares and miseries of this transitory life.

Think of the composed felicity of the ancient matron, as she surveyed the fruits of her beloved daughter's dutiful exertions, and heard the artless story of a harvest day's employment and recreation. Yes, she is the happier of the two. The joys of age are calm, untumultuous, untempestuous; those of youth have always a mixture of ardour and impetuosity, that allays their purity, and hastens on their dissolution. We sincerely bid them good night, and leave them to the
sweet

sweet repose of conscious integrity, of acquiescence in the will and thankfulness for the bounty of gracious Heaven, and of budding, blossoming hope of greater blessings yet to come.

—At what a small expense may a great man acquire respect, esteem, love? How infinitely nature excels art! In how simple and easy a method does Providence bring about the greatest events! “Godliness is” every way “great gain:” it has “the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

History of Ruth.

L E C T U R E XIII.

RUTH ii. 19—23. and iii. 1.

And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? And where wroughtest thou? Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. And Ruth the Moabites said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley-harvest, and of wheat-harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law. Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

NOTHING is more absurd than to judge of ancient and foreign customs, by the fashion of our own country and of the present day. Language, manners, and dress are incessantly changing their form. Were our

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ancestors of the last century to arise from the dead, and to appear in the habit of their own times, their great grand-children and they would be utter strangers to one another. Their speech would be mutually unintelligible, their modes of behaviour uncouth, their apparel ridiculous. How much more, after the lapse of many centuries has intervened, and the scene shifted to a distant land, peopled by men of a different complexion, governed by different laws, and communicating thought by means of a different language.

One of the great pleasures arising from the study of ancient history, is to trace these differences, to contemplate the endless variety of the human mind, ever changing, still the same; to compare age with age, nation with nation, in order to excite admiration of the great Creator's wisdom and goodness, and to inspire love towards our fellow-creatures.

In examining the customs described in the context, let it be remembered, that they are the customs of men who lived upwards of three thousand years ago, who inhabited a different quarter of the globe, whose ideas, employments and pursuits had no manner of resemblance to ours, and who would be equally astonished, shocked and offended, were modern and European manners made to pass in review before them. And let it be farther remembered, that we speak of *customs* and *manners* only, and not of *morals*; of circumstances which from their own nature and the current of human affairs are liable to alteration, not of things in themselves eternal and immutable.

We have seen by what easy and natural progress, the providence of God carried on its purpose respecting the posterity of Abraham in general, and the royal line of the house of David in particular, and respecting a much higher object, to which this was a mere ministring servant, an harbinger and preparation, namely, "the manifestation of God in the flesh," for the redemption of a lost world. We have seen the commencement of the temporal rewards of virtue, and the

the dawning of everlasting joy. We are now to attend the progress of divine beneficence, of providential interposition, to crown the endeavours, and promote the happiness of the faithful.

Ruth has returned to her mother-in-law, laden with the fruits of honest industry, and provided with a supply for present necessity; cheered and comforted by the benevolence of a respectable stranger, and exulting in the prospect of future employment and success. Sweet are the communications of filial attachment and prosperity to the ear of maternal tenderness. It is not easy to conceive happiness more pure than was enjoyed that evening by these amiable and excellent women. Artless, undefining Ruth seems to look no farther than to the remainder of the harvest, the continuation of her labour, and of protection and encouragement from Boaz, and to the pleasure of supporting herself and aged parent by her own exertions. But Naomi, more experienced and intelligent, begins to build on the history of what Providence had done for them that day, a project of recompense to her beloved daughter, which her piety and affection so well merited, even no less than that of uniting her to Boaz in marriage. Was she to be blamed in this? By no means. It is criminal to outrun Providence, it is madness to think of constraining or bending it to our partial, selfish views. But it is wisdom, it is duty to exercise sagacity, to observe the ways of the Almighty, and to follow where he leads. The advice she gives in pursuance of this design, and Ruth's ready compliance, have, according to our ideas a very extraordinary and questionable appearance, and seem rather calculated to defeat than to forward the end which they had in view; but modern refinement and licentiousness are little competent to judge of rustic simplicity and ancient purity. The proceeding was authorized by custom, was free from every taint of immorality, and had not in the eyes of the world even the semblance of indecency. The parties were all virtuous, they feared the Lord, they conform-

ed to the laws and usages of their country, and Heaven smiled on their honest, un sullied intentions.

Had I the happiness, with a mind as pure, to address ears as chaste, imaginations as undefiled, I should without hesitation or fear enter on the detail of the transaction as it stands on the record. But regard must be had to the prejudices of the times, to the propriety and decency which custom has established, remarking at the same time, that guilt is the parent of shame, and that an over-refined delicacy is too often the proof of a polluted heart.

The marriage of Boaz to Ruth is the only instance we have of the application of a civil and political statute of long standing: which runs in these terms, "The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it; then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession. But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubilee: and in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession."* And it stands in connexion with another law circumstantially narrated. "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the first-born which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

* Lev. xxv. 23—28.

Israel. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed."*

The whole spirit of the Mosaic dispensation considers the great Jehovah as the temporal sovereign of Israel, the land as his, the supremacy his. Every Israelite received his inheritance under the express stipulation that it should not be alienated from him and from his family forever. That if, pressed by necessity, he should sell the whole or any part of it, he himself or his nearest of kindred might at any future period redeem it; that at the worst, in the year of jubilee, it should revert unpurchased to the ancient proprietor or his representative; and thereby succession and property be preserved distinct till the purposes of Heaven should be accomplished.

To give the law farther and more certain effect, it was enacted, that if the elder branch of the family and the heir of the inheritance should die childless, his next elder brother or nearest male relation should marry the widow; and that the issue of such marriage should be deemed to belong to the deceased, should assume his name, and succeed to his inheritance. Here then was the family of Elimelech ready to be extinguished: he and his two sons were all dead without posterity. Naomi was past child-bearing, the lands were ready to pass into the hands of strangers, for want of an heir, the hope of succession existing alone
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* Deut. xxv. 5—10.

in the person of Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon. The measure therefore recommended by Naomi, and adopted by Ruth, was neither less nor more than a legal call on Boaz, as the supposed nearest kinsman of that branch of the family, to fulfil the duty of that relation: Naomi not knowing, or having forgotten that there was a kinsman still nearer than him, Boaz, apprized of this, and respecting the laws of God and his country, preferably to his own passions and predilection, refers the whole cause to a fair, open, judicial decision.

The conduct of Boaz throughout is exemplary and worthy of commendation: it bespeaks at once a wise and a good man. We have expatiated at considerable length on his character as a man of piety, regularity and humanity; we have bestowed on him the just tribute of admiration and respect, as a man of sensibility, as susceptible of pity for the miserable, of kindness to the stranger, of love for a deserving object. His character acquires much additional respectability from this last consideration, connected with the delicacy of his situation as a man and a citizen. His partiality to Ruth was clear and decided. In the confidence of virtue she had put herself entirely in his power; and what use did he make of this advantage? Never was father more tender of the reputation and chastity of his daughter. Every selfish consideration is sunk in sense of propriety, in respect to the divine authority, in solicitude about the honour and interest of the woman whom he loved. His partiality to Ruth was decided, but the right of redemption was in another, and he nobly disdains to avail himself of wealth, of power, of prior possession, to the prejudice of that right. What is the victory of the warlike hero compared to this triumph of a man over himself! What are trophies stained with blood, opposed to the silent applause of a good conscience, and the approbation of Almighty God! I see him bringing the cause to the determination of the judges, with the firmness of an honest

honest man, with the anxiety of one in love, and with the resignation of one who feared the Lord, and committed all to the conduct of infinite wisdom. Characters shine by contrast. The nearer kinsman's versatility, dissimulation, and insensibility to shame, serve as a foil to the firmness, candour, and delicacy of Boaz. When the former hears of a good bargain, when he considers the advantage of his birth as the means of stepping into a vacant inheritance upon easy terms, he is all acquiescence and eagerness; but the moment he hears of the condition under which he is to purchase, of the assumption of the widow, of the relief of the miserable, of transmitting the name of Elimelech, not his own, to posterity, together with his lands, he instantly cools, submits to the infamy of having "his shoe pulled off," of being publickly spit upon, of having his house branded with a note of disgrace, and leaves the field open to a much better man than himself.

It is much easier to conceive than to describe the solicitude of the parties, while the cause was yet in dependence. What a blow to the heart of Boaz, when he, on whom the law bestowed the preference, declared his assent to the proposal; what disappointment to the hopes of Naomi, who had evidently set her mind on this match; what a damp thrown on the wishes and expectations of Ruth, on whose susceptible heart the goodness and generosity of Boaz must have made a deep impression! What relief to all, to hear him solemnly retract his assent, resign his right, and submit to the penalty. Those are the genuine delights of human life at which we arrive through danger and difficulty, which are the immediate gift of Heaven, which we have not employed improper arts to acquire, and which we can therefore enjoy without shame or remorse. The felicity which we are in too great haste to grasp, which we pursue independent of God and religion, which by crooked paths we arrive at, proves at best a cloud in the embrace, often a serpent full of

deadly

deadly poison in the bosom. The very delays which Providence interposes, the sacrifices which a sense of duty offers up, the mortifications to which conscience submits, enhance the value, and heighten the relish of our lawful comforts.

Let us apply this observation to the three leading personages in this interesting tale. Naomi sits down, and thus meditates with herself. "With what fair prospects did I begin the world; the wife of a prince, a mother in Israel, among the first in rank, in wealth, in expectation. But how early were my prospects clouded! Driven by famine from the land of promise, reduced to seek shelter and subsistence among strangers, but supported and refreshed by the company and tenderness of the husband of my tender years, and the presence and improvement of my children: finding a new home in the land of Moab, my family respected in a foreign country, reputedly allied, comfortably settled. But the cup of prosperity again dashed from my hand; husband and sons, *the desire of my eyes, taken away with a stroke*; Canaan and Moab, rendered equally a place of exile, robbed of that which rendered all places a home, all situations a pleasure; deserted of all but Heaven, and a good young woman, once the partner of my joys, now my sister in affliction: fleeing back for the relief of my anguish to my native soil and city, and mortified at finding myself there more a stranger than among aliens; providentially raised into notice and consequence again, my affectionate daughter nobly allied, the name of Elimelech about to be revived, and his house built up! What a strangely chequered life! Naomi and Mara in perpetual succession! But every thing is ordered wisely and well of Him who sees all things at one view; the latter end is better than the beginning; behold good arising out of evil; the designs of the Most High hastening to their accomplishment. All is of the Lord of Hosts, who is *wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.*"

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The reflections of the Moabitess may be supposed to run in this channel. “What a blessing for me that I ever became united to an Israelitish family, whatever pangs it may other ways have cost me! But for this I should have been, like my fathers, a worshipper of stocks and stones, the work of men’s hands; a stranger to rational piety, to inward peace! Happy loss, which procured for me this unspeakably great gain: propitious poverty, which sent, which drove me out, in quest of treasures inestimable; blessed exile, which conducted me to a habitation under the wings of the Almighty! What real gain is true godliness! It has more than the promise, it has the enjoyment of the life that now is. Mysterious Providence, that directed my doubtful, trembling steps to glean in that field, that has in a few short weeks made such a change in my condition, that has raised me from the lowest, meanest, most forlorn of dependants, to the highest state of affluence, ease and respectability; and transplanted me from the vast howling deserts of idolatry and ignorance, to the fair and fertile regions of knowledge, of purity, of hope and joy! To comfort and maintain a mother like Naomi, to find such a friend and husband as Boaz! It is life from the dead. It is of that God who has taught me to know, and to choose him as my God, and who will never fail nor forsake them who put their trust in him.”

Boaz too finds his situation greatly improved, rejoices and gives God thanks. “My wealth was great, my garners full, my man servants and maidens numerous, dutiful and affectionate, but I had no one to share my prosperity with me, I was solitary in the midst of a multitude: like Adam in Paradise, incapable of enjoyment, because destitute of a companion, an help-meet for me; but God hath provided for me a virtuous woman, whose price is above rubies. My house has now received its brightest ornament, my family its firmest support, my estate its most prudent and faithful dispenser. I have done my duty. I have
respected

respected the majesty of the law. I have followed where Providence led the way, and I have my reward, in the peace of my own mind, in the possession of a wife and good woman, in the blessing of that God who has done all things for me, and who does all things wisely and well."

Behold a match formed immediately by the hand of Providence, through the happy concurrence of little incidental circumstances; a match built, not on the brittle foundation of sordid interest, but on the solid basis of mutual affection, of generosity, of wisdom, of religion; a match pregnant with what consequences to Bethlehem-Judah, to all Israel, to the human race!

From this advantage of ground, how pleasant it is to trace the sweetly meandering course of the river of prophecy and promise united, toward the vast, the immeasurable ocean of accomplishment. Now the tribe of Judah is rising into consequence, now the royal sceptre is ready to be put into his hand, never to depart thence "till Shiloh come, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end: to whom the gathering of the people shall be." Now the star of Jacob begins to appear. Now the "tender plant" begins to rear its head, and the "root out of the dry ground to spring up; it buds and blossoms as the rose, and its smell is as the smell of Lebanon."

But what eye can discover, what created spirit take in the whole extent of "God's purpose and grace given in Christ Jesus before the world began," and terminating in the final and everlasting redemption of a lost world, through faith in his blood? The veil of eternity is drawn over it; "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."* "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.”*

The history of Ruth, will be brought to a period next Lord's day.

You see, men and brethren, the object which is closely kept in view, through every era of time, under all dispensations, and by whatever instruments. The work of God cannot stand still, his purpose cannot be defeated. One generation of men goeth and another cometh, but every succeeding generation contributes to the furtherance of his design ; and, whether knowingly or ignorantly, voluntarily or reluctantly, all fulfil his pleasure.

None are forsaken of Providence, but such as are false to themselves, and till we have done what is incumbent upon us, we have neither warrant nor encouragement to look up and wish, to expect, and pray.

Nothing is dishonourable, but what is sinful : poverty that is not the effect of idleness, prodigality or vice, has nothing shameful in it ; the gleaner behind the reapers may be as truly dignified as the lord of the harvest. Let lordly wealth cease from pride, and virtuous obscurity and indigence from dejection and despair.

Waste not time, spirits and thought in airy speculation about imaginary situations, but try to make the most of that in which infinite wisdom has seen meet to place thee.

Disdain to envy any one, at least until thou hast thoroughly examined into the estate of him whom thou art disposed to envy.

He is destitute of the happiest preparation for the relish and enjoyment of prosperity, who has not arrived at it through the path of adversity. To receive with thankfulness, to enjoy with moderation, to resign with cheerfulness, to endure with patience, is the highest pitch of human virtue.

Men

* 1 John iii. 2.

Men are often fulfilling a plan of Providence, without intending, or even being conscious of it. They are acting a double part at the same instant; the one private and personal, local and transitory, the other public, comprehensive and permanent: they may be building up at once a private family, and the church of God, carrying on and maintaining the succession to an inheritance, to a throne, and ministering to the extension and progress of a kingdom which shall never be moved or shaken.

In the kingdom of nature, there is high and low, mountain and valley, sameness with diversity: in the kingdom of Providence, there is difference of rank and station, of talent and accomplishment, of fortune and success, but a mutual and necessary connexion and dependence. In the kingdom of grace, there is diversity of gifts and offices, but the same Spirit; and so in the kingdom of glory, different degrees of lustre, as stars differ one from another, but one universal glory, of which all the redeemed are together partakers, all being kings and priests unto God. Throughout the whole, there is a gradation which at once pleases and confounds, that depresses and exalts, that inspires contentment and teaches to aspire, that now attracts to the pure fountain of uncreated light, and now repels the bold inquirer to his native darkness and distance again.

Is it pleasant to survey from the exceeding high mountain, where the christian tabernacle is pitched, the course of that river whose streams make glad the city of our God? What will it be, from the summit of yonder eternal hills; to contemplate the whole extent of Emanuel's land, "watered with the pure river of water of life;" to mingle with the nations of them that are saved, as they expatiate through the blissful groves, planted with the tree of life: to converse with the distinguished personages who shine on this hallowed page, and shall then shine in immortal lustre; to reap with Boaz a richer harvest than ever waved on the

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the plains of Bethlehem-Judah ; to assist Naomi in raising her triumphant song of praise ; and to rejoice with Ruth, and with one another, in our joint reception into God's everlasting kingdom, in our common admission into "the general assembly and church of the first-born." Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of our God. We have heard of them with the hearing of the ear, may our eyes be blessed with the sight of them. May "the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne lead us to living fountains of waters, and God wipe away all tears from our eyes." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

History of Ruth.

L E C T U R E XIV.

RUTH iv. 13—17.

So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age. For thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

THERE is an obvious resemblance between the general plan of the divine providence, and the separate and detached parts of it. The life of almost every good man exhibits virtue for a season struggling with difficulty, overwhelmed with distress, but emerging, rising, triumphing at length. Through much tribulation the christian must enter into the kingdom of God, and on his way be often in heaviness through manifold temptations. It is the wise ordinance of infinite goodness. Opposition rouses, calls forth the latent powers of the soul; success is heightened by the
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the danger to which we were exposed, by the trouble which it cost us, by the pains we took; antecedent labour sweetens rest. Hence, the passages of our own lives which we most fondly recollect and relate, and those in the lives of others which most deeply engage and interest us, are the scenes of depression, mortification and pain through which we have passed. The perils of a battle, the horrors of a shipwreck, so dreadful at the moment, become the source of lasting joy, when the tempest has ceased to roar, and the confused noise of the warrior is hushed into silence.

Fiction, in order to please, is, accordingly, forced to borrow the garb of truth. The hero's sufferings, the lover's solicitude and uncertainty, the parent's anguish, the patriot's conflict, are the subject of the drama. When the ship has reached her desired haven, when the cloud disperses, when the contest is decided, the curtain must drop. Periods of prosperity cannot be the theme of history.

The vast, general system, in like manner, exhibits "the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together:" interest clashing with interest, spirit rising up against spirit, one purpose defeating another, universal nature apparently on the verge of confusion; chaos and ancient night threatening to resume their empire: but without knowledge, design or co-operation, nay, in defiance of concert and co-operation, the whole is making a regular, steady progress; the muddy stream is working itself pure; the discordant mass is bound as in chains of adamant, the wrath of man is praising God; every succeeding era and event is explaining and confirming that which preceded it; all is tending towards one grand consummation which shall collect, adjust, unite and crown the scattered parts, and demonstrate, to the conviction of every intelligent being, that all was, is, and shall be very good.

Finite capacity can contemplate and comprehend but a few fragments at most: and scripture has furnished us with a most delicious one, in the little his-

tory,

tory, of which I have now read the conclusion. The story of Ruth has been considered, by every reader of taste, as a perfect model in that species of composition. It will stand the test of the most rigid criticism, or rather, is calculated to give instruction and law to criticism. With your patience I will attempt a brief analysis of it.

1st. The *subject* is great and important beyond all that heathen antiquity presents: the foundation and establishment of the regal dignity in the house of David, the type and ancestor of the Messiah. An event in which not one age, one nation, one interest is concerned, but the whole extent of time, the whole human race, the temporal, the spiritual, the everlasting interests of mankind. What is the demolition of Troy, or the settlement of Æneas in Latium, compared to this? *Paradise Lost* itself must give place to this glorious opening of *Paradise Regained*.

2d. The *story* is perfect and complete in itself; or, as the critic would say, has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Elimelech is driven by famine into banishment, dies in the land of Moab, and leaves his family in distress. Here the action commences. Naomi and Ruth, united by propinquity, by affection and by distress, are induced to return to Bethlehem-Judah, in hope of effecting a redemption of the estate which had belonged to the family, but under the pressure of necessity had been alienated. Their reception, deportment, and progress, form the great body of the piece. The marriage of Boaz and Ruth, and the birth of Obed is the conclusion of it.

3d. The *conduct of the plot* is simple, natural and easy. No extraneous matter, personage, or event is introduced, from first to last: the incidents follow, and arise out of one another, without force, without effort. No extraordinary agency appears, because none is requisite; the ordinary powers of nature, and the ordinary course of things, are adequate to the effect intended to be produced. There is no violent or sudden

den transition, but a calm, rational, progressive change from deep sorrow to moderated affliction, to composed resignation, to budding hope, to dawning prosperity, to solicitous prosecution, to partial success, to final and full attainment.

The discovery of Ruth, of her character, of her virtues, of her relation to Boaz, is in the same happy style of natural simplicity and ease. On her part we see no indecent eagerness to bring herself forward, no clamorous publication of her distresses or pretensions, no affected disguise or concealment to attract observation or provoke inquiry: on his, there is no vehemence of exclamation, no hastiness of resolution; but in both, the calmness of good minds, the satisfaction which conscious virtue enjoys, in the unexpected discovery of mutual attractions and kindred worth. The situations are interesting, affecting, governed by the laws of nature and probability, and consonant to every day's experience.

4th. The *sentiments* are just, arising out of the situations, adapted to the characters, guarded equally from apathy and violence. The pathetic expostulation of Ruth with her mother-in-law, when she proposed a separation, is, in particular, a master-piece of native eloquence: at hearing it, the heart is melted into tenderness, the tear of sympathy rushes to the eye, nature feels and acknowledges the triumph of virtue. The sentiment of impassioned sorrow glows with equal vehemence on the lips of Naomi, and excite in the bosom of sensibility, pity mingled with respect. In Boaz we praise and admire unostentatious generosity, dignified condescension, honest, undisguised affection, a sense of impartial, inflexible, undeviating justice.

5th. The *characters* are nicely discriminated, boldly designed, and uniformly supported. The grief of Naomi is verbose, impetuous and penetrating; that of Ruth calm, silent, melting, modest. The plans of the mother are sagacious, comprehensive; the result

of reflection, of experience; they indicate skill, ability, resolution, perseverance. Those of the daughter are artless, innocent; the suggestion of the moment, the effusion of the heart; indicate candour, sincerity, conscious, unblushing, unsuspecting rectitude.

In Boaz the struggle between inclination, propriety, prudence and justice is happily designed, and forcibly executed: it is a painting from nature, and therefore cannot fail to please. His openness and fair dealing also, as was observed in a former Lecture, are finely contrasted with the selfishness, insincerity and unsteadiness of the nearer kinsman.

The character of the servant who was over the reapers, though we have but a slight sketch of it, discovers the hand of a master, the hand of truth and nature. We see in it, the beautiful and interesting portrait of unabashed, unassuming inferiority, of authority undisturbed by insolence or severity, the happy medium between power and dependence, the link in the scale of society which connects the wealthy lord with the honest labourer, the friend and companion of both.

The rest of the characters are classed in groups, but discover a characteristic and decided distinction. We have the inquisitiveness, curiosity, hard-heartedness and indifference of an idle provincial town; the good-nature, hospitality, candour and cheerfulness of the country.

The compliments of congratulation presented to Boaz, on his marriage, and those addressed to Naomi on the birth of her grandson, clearly evince the different train of thought and feeling which dictated them, and mark beyond the possibility of mistake the sex and sentiment of the addressors. In a word, the ideas expressed by the several characters in this sacred drama, are so peculiarly their own, that no reader of ordinary discernment needs to be told, who it is that speaks: the sentiments cannot possibly be transferred from one to another.

6th. The

6th. The *manners* are delineated with the same felicity of pencil. We have a faithful representation of those that are permanent and founded in nature: and of those which are local and temporary. When I observe these Bethlehemites flocking round the old woman and her outlandish daughter, plying them and one another with questions, circulating the leer and the whisper, I could suppose myself in one of the gossiping villages which surround this metropolis, whose inhabitants feed on rumour, exercise no principle but curiosity, employ no member but the tongue, or the feet, in hunting after materials for that employment. In the innocent festivity, the uncomplaining toil, the contented simplicity, the unaffected benevolence, the unprofessing piety of that field of reapers, I have mingled a thousand and a thousand times. It was the delight of childhood, it is the unpainful, the undepressing retrospect of age.

We have a representation equally faithful and just of customs and manners which are local and temporary; some of which excite our astonishment, some shock our delicacy, and some provoke our mirth. Such are the modes of courtship here described, the transfer of property, the forms of judicial procedure, the terms of familiar address and friendly communication; and the like. These, having no intrinsic moral excellence or turpitude, are the object of neither praise nor censure. To trace their origin, or explain their nature and design, may be an innocent amusement, but it were unjust to explode them as absurd, or to run them down as ridiculous. The antiquarian will revere them for their age, the philosopher will investigate them as opening a new path to the knowledge of the human heart, the philanthropist will deal with them gently, because they are the harmless peculiarities of his fellow-creatures, and piety will respect them as presenting another view of the endless variety discoverable in all the ways and works of the great Creator.

In the permanent manners of mankind we see the eternal sameness of the human mind, which no change of climate, times, government, education can alter; a sameness as discernible and as fixed as the number of eyes, arms and fingers peculiar to the species. In those which are local and transient, we behold the infinite and endless variety of the human powers, which no stability and uniformity of law, instruction, discipline, interest, example, can arrest and fix; a variety as discernible, as unsteady, as unaccountable, as the different shades of complexion, the conformation of feature, the measurements of stature, the fluctuations of thought. Every thing satisfies, every thing confounds.

Once more, the *language* of this charming little epic history is plain and perspicuous, elegant yet unadorned, nervous yet chaste, simple yet not mean or vulgar. It consists of narration and dialogue, the former possessing the most exquisite degree of grace and ease, the latter of vivacity and force. There is no obscurity of idea, no redundancy of expression, no appearance of labour, no artful polish, no tinsel of words, no disgusting tediousness, no affected conciseness. Like the general code of scripture, it is capable of neither increase nor diminution, without sustaining an injury.

But the least merit of the piece is its excellency as a composition. It forms a most material member of the great building of God, an important link in the chain of Providence, an interesting and instructive chapter in the history of redemption. The union of Boaz and Ruth can never lose its influence, never spend its force. When nature expires, and all these things are dissolved, the offspring of that pair "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever." From that root behold a branch has arisen, to which "the nations of them that are saved" continually resort, under whose shadow they repose, whose fruit is the source and support of a
divine

divine life, whose "leaves are for the healing of the nations." Let the Jew read this sacred page, and glory in his ancestry; let the scholar read it, and improve his taste, and extend his knowledge; let the rustic read it, and prize his humble pursuits and innocent delights; let the sons of poverty and the daughters of affliction read it, and cease from despair, let them learn to "trust in the Lord, and to do good;" let the christian read it, and "hold fast the beginning of his confidence," and "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

The last obvious remark on the history, sorry I am to say it, is not highly honourable to human nature. While Naomi was poor, and friendless, and forlorn, she met with little sympathy, with little countenance; she was permitted to depend for subsistence on the miserable, unproductive industry of a woman weak and wretched as herself; but no sooner is she connected with "a mighty man of wealth," become a mother to Boaz, than the whole city is seeking to her; her own sex, in particular, we see entering into all her feelings, flattering all her natural propensities, accommodating themselves to her little wishes and desires, and trying to compensate their former coldness and neglect by every art of attention, officiousness and zeal. Base spirit! base world! Behold kindness pressed upon a man, just in proportion as he has no need of it; behold him oppressed with new friends, because he has already got too many, caressed by those who lately knew him not, praised and flattered to his face, by the very tongues which maligned and censured him in his absence. But that man is left to continue poor, because he is poor. He finds no support because he wants it, he stands unbefriended because he has no friend. Shame on the fawning sycophants that only flutter about in fair weather, that only frequent the mansions of the rich and great, that turn with the tide, that can despise ragged poverty, and offer incense to ermined villainy.

Let

Let us turn with contempt from the sight, and take a last parting look of one of the worthiest, best, happiest of human beings—Naomi nursing and cherishing her little grandson in her bosom. If there be bliss on earth, she now enjoyed it. Her honest scheme had succeeded, the name of her beloved husband was revived, and his house begun to be built up; her amiable and beloved daughter was nobly rewarded for her tenderness and attachment; the inheritance of Elimelech is redeemed, and reverted to its proper channel; the wisdom and goodness of Providence are fully justified, and a prospect of felicity and honour is opened which knew no bounds. The miseries of a whole life are done away in one hour, converted into blessings, blessings heightened and improved by the memory of past woes; the name of Mara is forever obliterated, and the original, the suitable, the prophetic name of Naomi restored and confirmed. The sensibilities of a *Grand-mother* are peculiarly pure and delicate respecting infant offspring. All good women are fond of children, to whomsoever they belong, how much more of their own, whom they bare with sorrow, and have brought up with solicitude: but “that I should live to see my child’s child, my being multiplied; dropping into the grave, yet reviving in that infant. I feel myself immortal; this babe will live to put his hand upon my eyes, and then I shall not feel the oppression of death; if he survive I cannot all die.” “*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*”

The Spirit of God has drawn a veil over the feelings of the mother herself, and the expression of them, and left it to imagination to figure the felicity of Ruth the widow of Mahlon, the daughter of Naomi, the wife of Boaz, the mother of Obed, in surveying the changes of her life, in comparing what she was with what she is.

—And thus have we finished what was intended, in discoursing on the book of Ruth. We have considered

ered it, as a beautiful, because natural representation of human life ; as a curious and interesting detail of important facts ; and as an essential, constituent part of the plan of redemption. It happily connects the history of the Israelitish judges with that of their kings, and is obviously blended with both : and while it demonstrates the care of Providence, in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham, the friend of God, in prolonging his race, in multiplying his seed, in making kings to arise out of him, it unfolds the more enlarged and comprehensive purpose of the Eternal Mind ; it points directly forward to that “ seed in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed ;” it shews the subserviency of all that preceded, to the evangelical dispensation ; it breathes good will to men. The reception of Ruth, a Gentile, within the pale of the church of the living God ; her advancement to honour, her participation of the privileges of a mother in Israel, are a happy prefiguration of the admission of the whole Gentile world within the bond of God’s covenant. We see the work of God still going forward and prospering ; the work of mercy enlarging, extending its sphere ; all bending forward to that grand consummation, when “ Israel too shall be saved,” and the ancient people of God brought into a communication of the blessings of the gospel, together with “ the fulness of the Gentile nations ;” when there shall be “ one shepherd and one sheepfold ;” when Jew and Gentile shall arise together from the dead, because “ Christ doth give them life.”

The birth of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David, brings the history of the world down to the year 2697, from the creation, and before Christ 1307, and conducts us to the eve of the establishment of kingly power in Israel.

How many generations of men have passed in review before us, in the course of these few years evening exercises from Adam down to Boaz ! What changes

changes has the audience undergone, since first it collected in this view! What deep and affecting changes will a few more seasons produce! The turning of the page will present a new preacher, new hearers, a different plan, a different arrangement, different interests, different feelings. The separation of this night may be final and permanent. We bend together, gracious God, with wonder and gratitude before thy throne. Spared together so many years longer, "cumberers of the ground" that we are; our bodies preserved in health, our minds in tranquillity: blessed with friendship, blest with sufficiency, blest with the means of improvement, blest with hope! Ah, we are unworthy of the least of thy favours, and we have been distinguished by the choicest and best! Make us to feel thy goodness and our own unworthiness; help us to live more to thy glory. As our interest in the world diminishes, as years increase, as grey hairs multiply, as friends depart, as comforts fail, as eternity advances, let our faith strengthen, let our spirits rise to thee, let our prospects brighten, let our ardour after immortality kindle. The nearer we approach to thee, let our resemblance to thee become more apparent; let the spirit of heaven, the spirit of the blessed Jesus, be imparted to us, that, living and dying, we may edify the world, be a blessing to all connected with us, and still enjoy inward peace. And as we separate from time to time, may it be in the sweet expectation of meeting together in the regions of everlasting purity, love and joy. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits. Amen."

History of Hannah,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

L E C T U R E XV.

I SAMUEL i. 1—8.

Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of Mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city yearly, to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions. But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion: for he loved Hannah; but the Lord had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord; so she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? And why eatest thou not? And why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?

Similar

SIMILAR causes ever have produced, and ever will produce similar effects. You may shift the scene from one age and country to another, but like beings, the same spirit, the same passions and pursuits arise continually to view. The difference between period and period, nation and nation, city and city, man and man, consists merely in a few arbitrary customs, various forms of speech and modes of behaviour; but the great principles of human nature, the great moving springs of human actions are universal and invariable. What then is so absurd as to tax others with absurdity, only because their language, manners or prejudices do not exactly coincide with our own?

As the principles of our nature, so the rules of the divine government are similar and uniform. The views, passions and interests of men are the hinges on which the mighty engine revolves. Every little individual moves and acts in his own proper sphere, like the stars in the firmament of heaven, but all move and act together under the influence of one great commanding power, which animates and directs the whole. Every one possesses, and feels, and exercises its separate intelligence, and all are, at the same time, checked, impelled, sustained by one supreme Intelligence which is above all, through all and in all.

The justest and most accurate, the most useful and instructive representations of human life and conduct are to be found in this divine record. The actors in this sacred and interesting drama, are personages of the very highest distinction, patriarchs and prophets, legislators and kings; but we are never permitted, for a single moment, to forget, that they are also men. In their form and features we behold our own image reflected. In the emotions by which they were agitated, in the objects which they pursued, we recognize our own aversions and desires, our own pursuits and attainments, our own mortifications and successes.

We are now entering on the history of one of the greatest among the prophets, and that history delineated by his own pencil. He begins it with a description of his father's family, previous to his own birth, and a faithful representation of the different characters of which it was composed. And this will furnish ample matter for the present Lecture.

Elkanah, the father of Samuel, from the genealogical deduction here presented; was a Levite of the family of the Kohathites, and is denominated a man of Ramathaim-zophim, of Mount Ephraim, from his being born or residing at that city.

Men of eminence, as has often been observed, confer celebrity on cities and countries; but poor is that merit which is derived from no other source but a man's parentage, or the place of his birth. The Levitical tribe was scattered over the whole country, and during the disorderly times which succeeded the death of Joshua, their residence and their services seem to have been regulated by no certain and fixed standard. His ancestors for many generations are mere names in the historic page; shadows without a substance; and he himself borrows the fame and lustre in which he is transmitted to us, from the reputation, ability and distinction of his nobler son; whose children, in their turn, sink into infamy, and thence into oblivion.

The first article in Elkanah's domestic economy presented to our consideration, is an imputation upon his wisdom, if not upon his piety. "He had two wives." Polygamy, or a plurality of wives, was a practice at that time indeed connived at, but no where, and at no period, sanctioned by a law: a practice not indeed condemned by statutes and punishments, but sufficiently condemned by effects and consequences. It is of very little importance to inquire whether it be forbidden, if it can be proved unreasonable, unwise, inexpedient. And for such proof we have but to recur to the domestic history of Abraham, of Jacob, of Elkanah, and of every family in which it prevailed.

prevailed. Hannah was probably the prior wife, and it is presumable that the disappointment of not having children by her suggested the hazardous experiment of a double marriage; and the issue demonstrated that every deviation from the path of rectitude leads directly to its own chastisement.

The mortification of Hannah, already too much to bear, is grievously embittered by the assumption of a rival in the affection of her husband, and becomes intolerable by the fruitfulness of that rival. And thus, by one ill-advised step, all the parties are rendered unhappy, and that without any high degree of criminality on any side. Elkanah's peace is incessantly disturbed by the mutual jealousy, and bitterness, and strife of those conjoined, who separately might have contributed to soothe and soften the cares of life. The pleasure of having children is marred and impaired to Peninnah, by the ill-disguised partiality of the father of her children, to another. The misery of barrenness is dreadfully aggravated to Hannah, by the cruel mocking and taunts of her merciless adversary. And what became of the children all the while? Were they likely to be well and wisely educated, amidst all these domestic jarrings? Hated and opposed by more than a step-mother's rancour, spoiled by the over indulgence of maternal tenderness, striving to compensate that rancour and hatred; secretly carested, openly neglected by an embarrassed father, who was now afraid to express, and now to conceal the honest emotions of nature. It is not vice only that destroys human comfort. And if mere imprudence involves a man in so many difficulties and distresses, how dreadful must it be to bear continually in one's bosom the burning coal of an ill conscience.

Happily for Elkanah and his house, family discord did not extinguish family religion; he went up regularly with all his household to worship the Lord at Shiloh, at the great yearly festivals. The law commanded the attendance of the males only, on such occasions;

sions; but whether it were that a higher sense of piety induced him to appear before Jehovah rejoicing with all that were his, or whether he hoped to allay the ferment of fierce and angry spirits, in the soul-composing exercises of devotion, both his wives attended him to the service of the sanctuary, and sat down together with him at the sacrifice of peace-offering. It was wisely and well intended, the fire of malignity fades and dies in presence of the pure flame of love divine, as material fire is absorbed and extinguished when exposed to the rays of the glorious orb of day. It was well intended, had he not reason to hope that Hannah would forget her misery, and Peninnah her pride in the presence of God; that the power of religion, and the prospects of immortality might haply unite those whom passion and interest had severed. But if such were his intention, he succeeded not. And that he succeeded not, is to be imputed, in part, to his own weakness. The beloved wife must be distinguished by a "worthy portion," and to render it more insulting, at a public festival, and before envious, watchful eyes, those of Peninnah, and her sons and daughters. Thus, through some mixture of folly in ourselves, through the craftiness and malignity of another, or through some untowardness of arrangement, over which we had no power, and neither could foresee nor prevent, the best designs miscarry, medicine is converted into poison, and religion is made a minister of wrath and unrighteousness.

Who does not here recollect a certain "coat of many colours," which cost so dear to him who gave, and to him who wore it? Who is not warned to guard against, or at least to conceal partial affections, where claims are equal? Who does not feel the importance of bringing to the altar of God, a spirit elevated above all temporal considerations!

Not only was the good-natured intention of Elkanah frustrated, but the worship of God was profaned; and

and wretched indeed must be the state of that family, where religion not only fails to conciliate, but tends to alienate, irritate and inflame. "Elkanah loved Hannah, but the Lord had shut up her womb."—The absence of one desired blessing renders the possession of a thousand others tasteless and insipid. The moderating hand of eternal Providence rectifies the disorders, and counteracts the violence, of human passion; preserves the balance from a preponderancy too great, or too lasting, on either side; and conducts all to the happiest issue at length.

But an evil which comes immediately from heaven is by that very consideration rendered both tolerable and salutary. The Lord can do nothing but what is right; in wrath he remembers love; "he afflicts not willingly nor grieves the children of men, not for his pleasure, but their profit." But alas, there was mingled in Hannah's cup, an ingredient which converted the whole into wormwood and gall; "her adversary also provoked her sore for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb." What relish had now the double portion, though the token of a fond husband's unabated kindness? The insulting words and looks of her pitiless "adversary" are as vinegar upon nitre. How dreadful to have a calamity which was incessantly, though secretly preying upon her vitals, incessantly thrown in her teeth; home rendered a burthen; the place of sacrifice, a habitation of discord; fire snatched with unhallowed hands from the altar of Jehovah to kindle the gloomy fire of hell! There needs no tormenting fiend to ascend from the bottomless pit, armed with scorpions, to plague and torture wretched mortals; see, they are armed like furies one against another, they exult in one another's pain; relentless, remorseless, they "say not it is enough."

Dreadful to think, this angry vengeful spirit continued to agitate and torment these unhappy women for many years together; and what is hell, but a state
of

of unabating, growing animosity and hatred? "As he went up year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, so she provoked her." In female bosoms can such malignity dwell? Ah, what so bad as the good corrupted, perverted! Behold a rancour which no time could enfeeble, no sense of shame restrain, and which the sacredness of the sanctuary served only to embitter and inflame! Can it be possible, merciful Father, can it be possible, that such a fell spirit should ever have accompanied any of us to thy house of prayer? Can "the same tongue utter blessing and cursing?" Dare we say "we love God, whom we have not seen, while we hate" or despise "a brother" a sister "whom we have seen?" "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

It is greatly to the honour of Hannah, that all this cruel and insulting treatment drew from her no indecent return. Though grieved in spirit, provoked, fretted beyond all enduring, we hear of no furious appeal to the partial tenderness of her husband, no railing for railing, no rash malediction, no furious threatening of revenge. It is not easy to govern the spirit; it is not always possible to command the temper under offence and insult; but the tongue is in every one's power, improper words admit of no defence, and rage is but a poor apology for abuse and blasphemy. But she pines away in silent sorrow. "She wept, and did not eat." These seasons of rejoicing before the Lord, these times of refreshing to every other daughter of Israel, were to her days of heaviness and woe. What signifies a large portion to one who has no appetite? What is the prosperity of her people, to one, who, like a dried branch, is cut off from all interest in posterity, who sees the name and honours of her beloved husband passing away to the children of another, the children of one who hated her?

* Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

her? Alas, the spirit of devotion itself is checked and repressed by the incessant, unrelenting stings of envy and jealousy; life is become a burden to her.

The deep affliction with which she was overwhelmed could not escape the attentive eyes of Elkanah. Though her tongue said nothing, her eyes, her tears, her dejection, her abstinence, her sighs betrayed abundantly the anguish of her soul. "Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah why weepest thou, and why eatest thou not, and why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" To what distress has the good man reduced himself? Now he severely feels the effect of his own imprudence, and laments his having tried the dangerous experiment, which robbed him of all domestic quiet, disturbed the festivity of the solemn rendezvous at Shiloh, and threatened to produce one day some tragical event in his family.

Sympathy, if it does not wholly dispel our miseries, pours at least a temporary balm into the wound, and "soothes pain for a while." Hannah becomes composed, and the feast is concluded. There is still one refuge left for the miserable, one remedy against despair, one friend able and ready to help in every time of trouble; and our eyes with complacency follow the mourner, not into her secret retirement, to spend her sorrow in unavailing tears, or to curse the day in which she was born; not into the round of giddy dissipation, to drown reflection and anxiety, in the poisoned chalice of intemperate mirth and jollity; but to the place of prayer, but to the door of mercy, but to the dawn of hope.

We shall presently find, that what related to the externals of God's worship was at that time but badly conducted in Israel, the "sons of Eli were sons of Belial," they "knew not the Lord." But be the minister who he will, the word and service of God cannot be rendered of none effect. Not only the spirit of piety, but a sense of common decency was
now

now lost in the Levitical priesthood: when it pleased God to make this very afflicted woman, the means in his hand, to restore the dignity, purity and importance of the sacred function, to revive the decayed interests of religion, and to bring forward the great events which are so intimately connected with the things which belong to our everlasting peace.

When we look into human life, whether as exhibited on the hallowed page of inspiration, or by our own observation and experience, we shall find that most of the "ills which flesh is heir to" may easily be traced up to some imprudence, heedlessness, or transgression of the man himself, who, before he was aware, found himself involved in difficulties and distresses the native effects of his own misconduct, but which he foresaw not, apprehended not, and which he never could intend. I know how poor a consolation it is, to tell a man, "you have nobody but yourself to blame," and to upbraid him with the warning which you gave him, and he would not take; but it is not, for that, useless for one to discover the source, cause and progress of his calamity. The case must be bad indeed, or his eyes must have been opened very late, or his "heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," if he cannot turn to some good account the reflections of maturer judgment, the admonitions and chastisement of experience, the pain and remorse of an *ill* conscience, or the mistakes and wanderings of a *good* one.

—There are steps in conduct which are irretrievable, and therefore ought not to be tampered with. The excessive use of the most wholesome food, will at length overwhelm the strongest constitution; the occasional application of what is doubtful or unwholesome may undermine or waste it, but poison is certain death; and the sagacity of a brute, the understanding of a child, is sufficient to distinguish between poison and food, perhaps not between poison and medicine.

—To how many gracious, social, civil and moral purposes, may not the wise and proper use of religious

services be applied? The man who has performed with understanding and feeling the *devotions of the closet*, will issue from it in a higher state of preparation for every duty of life. Filled with veneration for his heavenly Father, "who seeth," and with whom he has been conversing "in secret," he breathes good will to man. The emotions of every unkind, ungentle, unjust affection are stifled, extinguished, forgotten. The principles of benevolence and benignity have acquired new life and energy. He is disposed to meet the ills of life with more firmness and fortitude, and to enjoy its blessings with a more exquisite relish. Hannah having poured out her soul to God, "went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." The devotion of the morning will prove the best assistant toward conducting the business of the coming day; and that of the evening, the happiest review and improvement of the past. From him who habitually begins and ends every thing with God, you may reasonably expect, the fruits of a good and honest heart, "speech alway with grace, seasoned with salt," and order in conduct, more than from other men: more works of mercy, more fair dealing, more steadiness in friendship: and less of the rancour of opposition, less of the self-sufficiency of pride, less of the malignity of envy; for the love of God absorbs all these baleful, malignant fires.

The *devotions of the family*, in like manner, produce the happiest effects within that sphere. How soothing, how cementing, how conciliating they are! Does common calamity press? It is alleviated, it is sanctified, it is done away, when the "care is cast upon God," when the burthen is transferred to a Father in heaven, who stands engaged to remove it, or to render it a blessing. Is domestic prosperity abounding, increasing? What an additional lustre, value, sweetness does it derive from union, from piety, from a common sense of obligation and dependence? Have offences come? Has peace been disturbed? Are the bonds which united
 husband

husband and wife, parent and child, brother and brother, master and servant, unhappily broken? The moment that the healing address, "Our Father who art in heaven," reaches the ear, every soul is peace, the spirit of love pervades the whole, and the voice of discord is heard no more. When pardon is implored from him whom all have offended, the stony heart relents, melts, forgives, for he needs to be forgiven.

The influence of *public worship* likewise, where it has not degenerated into mere form, is the strongest cement of society. It serves to consolidate men of various ranks and conditions, with their several talents and abilities, into one compact, efficient, well-organized body, ready to act with one heart and one soul, in the cause of God and their country. Little shades of difference, in men truly good, will unite instead of disjoining. Our great national assemblies are obliged, by law, to open their sittings for public business, by acts of public devotion. The reason and intention of the law, and of the practice founded upon it, are abundantly obvious. If the effect does not follow to the extent that might be wished—it must be concluded, that the devotional part of the sitting is neglected; that formality has extinguished the flame; or that difference of religious sentiment, or what is still worse, indifference to all religion, mar and weaken, and distract the whole. The prevalency of a worldly spirit must at length prove fatal to piety, and when piety is gone, public spirit is on the decline, and will not long survive.

—But we have in the history under review, a melancholy instance of what frequently happens to this day, and under a happier dispensation of religion—seasons and places of devotion perverted into the instruments of kindling and exercising the ungracious, the unsocial, the unkind affections. How often is the sanctuary of God profaned, by being made the scene of displaying the rivalry of beauty, dress, equipage, rank and affluence? The humbling services of the meek

and lowly Jesus, are unnaturally forced into the ministers of pride and vain-glory. The tranquillity of the day of sacred rest, and its gentle, peaceful employments, give a birth, which they detest and disclaim, to the whisper of envy, and the noise of slander. The feast of love is disturbed, the sacrifice of peace is defiled by the impure claws of harpies; and "the house of prayer is turned into a den of thieves." "Surely, my beloved brethren, these things ought not so to be."

—Happily for us, the influence of the gospel, and the laws of our country, and the spirit of the times, prevent the practice which threw Elkanah's family into such a flame; and which, wherever it has prevailed, has been productive of confusion and every evil work. May a purer religion, and wiser institutions, and a more enlightened spirit produce a more perfect morality, promote domestic happiness, and extend and secure national prosperity.

We now proceed farther to unfold, from the sacred history, the character and conduct of Hannah; earnestly praying, that with "all" the rest of "scripture," which "is given by inspiration of God," it may prove profitable for doctrine, and for reproof, and for correction, and for instruction in righteousness."

History of Hannah,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

L E C T U R E XVI.

I SAMUEL i. 9—18.

So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drank. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my Lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drank neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast

hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

THE support and the consolations administered by religion, are adapted to the nature and necessities of man. The exercises which it prescribes arise out of the circumstances and events of human life; and the being and perfections of God present themselves to us according as we pass from one condition to another. There are comforts which no one but God could have bestowed: there is wretchedness which God only can relieve. Hence the soul rises directly to the Giver of all good in transports of gratitude, and cleaves to him when every other refuge fails. Hence, all that is known by the name of prayer, is at once the voice of nature, the result of reason, and a dictate of religion.

What is the confession of the penitent, but the trembling hope of a guilty creature toward the God of mercy, fleeing from the judgment of unrelenting, unforgiving man; from the persecution of an awakened, an accusing conscience, to a proclamation of peace and pardon from heaven? What is the resignation of the patient, but a devout acknowledgment of unerring wisdom, which does all things well, and afflicts in loving-kindness? What is the cry of distress, but an appeal to omnipotence for that assistance which the powers of nature cannot bestow? What is adoration, but the faculties of an intelligent being lost in the contemplation of infinite perfection? Even the rash and impious appeals to Heaven, which are uttered by the thoughtless and profane, demonstrate, that piety and prayer are founded in the very constitution of our nature. Why does that blasphemer take the name of the Lord God in vain? why swears he by the great and terrible name of Jehovah? why is his imprecation sanctioned by that tremendous signature? why are the emotions of anger, of pain, of surprise, of joy, enforced by the names and attributes of Deity? The wretch
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who thus tramples on his law, insults his authority, defies his power, is in these very acts of horror paying an involuntary homage to the God of truth and justice, and obliquely confesses that divine perfection which he has the boldness to violate.

We turn from the dreadful practice with holy indignation, to contemplate the desponding mourner fleeing for rest and relief in the bosom of a Father and a God; and to learn lessons of piety, and derive nourishment to hope, from the experience of others.

We have seen the disorder of a family in Israel occasioned by the foolishness of man; we are now to consider that disorder rectified, and turned into a source of domestic joy and public felicity through the wisdom and goodness of God. The solemnity of the yearly sacrifice, and the cheerfulness of the feast, had been continually embittered and destroyed to Hannah by reflection on her state of approach among the daughters of Israel, and the merciless insults of her rival and adversary. The kind attentions, and affectionate remonstrances of a beloved husband, soothe for a moment, but cannot remove the anguish that preyed upon heart. She looks with impatience through the tediousness of the entertainment, to the hour of retirement; and, as soon as decency permits, she exchanges the house of mirth for the house of prayer.

“If any one is afflicted let him pray.” And who is not ready to give testimony to the salutary influence of this hallowed employment? The suppliant thus disburthens the mind of a load, before intolerable; the effusion of tears cools and refreshes the heart. Prayer does not always bring down the grace that is solicited, but verily it has produced its effect, when the spirit is moulded into the will of the Most High. Prayer prevails not to obtain that particular blessing, but behold it is crowned with another and a greater benefit. The expected good comes not exactly at the time and in the way it was entreated, but it is conveyed at the most proper season, and in the fittest way; and

and how much is the enjoyment heightened and sweetened by the delay! Thus, whether the wrestler “as a prince has power with God, and prevails,” or by a touch is made sensible of his weakness and inferiority, God is glorified, and the divine life is promoted in him.

The memoirs of this good woman’s life comprehend but a very short period, a few years at most. Herein consists one of the excellencies of the sacred writings. Other biographers drag you with them into dry, uninteresting details of events which had much better been forgotten. You are wearied out with the laborious display of childish prattle, the pretended prognostic of future eminence, or the doting, imperfect, distorted recollections of a wretched old man who has outlived himself. There are in truth very few particulars in any man’s life worthy of being recorded; and of those who really have lived, a very short memoir indeed will serve all the valuable purposes of history.

Every thing of importance for us to know respecting Hannah is what related to the birth of her son Samuel; and to that accordingly the scripture account of her is confined. She is the fourth, as far as we recollect, on the face of the sacred history, represented in nearly similar circumstances, and she is not the least respectable of the four. “Sarah laughed,” staggering at the promise of God through unbelief. Rebekah seems to have borne her trial with listlessness and indifference; and Rachael, irritated with her’s, loses all sense of shame and decency, and exclaims, “Give me children, else I die.” Hannah feels her calamity as a woman, deplores it as a woman, and seeks deliverance from it as one who believed in the power and grace of God.

Observe the more delicate shades in her character, She rose not up till “after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk.” She had patience and self-government sufficient to carry her without any apparent

parent disquietude, through the formalities of a public assembly, which must have been very painful, irksome, and disgusting to her. She would rather constrain herself, than make others uneasy; and pine in secret, rather than permit her private griefs to spread a gloom over the innocent communications of society. Tell me, if you will, that the remark is frivolous, and the doctrine unedifying. I shall neither feel mortified nor complain, provided you permit me to think that nothing is frivolous that tends to unfold the excellence and importance of the female character, and nothing unedifying which serves to improve the better part of our species in the knowledge of the means whereby both their respectability and importance may be effectually promoted. I repeat it therefore confidently, that Hannah is here represented as exemplifying a hard lesson, but one of high importance to all her sex. Who does not know, my female friends, that your condition and place in society necessarily subject you to many cruel privations, many mortifying constraints? What heart but sympathizes with you, obliged, as you are, to bear and to forbear, in patience and silence, and to practise painful duty, without so much as the poor reward of notice and approbation. But trust me, you have often, when you little think of it, the admiration and esteem of the more attentive and judicious; you have the sweet consolation of reflecting that you are endeavouring to act well; you can look up in humble hope to that God who seeth in secret; who observes and records what the world overlooks or forgets.

How pitiable, on the other hand, are those unhappy females, who dream of deriving consequence from vexing and disturbing all around them, by perpetually bringing forward their personal vexations, as if the world had nothing to mind but them, and their real or imaginary grievances.

But this, as was said, is only a shade in the character; the great, striking feature, is a fervid, importunate,

nate, aspiring spirit of devotion. Sighs and tears are the language of nature sinking under its own woe, of a "heart that knows its own bitterness;" prayer is the language of faith in, and hope toward God, the exertion of a soul struggling to get free, casting its burden upon the Lord, and acquiring strength from exercise. There is a beautiful and affecting copiousness in her expression. She addresses God as the Lord of universal nature, who "doth according to his will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth;" as "the Lord of Hosts," who has all creatures, all events in his hand and at his disposal. The repetition of the word "handmaid" is emphatical, and powerfully expresses her humility, submission, and sense of dependence; and it is humility that lends energy to every other principle of the divine life. "From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and accordingly we find her diversifying her petition into all the various modes of address; "If thou wilt indeed look on my affliction, and remember me, and not forget me. Is this the vain repetition of the hypocrite, who thinks he shall "be heard for his much speaking?" O no, it is the honest effusion of a heart filled with its object, persisting in the pursuit, and rising gradually into confidence of success. It is a happy anticipation of the Saviour's doctrine, "that men ought to pray always, and not to faint:" a happy example of clearness and precision in the subject matter of prayer, of confidence in, and reliance on the Hearer of prayer, of holy resolution to make a suitable return to prayer heard, accepted, and answered.

But what was here the expression of a devout, a praying spirit? The noise of the Pharisee, the pomp of words, the correctness that courts the applause of men? No, but the ardour of a gracious spirit which neglects forms, which never thinks of appearance, or the opinion of others, which, occupied with God, overlooks man. What need of words, to him who reads
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the secret recesses of the heart, who hears the half-breathed sigh of the prisoner in his dungeon, who collects the falling tears of the mourner, and has already granted the pious request before it is formed in the anxious breast? Strong inward emotion will of necessity imprint itself on the external appearance. The voice may be suppressed, but the features will speak; what bushel will confine the lightning of the eye? the lips will move involuntary; the hands will raise themselves to heaven, without an admonition from vanity, and the bosom will swell to make room for the expanding heart, though no eye is present to see it, and regardless whether there be or no.

How equivocal are the signs of human passions, and how liable to mistake is the most discerning human eye? What was in the sight of God an indication of faith believing against hope, of a fervent piety which totally absorbed the senses, of a heavenly mind which rapt the very body up to the throne of God, is, in the sight of Eli, the disorder of a distempered brain, the effect of excess, the lowest, the most deplorable, the most disgusting exhibition of degraded humanity. Alas, the good man, as we shall presently find, had "a beam in his own eye;" and thereby was led to discern "a mote" in that of another, where there was none. In reflecting on the rash judgments of men, the choice of David, when in a great strait, presses itself upon us with redoubled force; "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man." "If God justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" But ah! what signifies the applause of the world to him who is condemned of his own conscience, and who trembles every hour at thought of the righteous judgment of God!

I like the defence of Hannah almost as well as her prayer; it argues conscious innocence and integrity. Not a single particle of gall enters into her reply, not even a particle of honest heat and indignation, at an imputation

imputation so odious. A female charged with a breach of decency so gross as excess of wine, and not break out into a flame! Ah, her calmness and temper refute sufficiently the infamous aspersion, infinitely better than a torrent of intemperate abuse would have done. How calm, how beautiful, how lovely, how dignified is innocence! It seeks the light, it shrinks not from the eye of inspection; it defies calumny, and wraps itself up in its own pure mantle; but disdains not, at the same time, to satisfy the honest inquiry, and to remove the hasty suspicion of true goodness; it is always ready to render a reason, always ready to prevent its good from being evil spoken of.

The conduct of Eli is estimable in two points of view. Observing, as he thought, the temple of the Lord profaned, and the female character dishonoured, he honestly speaks out his suspicion and censure to the party concerned; instead of whispering them in the ear of a third person; and thereby affords an opportunity of explanation, and of coming to a right understanding: and, once satisfied of his having been mistaken, he retracts his hasty judgment, and exchanges reprehension into blessing, and supplicates Heaven in favour of her whom he had rashly condemned.

To what a happy serenity is the mind of Hannah now restored! She has poured out her soul before the Lord, and vindicated her innocence to man. The tranquillity and joy of her spirit shine in the whole of her outward deportment; her countenance brightens up, she partakes in the festivity of the season, and "is no more sad." What a different figure does the same man present to the eyes of the world, inflamed with rage, torn with envy, stung with remorse, distracted with anxiety, degraded with debauchery; or with a visage beaming benevolence, eyes animated with love, a form firm and erect from conscious integrity.

Would you wish to appear to advantage before others, take care to cleanse the inside of the cup. Purify thyself "from all filthiness of the spirit." Let
order

order and peace reign within; no artificial daubing applied on the outside, no splendour or elegance of apparel, no studied arrangement of the features, will do it half so well.

Looks and appearance are perhaps of inferior consequence to one sex, but they are of much to the other. With some, appearance is all in all. In that view, it is not easy to imagine the effect which the inward temper and character produce. Beauty becomes perfect ugliness, and inspires nothing but disgust, from the moment that the face begins to wear the traces of pride, contempt, envy, fury or insolence. On the other hand, be assured, that a very homely external may be improved into perfect loveliness, by affability, gentleness, benevolence, compassion, and, above all, by a spirit of genuine piety, the parent of every grace. If there be a human being that really deserves the name of angel, a term, for the most part, most vilely prostituted, it is a sensible woman descending from the temple, or issuing from her closet, to enter with composedness, sweetness and satisfaction on the employments of her humble, but important station in human life.

It was through the disorder of a divided family, it was through the woe of an afflicted woman, it was amidst the corruptions of a degenerate church and a disjointed state, that God was pleased to raise up a prophet, a priest, a judge in Israel to stem the torrent, to restore the lost dignity of religion, to save a sinking nation. When events flow in an even channel, when the powers of nature produce their effect in an uniform tenor, a blind chance, an irresistible fate, or an unintelligent arrangement receives the homage, which is due only to sovereign wisdom, and all-comprehensive beneficence. For this reason, God sometimes permits the great machine as it were to stand still, that men may observe by what hand it is stopt, and by what hand it is put in motion again.

Isaac,

Isaac, Jacob, Samson, Samuel, four of the most eminent among the types of the great Restorer of fallen man, were introduced into the world, through the agonies of desponding nature, through the exercise of undaunted faith, and the unwearied importunity of prayer and supplication. They were the successive lights of the world, each in his day; and having every one fulfilled his day, were successively extinguished. The great Light of the world has arisen, the stars disappear, the shadows are fled away. Patriarchs and prophets bring their glory, and lay it at his feet, a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear Him."

—Let not the apparently declining state of any interest preach despair; for every evil has its remedy, except despair. That cause must perish, which all agree to give up as lost; a dying cause may revive and flourish by the wisdom and honest exertions of one man. Impaired health often issues in death, embarrassed circumstances in bankruptcy, an irregular life in irretrievable perdition; because the patient, the debtor, the sinner gave himself up too hastily, and was lost through fear of being lost. While there is "balm in Gilead, and a physician there," no wound, however grievous, is incurable. While there is friendship, while there is compassion on earth, honest distress will find sympathy and relief. While the throne of grace is accessible, there is hope "for the chief of sinners."

And if no cause of man be desperate, who shall dare to despair of the cause of God and truth? Behold, in a posterior period of this sacred history,* the utter extirpation of the posterity of Abraham determined, and the plans of Providence threatened, of course, with defeat and disappointment. Behold the bloody warrant signed, and "sealed with the ring" of Ahafuerus, and thereby rendered irreversible. Behold the vengeful Haman, like the exterminating angel,

* Esther iii. 8—15.

gel, with his sword drawn in his hand, ready to fall upon his prey. What can save a devoted people from destruction? One obscure Jew; one not admitted to the king's councils, but who sat unregarded in the king's gate. He feels as a citizen and a man, he laments the impending doom of his country as a citizen and a man; but he likewise acts, and exerts himself like a citizen and a man, and leaves the issue to Him, in whose hand are the hearts of kings—and it prospered. The remonstrance of Mordecai with the queen, at this awful crisis, is a master-piece of intrepidity, piety and good sense, and furnishes an useful example for the conduct of both public and private life. “Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* The Roman consul, whose rashness lost the battle of Cannæ, and endangered the existence of the state, received the thanks of the senate, “because he had not despaired of the commonwealth.” The gallant prince of Orange, afterwards William III. of England, when urged to submit to the victorious arms of France, which were ravaging the United Provinces, and when the ruin of the republic seemed inevitable, nobly replied, “There is one way to secure me from the sight of my country's destruction; I will die in the last ditch.” His resolution prevailed, and his country was saved from the yoke of the invader. And if confidence in a skilful, brave and fortunate commander, can carry a handful to victory through myriads of foes, what has the christian to fear, let difficulties and dangers be ever so many, ever so great, while conscious

* Esther iv. 13, 14.

he is engaged in a good cause, and that he is following "the Captain of Salvation?"

We proceed to view the character and behaviour of Hannah in the hour of success and prosperity, blessed with the answer of prayer, and exulting in the enjoyment of the purest delights, and in performing the most important duties of life and religion.—May our meditation on these things be sweet and profitable! Amen.

History of Hannah,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

LECTURE XVII.

I SAMUEL i. 19—23.

And they arose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah; and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about, after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. But Hannah went not up: for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide forever. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

THE birth of a child is an event of much importance to those who are immediately concerned in it, and of much importance to the world. It is natural for a man to wish that his family should be built up, and his name transmitted. Every child is an accession to

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national strength, is one more added to the number of rational, immortal beings, is a new display of the great Creator's power, wisdom and goodness. There lie dormant the precious seeds of faculties which are one day to astonish, instruct and bless mankind. These infants, a few years hence, are to be the pillars of the state, the bulwarks of their country, the glory of the church of Christ. That young one shall by and by burst through the obscurity of his birth, and the meanness of his condition; shall become eminently useful, and purchase a name which ages to come shall pronounce with respect and esteem. But what is it to be known and distinguished among men? The period approaches, when God himself shall in the face of the universe acknowledge the least of these as his sons, and seat them on heavenly thrones.

It is natural for a man to wish his family built up, and for a good woman to wish the name and virtues of the husband of her youth preserved and propagated, even though she has not the fond desire, the flattering hope, of being a mother in Israel. But the determinations of Providence do not always accord with the innocent propensities of the human heart, much less with the insatiate demands of pride, avarice and ambition. Even the wise, the amiable and the virtuous are visited with this sore evil, the want of children. It is sometimes the calamity of those who have no other calamity. It demonstrates the imperfection of human bliss; it spreads a field for the exercise of resignation to the will of God; it furnishes both a motive and a subject for prayer: for we can carry with confidence, to the throne of grace, many a petition which we should be afraid or ashamed of preferring to a man like ourselves. Happy is the man, happy the woman, who can deposit this and every other care in the bosom of a Father in heaven. She may sit down with Hannah, and "eat" and drink, "and be no more sad."

We

We are this evening presented with the history of the birth and infancy of one of those illustrious children whose fame is universally known, and shall be had in everlasting remembrance, namely, of Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, the judge of Israel, the setter up and the terror of kings; the glory of his own age and country; and the morning-star of a brighter day. The gift of this precious child was long withheld, that it might be more devoutly acknowledged, and more highly prized. Men overlook the ordinary appearances of nature, however stupendous and striking. In order therefore to rouse them to attention, and constrain them to observe the finger of God, the fiery comet is made to glare through the sky, and the earth shakes to the centre.

The blessing was sweetened to Hannah by every circumstance that can affect the fond maternal heart. A child to one who had long been afflicted with barrenness, and cruelly insulted on that account; a man-child, the answer of prayer; the power of performing for her darling infant the sweetest, and one of the most important, maternal duties; and the cordial concurrence of the father in all her prudent, affectionate and pious purposes; present enjoyment, and blossoming prospects! If there be pure and perfect bliss on earth, it is the portion of such a woman, in such a situation.

“The Lord remembered her.” Was he ever unmindful or unkind? No, he delayed, and he granted in love. How much it concerns thee, O man, O woman, to know and to believe this! What can reconcile thee to the hardships of thy lot, but the persuasion that the good thou desirest is denied in wisdom, and the load that oppresses thee laid on by the hand of a Father? Trust in the Lord, and be of good cheer; the time to favour thee will come; “the Lord will provide,” “the Lord will remember thee.”

“She bare a son, and called his name Samuel.” Gracious is the correspondence between a devout spir-

it and approving, assenting Heaven. Behold the prayer of faith ascending as on eagle's wings, and resting on the footstool of yonder radiant throne; behold the good and perfect gift coming down in return from the Father of lights. Thus the vapours exhaled from the briny deep, fall back in copious showers to refresh and fertilize the earth. What a holy contention is here presented to us! The pious soul striving with God in supplication, in praise, in obedience, in faithfulness; the God of mercy striving with the meek and humble one in shewing kindness, in heaping favour upon favour. *Samuel*, "asked and given of God," shall bear to the last hour of his life the memorial of his mother's fervent importunity at the throne of grace, and of God's hearing her in the time of need. It shall serve forever to remind himself that he was a gift obtained of God by prayer, and devoted to God in gratitude. Every tongue that pronounces, every ear that hears the sound, shall be admonished of the union which devotion forms and maintains between earth and heaven. The mother names, the father assents, God approves, and time confirms the nomination.

We find *Elkanah* and all of his family, who were fit for the journey, again on the road to *Shiloh*, to celebrate the great yearly festival, after the birth of his son. The bounties of Providence bind more powerfully the duties of the law upon the heart as well as upon the conscience, and thereby render religion not only a reasonable, but a pleasant service. The pleasure of waiting upon God, in the ordinances of his appointment, was greatly heightened to this good man, by the company of those whom nature had endeared to him. The length and inconvenience of the road were relieved, and sweetened, and shortened, by friendly conversation, and mutual offices of attention and kindness. The bitterness of strife is heard no more. The sacrifice is offered up with greater ardour, when one flame of affection meets another in presenting

ing it ; and the feast of peace acquires a higher relish from its being eaten in the spirit, and in the bonds of love. Social worship, as has been observed, has a most blessed effect in producing, supporting and improving social affections. The tie of duty is strengthened between husband and wife ; the bond of nature between parent and child, between brother and brother, is fortified and ennobled by going together to the house of God, and returning in company from thence. The eye of a stranger is caught and pleased with the sight of a decent family on their road to the temple. Your prayers arise with increased ardour from seeing your children around you, in the house of prayer ; your hearts glow with a holier gratitude when you hear their voices join in the praises which you sing. Offence has been given, behold it lost, and forgotten forever, because the parties have bowed their knees together before God, and pronounced together the petition of reconciliation and peace. “Heavenly Father, forgive our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.” Common mercies have been received ; see how they increase and multiply, see with what additional satisfaction they are felt and enjoyed, while the notes of thanksgiving ascend from hearts and lips in unison. Common distress presses ; lo, the burthen is already made light, the mourners have been together before the Father of mercies, the refuge of the miserable ; they have poured out their hearts before God, and are lightened ; they have cast all their care upon him, and are at rest.

Christians, you have no painful and expensive journey to undertake, in order to present yourselves before the Lord. Your Shiloh is at home. Of you no costly sacrifice is demanded ; “Offer unto the Lord thanksgiving, and pay your vows unto the Most High ; and call upon him in the day of trouble.” Christian parent, Providence has made thee priest to that little church and congregation ; bear them, as Aaron did the twelve tribes of Israel, engraven like jewels upon thy

thy heart, to the most holy place ; to the altar of incense.

“ But Hannah went not up ; for she said unto her husband, Not until the child be weaned.” Every duty of life and of religion has its proper place and season. God hath said, and the great Teacher sent from God, hath by both precept and practice established the word, “ I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” The religion which makes light of relative duty, which teaches carelessness or neglect in our lawful worldly concerns, and withdraws men from their place and station in society, is mistaken and erroneous ; it is not the religion of the Bible ; it has neither authority nor example to support it. That man is doing God service, who labours in his vocation, that he may have wherewith to do justly, and to shew mercy ; not he who is slothful in business, but eager in argument, and who gives himself to speculating, when he ought to be working with his hands. That woman is performing a religious service, who is looking well to her household ; giving suck to one child and instruction to another, practising industry and economy ; not she who is forever rambling after favourite dogmas or favourite teachers ; aiming at shining in the church, when she ought to be shining in her most honourable sphere, her own house ; and engaging warmly in matters of doubtful disputation, while the food and cloathing of her family are neglected. Who can call in question the piety of Hannah ? And surely her absenting herself from the feast at Shiloh, on so just an occasion, will not be deemed an impeachment of it.

But though the history has led me to make these remarks, perhaps, in our day, they might have been spared. Have I not been combating a mistake into which neither the men nor the women of the present age are greatly disposed to fall ? Ought I not rather to caution my hearers against the prevalence of a worldly spirit, to the extinction not only of the soul, but to the neglect of the very form of religion ?

What,

What, warn this generation against "the danger of being religious over-much?" What, warn them of the importance of attending to, and pursuing their temporal interest? What, caution them against frequenting the temple on working days, when they will not be diverted from the pursuit of business or pleasure on the Lord's day? I was in the wrong; and I change the object of my exhortation. To you, O men, I call, who, absorbed in frivolous, transitory occupations, forget that "one thing is needful;" to you, who, wallowing in the bounties of an indulgent Providence, regard not the hand from which all your comforts flow; to you, who, rising into a little wealth, a little hope, a little consequence, have lost the recollection of your having once been needy, and obscure and unimportant; and, what is infinitely worse, have lost the recollection and the practice of that humility, and decency, and piety, which poverty and obscurity, and dependence taught and enforced.

To you, O women, I call, who, without a shadow of reason; who, in the face of decency and propriety, who, in defiance of both feeling and conscience; who, entrusted with the education of children, female children, feel not the importance of the charge, or are not aware of the influence of example; can dispense with the very externals of godliness, can become the patterns of sabbath neglect or violation; can trifle with any thing that affects the morals or religion of the rising generation. To you I call, and say, you are treasuring up for yourselves remorse; and for these young ones, whom you dearly love, shame, and sorrow, and distress. What is the lot of a female, without the consolations of religion; and how is a young woman to learn religion if not from her own mother? Let me remind you of what you once thought, felt and resolved. You carried that child with uneasiness and anxiety in your womb; you formed a thousand fond wishes, you put up a thousand prayers, you came under a thousand engagements. You employed not perhaps the very
words

words of Hannah, but undoubtedly you entered entirely into her views, and the fruit of the womb was to be "holiness to the Lord." Well, God has been gracious to thee, and remembered thee. Thou hast survived the danger, and been delivered from the pangs of child-birth. You have enjoyed the satisfaction of training the beloved of your soul through the dangers, difficulties and solicitude of infancy and childhood. God has graciously done his part, and you have so far performed yours. But did your engagements cease, when the infant was weaned? Did you rear that tender plant with so much anxiety, tenderness and care, only to poison and corrupt it, after it had begun to take root, and bud, and blossom? Know you not, that the inconsideration and folly of a day may destroy the pains and labour of many years; and that the eyes of children are much quicker and more retentive than their ears?

Happy that daughter who is betimes formed to habits of discretion, of purity, of regularity, of piety, by the tender guardian and guide of her early days! Happy that mother whose attention is bent on infusing betimes, in her female offspring at least, the principles of wisdom, virtue, and true godliness; who is honoured to exemplify what she teaches, and is blessed with a docile, affectionate, and improving disciple!

The manner in which Elkanah and Hannah live and converse together, is exemplary and instructive. They have one common interest; they have one darling object of affection; they express one and the same will, in terms of mutual kindness and endearment. "She said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide forever. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good, tarry until thou have weaned him, only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she had weaned him."

There

There was in all this a commanding principle of religion, of zeal for the will and glory of God, which regulated the spirit, and inspired the tongue; without which, I am afraid there is but a slender security for domestic felicity in the exercise of even good nature and good manners, much less in a mere sense of decency, or regard to the opinion of the world. These may overawe at particular seasons and in particular situations; but the fear and love of God are permanent and unvarying principles; they enforce and assist relative duty till it grows into a habit, and habit renders even difficult things easy and agreeable.

Samuel, who is his own biographer, has most judiciously drawn a veil over his infancy. Childish prognostics of future eminence are generally ridiculous and contemptible; they can impose only on the partiality of parental affection, or the credulity of superstition. The cynic snarls disdain at the relation of these premature prodigies of dawning wisdom, and the sage smiles indulgence and compassion on the fond belief. Let parents, by all means, amuse, delight themselves and each other with the fallies of infant, opening genius, but let them keep the delight to themselves. It is one of the joys in which "a stranger intermeddleth not."

In the next Lecture we shall be led forward to consider the presentment of Samuel before the Lord in Shiloh; the sacrifice which accompanied that solemn ceremony; the farther discovery of the amiable and excellent spirit by which the mother was actuated; and the infant prophet's entrance on his important office.

—Behold once more, christians, the spirit of prophecy still pointing to one and the same great object. The persons and circumstances of the prophets were various; but amidst that variety, some one striking feature of character, office or condition announced "Him that was to come," more clearly or more obscurely reflected his image, and "prepared the way of the
the

the Lord." The tongues of the prophets are many ; but they all speak the same language, they all pronounce one name. The periods of their existence and predictions were widely remote ; but all meet in one central point of light, in one auspicious instant, " the fulness of time," in one illustrious personage, " to whom all give witness," in one commanding " purpose and grace"—the salvation of the world. " God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds ; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."* Behold all created glory thus absorbed in one glorious, divine person, " who is above all, and through all, and in all." " Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth : and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."†

* Heb. i. 1—3.

† Phil. ii. 9—11.

History of Hannah,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

LECTURE XVIII.

I SAMUEL i. 24—28.

And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, O my Lord, as thy soul liveth, my Lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth; he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.

“LORD, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” Every serious reflection on the nature, and perfections, and works of God, suggests this rapturous meditation of the holy psalmist. Every view of Deity is at once humiliating and encouraging to the soul. We seem to shrink into nothing, while we contemplate the regions of unbounded space; while the eye wanders from orb to orb; and the mind loses itself in calculating their number, distances, magnitude, lustre and harmony;

harmony ; while imagination wings its daring flight to the world of spirits, and surveys myriads of angels adoring before the throne of the Most High ; and “ the spirits of just men made perfect ” rejoicing “ with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” But man rises into greatness and importance, when we reflect that “ God created him in his own image ; ” that eternal Providence exercises an unremitting solicitude about him ; and that for his redemption the Son of God suffered and died.

The little concerns of individuals, and of private families, acquire value and dignity when we consider them as stamped with the seal of omnipotence, as the operation of infinite wisdom, as links in the great chain of divine administration, and as extending their influence to eternity. But destroy this connexion, and we perceive only a strange and unaccountable scene of vanity, folly and confusion.

The holy scriptures, which exhibit the justest representation, and enable us to form the justest estimate of human life, keep this continual interposition and commanding influence of Divine Providence constantly in view. We meet with domestic feelings and occurrences exactly similar to our own, and we find a proof that the Bible is the word of God, in our own personal, daily experience.

The transactions which led to the scene represented in the passage now read, have been too recently submitted to your notice, to need repetition. In the spirit and deportment of Elkanah and Hannah to each other, we have an useful example of conjugal complacency and affection. In the character of Hannah, we behold the feelings of the woman sweetly blended with the piety of the saint ; and the child of sorrow seeking and finding refuge in the power and mercy of God. We are now to contemplate one of the most pleasing objects that human life presents—a good and honest heart in possession of its wish, and making the proper use of the expected blessing ; the spirit of prayer

er changed into the spirit of praise, and vows formed in the hour of distress faithfully performed.

Let our first meditations turn on the wisdom and goodness of that great Being, who has established human felicity on such a solid foundation; or rather has drawn it from so many combined sources. How manifold and how tender, in particular, are the ties which unite a mother and her son? She carried him in her womb with solicitude and uneasiness, and brought him into the world at the hazard of her life. She sustained his infant days with the blood of her own veins, and slumber was a stranger to her eyes, that he might sleep in tranquillity. The first object which he distinguished was the smiling face of his guardian angel, the first sound that struck his opening ear was the murmur of maternal affection: the first idea he formed was that of seeking refuge from want, and pain, and danger in the fond bosom of a parent. The very anguish and trouble which she endured on his account, but endear him the more to her; a sense of early, assured protection "grows with his growth, and strengthens with his strength," and forms a bond of mutual attachment, which on one side is hardly to be dissolved, and on the other, is one of the most powerful securities against the inroads of vice, and is the last convulsive grasp of expiring virtue.

Nature has laid upon you, mothers, the heaviest and most important part of education. The good or the evil is already done, before the child is taken out of your hands. Happily the weakness of your constitution is strengthened and upheld for the arduous task, by the force of affection, and your very labour thereby is rendered your delight. And, O how glorious is your reward! you desire, you can desire none higher, than to see your son, the son of your womb, the son of your vows, remembering and practising the early lessons which his mother taught him.

How happy was Eli in having for a pupil, a child suckled, and weaned, and instructed in early life, by a
Hannah!

Hannah! How great the goodness of the compassionate and merciful Father of all, who by means so simple, so pleasant, so powerful, so effectual, makes constant provision for the comfort, the protection and the improvement of man!

Let us proceed to meditate, for a moment on the amiable and instructive pattern here set before us, of a faithful and obedient heart. Distress naturally dictates wishes, and prayers, and vows; it makes us sensible of subjection and dependence; but when the blessing is obtained, the load removed, and the hour of performance come, men are as forgetful and as niggardly as once they were attentive and liberal. Ten lepers were cleansed, but "where are the nine?" Has one only returned to give thanks? Ingratitude is one of those crimes which no man is either bold or depraved enough to defend, but with which all men are justly chargeable. How few earthly benefactors but have reason to complain of an ungracious return? How few parents but have that bitterness of bitterness, filial ingratitude, mingled in their cup? How verily guilty is a whole "world lying in wickedness," before God, in this respect? There is really no merit in gratitude, but what arises from its rarity; and that rarity stamps it one of the highest of moral virtues. Would it be doing injustice to the other sex, to say, that gratitude is a quality more frequently to be found in the female character? I have no hesitation in affirming, that it is one of the most powerful attractions in any character, and that all other attractions whatever are good for nothing without it.

We observed formerly in the conduct of Hannah a happy mixture of piety and prudence. While the state of her child confined her to Mount Ephraim, it would have been the reverse of a religious service to repair to the feast at Shiloh; when he could with safety be removed to the place of God's presence, to keep him back had been unfaithfulness and impiety. Prudence without piety will quickly degenerate into selfishness

selfishness and the love of this world; will harden the heart, and lull the conscience asleep. Piety without prudence will inspire pride and intolerance; will lead to idleness and irregularity in conduct; and, out of an affected zeal for the first table of the law, will erase the characters of the second, or through negligence and disuse, suffer them to be disfigured by filth, or corrupted and impaired by rust, so as to become at length wholly illegible. Where piety and prudence are found united, the love of God and man will perfectly consist; both tables of the law will be equally clear and distinct, and their combined influence will instruct the person by whom it is felt and understood, to “use the world so as not to abuse it.”

At length the time of presenting herself before the Lord, and of performing her vow arrives. The precious child must be no longer her's, but God's. And did he indeed cease to be the parents, by being dedicated to the Most High? Surely no, he became theirs by a firmer and more sacred tie, they have an interest in him unknown, unfelt before. Their treasure has acquired infinite value from the place in which it is deposited; and attendance at God's altar has conferred nobility on the little Levite, which all the possessions on Mount Ephraim could not countervail.

Hannah presented herself before the Lord at a former solemnity with bitter crying and tears; she “went forth then weeping, bearing precious seed, she cometh again rejoicing, bringing her sheaves with her; for they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” She presents herself before the Lord, but neither with a contracted heart nor an empty hand. The law demanded for God the first-born of every creature. The whole tribe of which Samuel was a son, was accepted in place of the first-born of all Israel, and the first-born of her family might be redeemed by the substitution of a victim. Thus clearly was the spirit of the gospel inculcated by the institutions of the law; and the doctrine of the atonement through the
blood

blood of the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," was taught unto them as it is taught unto us. Throughout we see the innocent suffering for the guilty; from the sacrifice of Abel down to the sacrifice on Mount Calvary, of "the just suffering for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God."

With what mixed emotions must an Israelitish parent, of any sensibility, have presented this sacrifice? Behold the darling child, the first-born led to the altar, but not to bleed and die: no, that innocent lamb, that bullock in the prime of life, is to bleed and die in his stead; and, mournful to reflect, though religion does not now demand such sacrifices, necessity and the appetites of men constantly require them, and we behold the whole brute "creation groaning and travelling in pain together," to perform the drudgery, minister to the pleasure, or with their flesh to satisfy the need of a creature much more criminal than themselves; and, as if that were too little, subjected to the cruelty and caprice of rational beings, become greater brutes than themselves.

With the confidence of true goodness Hannah now addresses Eli, and reminds him of what he had probably forgotten, but was of too much moment to herself ever to be permitted to fall into oblivion. Eli had only seen her lips move, but heard not the words she pronounced; and the violent emotion in which she was, had conveyed very foul suspicions to his mind. These, with the dignity and calmness of conscious innocence, she repelled; and assured him in general terms that what he had unkindly mistaken for the effect of wine, was the agitation of an afflicted spirit, pouring out its anguish before God; but the subject of her prayer she still kept within her own breast. There was then no witness of her vow but God and her own conscience; and that was enough; it was recorded in heaven; and an honest mind will find itself equally bound by a resolution formed in secret, as by an oath administered in the face of an assembled

bled world. With what holy exultation does she now declare her engagement, exhibit the sacred pledge of it, and proceed to the public and solemn discharge of it! "She brought the child to Eli, and said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him."* How sweetly affecting are the effusions of nature, when aided and animated by devotion! How religion ennobles and dignifies every character, how it places every other quality in its fairest and most favourable point of view! How well it is adapted to every season and situation of life! It was this which fortified Hannah against the bitter insults and reproaches of her merciless adversary, and preserved her from rendering railing for railing. It was this which taught her self-government, so that she disturbed not the solemnity of the feast with womanish complaints, but covered a sorrowful heart with a serene countenance. It was this which carried her to the house of the Lord, for light, comfort and relief. It was this which carried her with reputation and advantage through the first duties of a mother; and exhibited, in one, the affectionate wife, the tender parent, the devout worshipper. This filled her heart and inspired her tongue, in presenting her offering, in addressing the high-priest, in raising her song of praise. And this will communicate lustre, value and importance on every female character, whether known to the world, or overlooked by it; in the secrecy of the family, or in the celebrity of the temple. There is a God who "seeth in secret, and will reward openly."

Eli repeats a cordial *Amen* to her pious purpose, accepts the precious trust committed unto him, and bends his knees in joyful acknowledgment of that God who had been multiplying his mercy to this family, and building up the house of Israel. And it is not long before he finds that this young Nazarene

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was

* Verse 25—27.

was provided of God, and instructed of his mother, to rectify the disorders of his own house, and to supply the place of a degenerate race of priests, ripe for destruction and doomed to it, and ready to bring down a "father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Hannah's song of praise, which follows at length in the opening of the next chapter, merits, on many accounts, a separate and particular consideration. It possesses all the majesty, grace and beauty of ancient oriental poetry. It is one of the happiest effusions of an excellent female heart labouring under a grateful sense of the highest obligations. It presents and impresses some of the justest and most interesting views of Divine Providence, and, what is above all, it discloses one of the clearest and most distinct prospects of the coming, person and character of *Messiah*, the Prophet of prophets, King of kings, Lord of lords. Yes, christians, for this prophetess was reserved the honour of first pronouncing in sacred song, that "name which is as ointment poured forth," which angels mention with wonder and reverence, and which the whole company of the redeemed shall one day proclaim with "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" MESSIAH the anointed of the Lord—whom the world so long expected, who in the fulness of time appeared, whom unbelieving Jews refused to acknowledge; whom they despised, rejected, crucified, and put to death; whom "God has exalted a Prince and Saviour to give repentance and the remission of sins;" to whose second coming the course of nature, the evolutions of providence, the hopes and fears of every heart of man, the earnest expectation of the creature, and the handwriting of God in scripture, all, all directly point.

The next Lecture will be an attempt to illustrate, and practically to improve Hannah's song of praise. May we bring to it a portion of that spirit which inspired the lips of her who sung, and directed the pen of him who wrote. Let me conclude the present, with calling on every one present, to recollect personal obligations,

obligations, and to walk faithfully to them. Call to remembrance vows formed on a bed of languishing, in the hour of difficulty, in the instant of danger, at the table of the Lord; and thankfully pay them: as knowing that “it is better not to vow, than to vow and not to pay.”

Desire more earnestly the best gifts; spiritual, heavenly, eternal blessings. By all means, in your vows, stipulate for your portion of present and temporal good things, saying with Jacob, “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God;”*—and with Hannah, pouring out the bitterness of an oppressed heart before God, and begging relief of the Father of mercies, saying, “O Lord of Hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid.” But forget not withal, to stipulate, with Solomon, for “an understanding heart,” to prize and to improve mercies already bestowed; and with Jabez, calling on the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed,—and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me.”

Hannah promised to devote to the Lord the child which should be given her; and ye have solemnly engaged to yield yourselves unto God; and “ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.” “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”†

* Gen. xxviii. 20, 21.

† Rom. xii. 1, 2.

History of Hannah,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

L E C T U R E XIX.

I SAMUEL ii. 1—10.

And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord: mine horn is exalted in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies: because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased; so that the barren hath born seven: and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man

man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces : out of heaven shall he thunder upon them : the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth ; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

IN man, the master-piece of creation, are discernible various kinds of life, distinct from each other, yet most wonderfully blended and united, so as to form one great and astonishing whole. The animal, the intellectual, the moral life : to which we add, in man as he came from the hands of his Creator, and in man "renewed" by grace "in the spirit of his mind," the spiritual and divine life, the dawning light, the earnest and pledge, the celestial foretaste of everlasting life.

The first of these we enjoy in common with the beasts that perish. Like theirs, our bodies grow and decline. Like them we are led by sense and appetite, and are susceptible of pleasure and pain. And, like them, we arose out of the earth, are supported by it, and feel ourselves returning to it again.

The second, or intellectual life, raises man far above every other animal. He possesses the power of thought, that productive faculty of the Almighty ; that image of God in our nature. He contemplates, compares, reflects, reasons, plans, performs. By means of this he exercises dominion over all other creatures. Inferior to many, in some respects, by this he renders himself superior to all ; and reduces all their powers to the subjection and obedience of himself.

The moral life places man in society ; connects him with intelligent beings like himself ; opens a capacious field of duty and of enjoyment ; stamps him an object of approbation or blame, of reward or punishment.

The divine life unites man to the Author and supporter of his existence, the source of all his comforts, the foundation of all his hopes ; the witness and the judge of all his actions ; the avenger of all unrighteousness,

unrighteousness, "the rewarder of them who diligently seek him."

To Adam, as an animal, God said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth: behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth; and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree, yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."

In Adam the intellectual life discovered itself, when the Lord God brought unto him "every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof."

—God having implanted a principle of moral life in man, said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him;" he took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it; and commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it. For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

In Adam the spiritual and divine life was perfected, when "God created man in his own image." It was extinguished and lost when by transgression he fell; it was revived by the promise of the Messiah and salvation through his blood; and it will be completely recovered when the image of God is restored through the spirit of sanctification.

All these different kinds of life have their several and corresponding expressions; and according as any one prevails, such is the character of the man. When the habitual cry is, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" it is easy to determine what life is predominant; it is easy to discern when the brute runs away with the man. Solomon may be given as an instance of the prevalence of intellectual life. He looked through nature, and "spoke of trees, from the cedar-tree that
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is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes." "His wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt." The psalmist has presented us with an exquisite representation of the moral life of man, (would to God it were more frequently realized) in the fifteenth psalm; "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour; in whose eyes a vile person is contemned: but he honoureth them that fear the Lord: he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved."* Where shall we look for an example of the highest life of man, the life of God in the soul? Nature stands silent, the whole world lies dead; it presents every kind of life but this. Where is the model to which to refer? Where is the idea of this most exalted excellence of our nature? It is to be found. "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "I seek not mine own glory, but the glory of him who sent me." Read and ponder the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel, and discover the author, the example, the giver of this divine life; and aspire after a participation of it.

We have some of these holy aspirations in the passage now read. We behold a spirit alive unto God; sinking the creature in the Creator; discerning God in every object, and in every event that arises; referring all things to Him "who doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Let us blend our spirits, with that of pious Hannah, and may God grant us to know
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* Ver. 2—5.

and feel the happiness of having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

“Hannah prayed.” In affliction she prayed: and in prosperity she prayed. Tears and smiles are not more the expression of their corresponding emotions, than supplication and thanksgiving are of that life which dictates them, in a suitableness to the various aspects of Divine Providence. Sorrow is no longer sorrow when it is poured out into the bosom of sympathy and tenderness. Every joy is multiplied an hundred fold by every communication of it to the ear and the heart of friendship. Hannah prays, “and her countenance is no more sad.” She restores her earnestly expected son to God; and is infinitely enriched by the restitution. Whether the child cry for relief, or express its gratitude by caresses and looks of satisfaction, it is equally grateful and soothing to the fond parental heart. And will the great God in very deed vouchsafe to make himself known to us by the name of the hearer of prayer? Is he exalted to shew mercy? Can he be pleased with the effusions of a thankful heart? Thoughtless, inconsiderate creatures that we are; blind to our highest interest, dead to our purest joy! We see nothing of God in that distress, in that deliverance. We attended to the creature only, and therefore found no comfort. We endured without hope, and we enjoyed without relish. Happy soul, that can command itself to peace, and say, I have poured out my anguish before the Lord, I have cast all my care upon him, my burden is no longer mine, but his. “Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. He hath delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.”

In the first transports of her joy, Hannah forgets every thing but the glorious object of it. The insults of Peninnah, her delight in Samuel, stand for a while suspended; they are lost and forgotten in the contemplation of Him, who had delivered her from
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the one, and bestowed the other upon her. But God, as he is in himself, cannot long be an object of contemplation to mortals. It is only by what he doth, that he can be known, and loved, and enjoyed by us. The soul springs up to God, is instantly repelled and overwhelmed by "light inaccessible and full of glory," and seeks relief and employment in surveying the ways and works of God.

"My heart rejoiceth in the Lord." But "who is this King of glory?" The spirit shrinks with reverence from the inquiry; and the heart sweetly slides into the observation and acknowledgment of what an incomprehensible Jehovah hath done. "Mine horn is exalted in the Lord." "The horn," in scripture language, is the emblem of strength and empire. She was till now undistinguished, unprized, unimportant in Israel; a wife, without the honour of being a mother. But now she has risen into lustre, and place, and pre-eminence. Her Samuel is to her "a crown of glory, and a diadem for beauty!" She had power with God and prevailed; she asked, and God granted her request. This is naturally blended in her mind, with the derision and cruel mocking which she had endured. For the very devotions of fallen creatures must favour of the calamities to which they are exposed, and the imperfection in which they are involved. Both nature and piety accordingly concur in dictating the expression of thankfulness which follows; "My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies:" Here the woman speaks; but the saint instantly subjoins, "because I rejoice in thy salvation."

When the life of God is completely formed in the soul, every particle of human corruption shall be purged away. There shall be no feeling, nor recollection, of unkindness or enmity. And in proportion as evil affections are rooted out, and kind affections are implanted, cherished, and promoted, so is the image of God impressed, renewed and preserved. The love
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of God perfected shall obliterate and efface every trace of resentment against man.

After a short vibration on this string, the heart of the worshipper seems to recur with increased complacency and delight to a worthier subject of meditation, and loses itself in infinite perfection. "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God." When we attempt to meditate upon God, thought fails. When we attempt to address ourselves to him, language fails. In vain do we look round for a similitude that may enable us to form a clearer perception of his nature. It is his glory to be single and alone; to defy and prevent every idea of resemblance or comparison. When the whole world of nature is explored, when all the powers of nature are exhausted, the soul falls back upon itself, shrinks into nothing from the daring attempt, and exclaims, "There is none beside thee," "there is none holy as the Lord." "Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection!"

—Hannah awakes from this holy rapture, to contemplate this incomprehensible Jehovah, as exercising an intelligent, uncontrollable, irresistible authority over all the ways of men; as the wise and righteous Governor of the world, whom none can successfully oppose, from whose notice none can possibly conceal himself. "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength."* Behold the cure of pride. There is a God on high, from whom descended every advantage which one possesses above another, who carefully notes the use that is made of his benefits, and will demand an account of them; who "seeth the proud afar off, but has respect unto the lowly." "By him actions are weighed;" they are judged, not according to their
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* Verse 3, 4.

apparent circumstances, nor the maxims of the world, nor the rank of the parties concerned, but according to truth, according to the real merit or demerit of the action, according to the thoughts and intent of the heart. Thus is the mouth of arrogancy effectually shut, and the whole world laid low in the dust before a holy and righteous God. "The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girt with strength." Even in this world, "the Lord maketh himself known by the judgments which he executeth;" and causeth men to change conditions, and turneth the world upside down. The affairs of men, like the frame of nature, are in a state of perpetual revolution, and the history of mankind is simply an account of the rise and depression of wretched mortals by means not of their own contrivance, by events which they could not foresee, and over which they had no power. The victor of to day is to-morrow a captive, and he who now lieth "among the pots, shall come forth as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

The greater part of Hannah's song of praise is employed in making a more enlarged display of the wisdom and justice of the Divine Providence in the government of the world. "They that were full have hired themselves out for bread." Some are born to ease and affluence, and through indolence, inattention or prodigality, reduce themselves to want. Some acquire wealth by frugality and industry. But however gotten, it is but an uncertain possession, and we daily see multitudes, not through any apparent fault of their own, "waxing poor and falling into decay." Others, as unaccountably rise into distinction and opulence. There is an unseen hand which gives and takes away. In prosperity there is no ground of insolence and triumph; in adversity no reason to despair.

Her own peculiar felicity again presents itself to view, and the incense of praise ascends to heaven. "The
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barren hath born seven, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble." There is a Jewish legend which saith, that for every child that Hannah bore, one of Peninnah's died. It is a mere conjecture; Hannah's triumphant song is rather a proof of the contrary. She discovers a spirit too excellent, in other respects, to permit us to suppose her capable of rejoicing in the devastation which the hand of God had wrought, much less in the destruction of her own husband's family. That heart must be lost to every feeling of humanity, lost to decency, lost to the fear of God, who can make the calamity of another, especially such a calamity, a ground of self-gratulation, and complacency, or a subject of thanksgiving to a holy and merciful God, as if he could become a party to our petty jealousies and contentions. No, a spirit so regulated as hers, so patient under mortification, so long nurtured in the school of affliction, so observant of, and submissive to the will of Providence, could not taste the mortality of even Peninnah's children as a source of joy. Her expressions amount to no more than a devout and humble acknowledgment of unerring wisdom, of unimpeachable justice, in conducting all the affairs of this world: in building up families, and in bringing them low; in exercising an absolute right of sovereignty, which will not be compelled to give account of its matters to any one. The gift of children is not always withheld in anger, nor bestowed in kindness, as the character and history of Eli's family will shortly evince.

She proceeds to pursue the same idea of a divine superintendence in every thing, through a variety of particulars strikingly contrasted one with another, all aiming at the same end, all calculated to enforce the same practical lesson. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from
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the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory : for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness : for by strength shall no man prevail."*

In the conclusion of her song, Hannah, rapt into futurity, no doubt by the spirit of prophecy, contemplates the final consummation of the great mystery of Providence, as issuing in the establishment of universal order : in the suppression and punishment of vice ; and in the unchangeable and permanent glory of a Redeemer's kingdom. The same hand which balances the spheres, which conducts all the affairs of men, which preserves harmony and prevents confusion, in both the natural and moral worlds, shall at length, by another almighty *fiat*, "make all things new." Then "the adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces : out of heaven shall he thunder upon them." "But who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ? for he is like a refiner's fire ; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." Chastisement shall, therefore, be preceded by righteous judgment, that every mouth may be stopped before God. "The LORD shall judge the ends of the earth." Now these words of the prophetic mother of Samuel, taken in connexion with the clearer and fuller display of a judgment to come, in the writings of the New Testament, clearly point out that glorious and divine person, in whose hallowed name the song terminates—God's *Anointed*. A woman was honoured first to announce the Saviour of the world, under that description ; and a succession of prophets henceforward hold it up to the eyes of succeeding generations, as "all their salvation, and all their desire." Samuel, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Habakkuk, each in his day proclaims the approach of this King of glory, of whom all who were *anointed* with material oil, wheth-

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* Ver. 6—9.

er as priests, or prophets, or kings, were but a shadow; and in whose superior lustre they disappear, as the light of the stars is absorbed in the splendour of the sun. The prophets celebrates JEHOVAH who “shall judge the ends of the earth,” as that “King” to whom all authority is committed, to whom all strength is given,” as that “*anointed*” One, Messiah the prince, whose “horn” should be finally “exalted,” and before the brightness of whose coming, all disorder, iniquity and misery shall flee away; who shall first “judge the ends of the earth,” and then reign forever and ever.

And thus is the voice of this holy woman, near twelve hundred years before Messiah’s day, in perfect unison with the tongue of Christ himself, and of the apostles of the Lord, after his ascension into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. “The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”* “God now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”† “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever.”‡ And such, in every age, is the native expression of a soul alive to God, the natural aspiration of the spiritual and divine life.

—Art thou, O man, through grace a partaker of it? You shall “know it by its fruits.” As it increases, corruption dies. “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”§ To be destitute of this life, in whatever state of perfection the intellectual life

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* John v. 22, 23.

† Acts xvii. 30, 31.

‡ Rev. xi. 15.

§ Rom. viii. 10.

may be, is to be under the power of everlasting death, a death of trespasses and sins. But if its very first breathings are felt, however feebly, it is a new creation begun, it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Attempts will be made to extinguish it, but in vain. Like its Author it is immortal. It may be oppressed, it may be suspended, it may, at seasons, lie dormant, but it cannot expire. It doth not always make itself sensible to the eyes and ears of the world; for the believer's "life is *hid* with Christ in God." But "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."* "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."†

* Col. iii. 4.

† 1 John iii. 2.

History of Hannah,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

L E C T U R E XX.

I SAMUEL ii. 18—21.

But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband, to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home. And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.

THE character of most men is formed and fixed, before it is apprehended that they have, or can have, any character at all. Many vainly and fatally imagine, that the few first years of life may be disposed of as you please: that a little neglect may easily be repaired, that a little irregularity may easily be rectified. This is saying in other words, “never regard the morning; sleep it, trifle it, riot it away; a little closer application at noon will recover the loss.” “The spring returns, the flowers appear upon the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come. No matter; it is soon enough to think of the labours of spring.”

spring. Sing with the birds, skip with the fawn; the diligence of a more advanced, more propitious season will bring every thing round; and the year shall be crowned with the horn of plenty." A single ray of reason is sufficient to detect and expose such absurdity; yet human conduct exhibits it, in almost universal prevalence. Infancy and childhood are vilely cast away; the morning is lost; the seed-time neglected—And what is the consequence? A life full of confusion, and an old age full of regret; a day of unnecessary toil, and a night of vexation; a hurried summer, a meagre autumn, a comfortless winter.

It is the ordinance of Providence that the heaviest and most important part of education should devolve upon the mother. It begins before the child is born; her passions and habits affect the fruit of her womb. From her bosom the infant draws the precious juice of health and virtue, or the baleful poison of vice and disease. The fleeting period he passes under the shadow of her wing, is a season sacred to wisdom and piety. If the mother lead not her son to the hallowed spring, if she fail to disclose to his eager eye and panting heart the loveliness of goodness, the excellency of religion; if she permit the luxuriant soil to be overrun with briars and thorns, in vain will she strive to redeem the lost opportunity, by restraints and punishments, by precepts and masters, by schools and colleges, in a more advanced stage of life. The good or the mischief is done by the time he comes out of her hands.

That Providence which has imposed this employment on the feebler sex as a task, has most graciously contrived to render it one of the highest and most exquisite of female comforts; as, in truth, all the impositions, nay, the very chastisements of Heaven are really blessings. Let the woman who has given suck, tell if she can, "how tender it is to love the babe that milks her." Ask that mother if there be any joy like the joy of hearing her child repeat the lessons which

she taught him. Ask her, if she recollects or regards her pain and anguish; her anxious days and sleepless nights. Ask her, if all is not forgotten and lost in the progress which expanding faculties have made, and in the richer harvest which they promise. Ask, if she has not already received more than her reward. If the representation of the case be just, let it procure for dutiful mothers the respect and gratitude which they merit; let it reconcile their minds to what is painful and laborious in their lot; let it raise them to their due rank and importance in society; and let it stimulate them to perseverance in well-doing, in the full assurance that they shall in no wise lose their reward.

—The passage of holy writ, on the consideration of which we are now entering, is a very affecting representation of the effects and consequences of a good and a bad education, exemplified in the conduct of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and of Eli, the father of Hophni and Phinehas. Scripture, instead of multiplying precept upon precept, leads us at once into human life, and exhibits the law written in the event. It instructs us how to bring up children, by delineating the dreadful consequences of excessive lenity and indulgence on the one hand, and the happy fruits of early piety, regularity and self-government on the other. This theme, being by far the more pleasing of the two, and coming in more regularly in the order of history, shall obtain the preference, in the course of our inquiry. Though, indeed, attention to the one must, of necessity, bring forward the other; and the good fortify and recommend itself by contrast with the evil.

The education of Samuel began in the pious resolution of his mother before he was conceived in the womb. "If thou wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life." Every parent receives every child under a tacit engagement to the same purpose: and the command of God, from the moment of the birth,
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is, "Rear that child for me." I have watched over him while he lay in darkness, "mine eyes saw his substance yet being unperfect; in my book all his members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. I added the immortal principle to the finished limbs; I stamped my image upon him. There my hand has scattered the seeds of wisdom and happiness; to thy fostering care I commit that tender plant. Cared for, it will abundantly reward thy toil; neglected, it will grow into a sharp thorn to tear thy flesh. Every day, every hour is producing a change in it. Grow it will and must; what it grows into, depends upon thyself. Of thy hand will I require it."

As Samuel was to be a Nazarite to God from the womb, the law prescribed to the mother certain ceremonial observances respecting her own conduct, and the treatment of her own person, which corresponded to that high destination. Abstinence, in particular, from certain kinds of meat and drink, which might eventually affect the bodily or mental constitution of the unborn infant. With these prescriptions we have no room to doubt Hannah punctually complied. And here we fix the second stage, or if you will, erect the second pillar of education. The commands of God are none of them arbitrary and capricious, but founded in reason and the nature of things. Whatever strongly affects the mother during the months of pregnancy, beyond all doubt affects her offspring, whether it be violent liquors, or violent passions. It belongs to another profession than mine to account for this, and to determine how far the sympathy goes. But the general belief of it would most certainly have a very happy effect in procuring attention to female health, regularity and tranquillity in that delicate and interesting situation. The comfort of both parent and child, to the end of life; what do I say? through the whole of their existence, may be concerned in it.

As soon as Samuel was born, we find Hannah devoting undivided attention to the first and sweetest of maternal offices. "The woman tarried at home, and gave her son suck, until she weaned him." Nature and inclination concur in pressing this duty upon every mother. The instances of real inability are too few to merit consideration. The performance of it, carries its own recompense in its bosom; the neglect, is, first and last, its own punishment. Without considering at present its connexion with the health and comfort of both parties, let us attend for a moment to its influence on morals, and as constituting a branch of education. Is not parental and filial affection the first bond of society, and the foundation of all virtue? It is this which arms a delicate female with patience which no pain nor labour can exhaust, with fortitude which no calamity can subdue, with courage which no difficulty or danger can intimidate. It is this which first inspires the infant purpose to excel, which blows the sacred spark of gratitude into a flame, which first awakens and animates the latent seeds of immortality in the human soul. The first perception of the child, is the sweet sense of obligation and dependence: he feels himself far advanced in a commerce of reciprocal affection the moment he becomes conscious of his existence; and finds himself engaged in habits of goodness, long before he understands the meaning of words. And is it fit that these kind affections should be transferred to a stranger? Who can be so well qualified to communicate these earliest and best lessons, as a mother? Can you complain that your child is cold, indifferent or averse to you, when you set the example of coldness, indifference and aversion, and preferred a little ease or pleasure to his health and comfort, and what is infinitely more, to his early, infant morals? Can you hope from a hireling, who must have renounced nature too, as well as yourself, what God, and nature, and decency, and regard to your own real well-being have

have pressed upon you in vain? It was so much a primary duty in the eyes of Hannah, that her attendance on the duties of the sanctuary at Shiloh gave place to it; she revered the ordinance of that God, who says, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" and religious service is interrupted for a season, to be resumed with greater ardour and effect, when the duties of life were faithfully discharged.

At what age the child was weaned, the history relates not. He remained under the tuition of his mother till he was of a proper age to be presented to the Lord, in the place which he had chosen to put his name there, and to be put under the instruction of Eli, and prepared for the service of the tabernacle. And we shall presently find that he was infinitely more indebted to the solicitous attentions of a pious mother for his progress in divine knowledge, than he afterwards was to the superintendence of the high-priest of Israel, who knew so ill to rule his own house, and to whom, of a pupil, he became a teacher.

I am well aware of the difficulty of forming a plan of religious instruction for children. Scripture suggests the happiest, the most obvious, and the most effectual. It ought to come from the children themselves. They are desirous of information. If left to themselves, they will think and inquire. Their questions will point out the mode of instruction. Do not be over anxious to take the lead, but carefully follow them. Their ideas will be directed by what they observe and feel; and strong facts and appearances of nature will make a deep and lasting impression upon them. He who knows what is in man, has accordingly given us, in a particular example, a general rule of proceeding in this great article: "And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? That thou shalt say unto him, by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And it came to pass when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord

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flew all the first-born in the land of Egypt." It was probably thus, that Hannah instructed her darling son; stored his memory with interesting events, and touched his heart by affecting representations of the mercy and judgment of God, exemplified in the history of his own forefathers. Milk is the proper food of babes, strong meat belongeth to them who are of full age. A dry precept is but half understood, and is speedily forgotten, but a tale of distress, the triumph of goodness over malevolence and opposition; the merited shame and punishment of wickedness, is easily understood, is long retained, and its impression is not to be effaced.

We advance to the fourth stage of wise and good education, of which we have the pattern before us. The same principle which induced Hannah to keep her son at home for a season, and to abide with him, constrained her to send him from home, to give up her interest in him, when the service of God, and the greater good of the child demanded the sacrifice. It is just the reverse of what high life, at least with us, daily presents. You shall see a mother who hardly inquired after her child at the time of life when her tenderness was most necessary to him, all at once assuming the parent, exercising an affected tenderness which he no longer needs, reducing him to childhood after he is becoming a man, and endeavouring to compensate by an after-growth of affection, the unkindness and neglect which blighted the early blossoms of the spring. She can suffer him no longer out of her sight. The discipline which her own wickedness has rendered necessary to his improvement, is reprobated as cruelty, and the poor youth is frequently ruined, by having at one time no mother at all; at another, one too much. I honour the firmness of Hannah, as much as I love her motherly softness and attachment. To possess with gratitude, to cherish a worthy object with tenderness, and to resign it with steadiness and magnanimity, is equally an
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object of admiration and esteem. Observe the mixed emotions which animate and correct her countenance as she conducts her well-beloved son to the altar. The faint speaks in that eye, sparkling with delight; as she devotes what she holds most dear in the world to Him, from whom she had by holy importunity obtained him; the tear rushes to it, and all the mother stands confessed as she retires. Piety has prevailed; and presented the offering: nature feels, but submits. It is easier to conceive than to describe what was the state of her mind as she returned from Shiloh to Ramah: the anxiety and regret at leaving her Samuel behind; the satisfaction and delight of reflecting in what hands she had left him, and to what care she had committed him. But we hear of no wild project formed of removing the whole family to reside at Shiloh, in order to indulge a fond mother's partial affection, with the continual presence of her little minion. No, the same spirit of prudence, the same domestic regards, the same sense of duty which once engaged her to prefer attention to Samuel, to attendance on the sacred festival, now engage her to prefer the unostentatious employments of a wife, and the mistress of a family at Ramah, to the sacredness of the tabernacle, and the care of an only son, a first-born. But the heart of a mother finds, and flies to, the innocent refuge which nature pointed out. She employs her mind and her hands during the intervals of the feast, about her absent son; "His mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice." O how pure, how cheap, how satisfying are the pleasures of virtue! No words can express the inward, the incommunicable joy of that mother, as her fingers wove the threads of that little coat, as her eyes saw it grow into shape and colour and shade, as the increasing stature of the wearer rendered the increase of her labour necessary. You must be converted and become a little child, a dutiful,
affectionate,

affectionate, and pious child, like Samuel, to conceive the delight of seeing his parents return, of putting on his new garment, of exhibiting his mother's present. These nothings are the bond of affection among virtuous minds, and the source of their felicity.

This we settle as a more advanced stage of education, as far as it depends upon the mother. To part with the child firmly and unreluctantly when the proper hour of separation comes; to preserve the commerce of affection by works and messages of kindness; and to subject every feeling and pursuit to the known and declared will of God. Let no one, O woman, usurp thy province, step between thee and thy child, steal his affections from thee. What, suffer him to have a step-mother while thou art yet living! Forbid it nature, forbid it decency, forbid it religion. But the hour of separation is arrived, you have done your duty, he must now pass into other hands; as a mother you retained him, as a mother resign him. You have not laboured in vain: you have not spent your strength for nought and in vain. Be of good cheer, you have trained him up in the way in which he should go, and when old he will not depart from it. Your heart shall rejoice in him many days hence. He shall be to thee a crown of glory when thou art dropping into the grave.

The disorderly state of Eli's family, the consequence of a careless and neglected education, will, through the divine permission, be the subject of the next Lecture.

I conclude with addressing myself in a very few words, first, to the parents of the other sex. You see what a heavy burden God and nature have laid upon the weaker of the two. You are bound in justice, in humanity, in gratitude, to alleviate it. To no purpose will the mother watch and toil, unless you cooperate. She has part of her reward in her very employment: her recompense will be complete if she obtain your approbation, and retain your affection.

Has

Has offence arisen, does calamity press, is the spirit ruffled, is her person changed? Reflect, she is the mother of thy child; perhaps she lost her looks, her health, it may be her spirits and temper, in doing the duty of a mother: she ought to be the more estimable in your eyes at least.

Let me next speak for a moment to ingenuous youth. Young man, superadded to all the other motives to virtue, if you feel not the force of this, you are lost indeed. There is a worthy woman in the world, who loves you as her own soul, who gave you your first nourishment and instruction, who brought you into life at the risk of her own, to whom nothing that affects you can be a matter of indifference. She is jealous over you with a holy jealousy. If you tread in the ways of wisdom, how her heart will be satisfied within her! If you decline from the right path, if you become "a son of Belial," you will rend her with severer pangs than those which she endured in bringing thee into the world. And can your heart permit you to plunge a dagger into the heart of your own mother? Who does not shudder at the thought of a parricide so detestable, so monstrous? For a mother's sake, renounce that "covenant with death:" retrace thy wandering steps, resume the reins of self-government, and return to real rest and joy.

Young woman, let thine eyes be still toward the nurse, the guide, the comforter, the refuge of thy early years. Alleviate, by partaking of, the burdens and labours of her station; dissipate her solicitude; soothe her pains; give her cause to bless the day she bare thee. Trust in her as thy most prudent counsellor, as thy most assured friend, as thy most intelligent instructor. Do her good and not evil, all the days of thy life. Rise into usefulness, into importance, into respectability, by marking her footsteps, imbibing her spirit, following her example. A
daughter

daughter unkind, undutiful, ungrateful to a mother, is of all monsters the most odious and disgusting. Youthful excellence is never more amiable and attractive, than when it seeks retreat and retirement under the maternal wing, and, shrinking from the public eye, seeks its reward in a mother's smile of approbation.

History of Hannah,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

L E C T U R E XXI.

I SAMUEL ii. 12—17, 23, 24.

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial : they knew not the Lord. And the priests' custom with the people was, that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand : and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot : all that the flesh-hook brought up, the priest took for himself : so they did in Shiloh, unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burned the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest : for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently : and then take as much as thy soul desireth, then he would answer him, Nay, but thou shalt give it me now : and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things ? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons : for it is no good report that I hear ; ye make the Lord's people to transgress.

PERFECTION

PERFECTION consists in the happy medium between the too little and too much. It is eminently conspicuous in every thing that comes immediately from God. "He is the rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are judgment." Contemplate the stupendous whole, or examine the minutest part, and you find no redundancy, no defect. All is good, yea, very good. But man is ever in the extreme. Now, under the power of an indolence which shrinks from every appearance of difficulty or danger, and now hurried on by a zeal which overleaps all the bounds of wisdom and discretion. Now, he cannot be prevailed on to begin, and now nothing can persuade him to stop. He makes his very good to be evil spoken of, by imprudence and excess in the manner of performing it.

In nothing is human ignorance and frailty more apparent, than in the important article of education. It is conducted, at one time, with a severity that intimidates and overwhelms; at another, with a lenity that flatters, encourages, and fosters vice. One is driven into an evil course by despair, another drawn into it, and fortified in it, by excessive indulgence. It is, in truth, no easy task to manage this matter aright. The modes of treatment are as various as the character and dispositions of the young ones, who are the subjects of it. The application of a general rule is impracticable and absurd. The discipline which would oppress one child, is hardly sufficient to restrain another within any bounds of decency. It is happy when the child is inured to habits of restraint and submission from the cradle. If the mother has discharged her duty tolerably, the business of the father and master is half executed. Last Lord's day we had the satisfaction of observing the effects of an early good education, in the example of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. We saw in her conduct a happy mixture of tenderness and resolution; of attention

to domestic employments, and regard to the offices of religion; of moderated anxiety about the safety and comfort of her son's person, and prudent concern about the culture of his mind. We are, this evening, to meditate on a subject much less pleasing, but not less instructive: the ruinous effects of education neglected; youth licentious and unrestrained, sinking gradually into universal depravity, and issuing in accumulated wretchedness and untimely death. A father weak and indulgent; sons profligate and abandoned; a God holy, righteous, and just.

Observe, in the entrance, the provision which infinite wisdom has been making to supply the breach which was ready to be made in the priesthood. The measure of the iniquity of Eli's sons was nearly full, their destruction was hastening on; Samuel is already born, instructed in, prepared for, the service of the tabernacle; and the care of a pious mother has been employed, in the hand of Providence, to counteract the criminal negligence and carelessness of a too easy father.

The representation given us of the degeneracy and dissoluteness of the Levitical family, equals, if not exceeds, all that history relates of the irregularity, and impurity of idol worship. The law had made a decent, and even an ample provision, for them who ministered at the altar, but had carefully guarded against whatever tended to countenance luxury or excess. But behold every thing confounded. The directors of religious worship are become the patterns of impiety. There is no reverence of God, no regard to man. Before the fat of the sacrifice smokes upon the altar of Jehovah, the choicest pieces of the victim are served up on the abominable table of a luxurious priest. The pious worshipper has his offering marred, his spirit discomposed, the festival of his family peace disturbed and defrauded, and indecencies, too shocking to be mentioned, close the scene of riot and intemperance.

All this is easily to be traced up to early habits of indulgence: men could not have become thus wicked all at once. Had the authority of the father, had the sanctity of the high-priest, had the severity of the judge interposed, to check and punish the first deviation from propriety, it had never come to this. We may judge of the gentleness with which slighter offences were reprov'd, when the most atrocious transgressions meet with so mild a rebuke as this, "Nay, my sons, it is no good report that I hear." This is rather an invitation to commit iniquity, than the vengeance of a magistrate to expose and suppress it. To point out the aggravations of Eli's offence, is neither malicious nor useless; it is written, among the other things in this book, for our instruction, and by the blessing of God it may prove salutary, as a beacon pointing out the rock on which others have made shipwreck.

Against his personal virtue no censure is insinuated. He seems to have been one of those quiet, easy, good-natured men, who love not to have their tranquillity disturbed, and are loth to disturb that of others; who, without being vicious themselves, by a passive tameness, become the undesigned abettors of the sins of other men. The corruption of the times must indeed have been very great, when it was supposed possible for the mistress of a family, during the solemnity of a sacred festival, to be disguised with wine, in the face of the sun, in the court of God's house. But the bare possibility of such a case, grievously enhances his guilt. He had not done his duty as the public guardian of morals and religion, or Hannah had not been suspected of intemperance, and the suspicion reflects the highest dishonour on both his understanding, and his heart; his bitterest enemy could not have devised a severer censure upon his conduct, than that under the priesthood of Eli such enormities were committed, and connived at.

Men

Men in power are chargeable not only with the evil which they do, but also with the evil which they might have prevented, but did not. Power is delegated to them, for this very end, that they may be "a terror to evil doers," as well as "a praise to such as do well." The same carelessness runs through the whole of his domestic and public administration; a disorderly family, a polluted church, a distracted, staggering state; no government, or what was worse than none. The best things are the most liable to abuse: and we shall give this faulty, unhappy father all the credit we can. His errors had their origin perhaps in goodness. His natural disposition was mild and gentle; his parental affection was great; he was unwilling to render any one unhappy; he thought of prevailing by love. He began with overlooking trifling faults; he flattered himself that the reason and reflection of riper years would correct and cure the wildness and irregularity of boyish days; "Surely the young men will by and by see their folly, and grow wiser." Who would not rather attempt to rule by love? But what is the proper conduct and expression of love? What saith the wisest of mankind? "He that spareth the rod, *hateth* the child." What saith the great Father and Saviour of all men? "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." There is no such thing as happiness but in habits of order, decency and subjection. The man, or the child, who knows no law but that of appetite or caprice, must of necessity be miserable. It is cruelty, not kindness, to give a man up to himself; and to dream of changing habits of indolence, dissipation, and criminal indulgence, by remonstrance and reason, is expecting that reason should survive itself, or that it should effect, when enfeebled, disordered, and corrupted, what it could not do when clear, and sound, and vigorous. But, "the grace of God is almighty, and his mercies are very great." Nay, but who art thou, O man, who dar'st to expect, or to ask a miracle of grace, with the conscioufness

scioufness of having neglected the means, which, timely employed, might, through the divine blessing, have proved effectual without a miraculous interposition? The one talent is justly taken away from him who hid it in the earth, and it is given to increase the store of the diligent and faithful servant, who, by wisdom and industry, had increased his five talents into ten.

The human mind, put under early culture, may be made to produce any thing. It possesses a happy pliancy, which may be moulded into any form. But the same plant, which, young and tender, you could with a touch bend into what shape you pleased; when grown into a tree, resists every effort of your strength. Cut it down you may, break it you may, cleave it asunder you may, but bend it you cannot. And alas, how great a portion of human life is spent in useless, unavailing regret for opportunities lost, seasons mispent, mischief done, misery incurred! Yet men will not profit even by experience, that plainest, most faithful, and most powerful of all instructors.

Who can view, without pitying him, that wretched old man, deploring the guilt which he himself had occasioned, which he wants resolution to punish, and wisdom to cure; which is proceeding from evil to worse, filling the past with remorse, and overspreading the future with despair? Ah, how heavily he suffers in his age, because these profligate sons bore not the wholesome yoke of discipline and restraint in their youth! Who can conceive the anguish of Jacob's soul, as he was sinking into the grave under the loss of a gracious son by the stroke of Providence? But what is it, compared to the more dreadful anguish of Eli, looking forward in horror to the utter extinction of all his family, with the insupportable reflection, that all, all was chargeable upon himself?

The character and behaviour of the unhappy young men is a melancholy and affecting representation of the progress of moral corruption. It begins in their making light of the ordinances of religion,
which

which they were bound, by their office, to venerate themselves, and to recommend by their example, to others. And you may be assured there is something essentially wrong about that man who expresses real or affected contempt for the worship of God. It is a gross violation of the laws of decency and good breeding. For what title can you have to insult that sober-minded person, who has given you no provocation, by deriding or profaning what he holds sacred? It is a direct defiance to the laws of your country, which have adopted the institutions of religion, to assist, at least, in carrying on and supporting good government, so essential to public happiness. He that despises, therefore, the ordinances of God, is a friend to anarchy, is making a wicked attempt to dissolve the bands of society, and deserves to be treated as a public enemy. It is an argument of a light and silly mind, aiming to supply the want of consequence, by affected boldness, impiety and singularity; and which, like every other species of affectation, generally misses its aim.

In the example before us, we find irreverence toward God speedily degenerating into violence and injustice to men. And indeed what hold has society of that man who has shaken off the first and strongest obligations of his nature, who has professedly degraded himself, and is become less than a man, in making the silly attempt to be thought something more. He who begins with defrauding God of his due, will not long be scrupulous about invading the rights of his fellow-creature. The same spirit which defers the sacrifice till an unruly appetite be first gratified, will, by and by, proceed to "take by force" the portion of another; and will lose all sense of the just claims and real wants of mankind, in pride and selfishness.

The third stage of this humiliating progress, discovers to us men wholly brutified, plunged into the lowest, grossest sensuality; sinking deeper and deeper in

the mire, till nothing remains but the image of the most odious and abominable of animals. Young man, look at the picture, consider it well. If you are so happy as to have preserved your virtue, if you have any favour of piety, you must regard it with a mixture of indignation and pity; if you are not lost to the feelings of humanity, it will fill you with loathing and disgust. The sequel will teach us many important lessons. For my own part, ever since I became a father, I have never been able to read this history without trembling; and my anxiety has not been diminished by reflecting, that the children whom God has given me, neither in their bodies, nor their minds, nor their dispositions, are among the lowest of their species. I have an awful conviction, that if any of them should unhappily turn out ill, a great part of the blame will be imputable to myself. I am frequently tempted to rejoice that none of my grown children have made choice of my own profession, the most dangerous, the most responsible of all; and I am much more alarmed at the apprehension, that when they are become men and women, they may accuse me of over-indulgence, than I am now, of being thought harsh and unkind by children.

As the greatest and most respectable part of my audience are parents, I must of necessity apply the great and important subject of my discourse particularly to them. And, as I always flatter myself with the greater hope of success with female parents, I take the liberty of addressing myself first to mothers. Providence, my friends, as I have frequently repeated, has laid the earliest, the heaviest, and the most important part of education, upon you; but it has also alleviated and sweetened the task by many peculiar affections and endearments. Let me suppose you have done your duty, and carefully reared up infancy and childhood. The charge must then pass into other hands. But surely both your heart and conscience tell you that you have not yet done with them. Female children in particular

ticular are an anxious and a lasting burthen upon the mother. They love you, they look up to you, they *imitate* you. You must *be* therefore what you wish them to become. Will a daughter learn to be industrious from an idle, indolent mother? Will she learn to be sober-minded, by seeing you habitually carried away by the pride of life? Will she catch the spirit of piety from one whose very sabbaths are devoted to dissipation and pleasure? I will not insult you by supposing that a positively bad example has been set, or that your darling charge may have grossly deviated from the paths of virtue; but let me suppose, for a moment, a case that may, and does, happen every day; that your daughter has grown up with a vain, light, worldly mind; has acquired a taste for dress and amusement; has become a perfect mistress of the usual accomplishments of the day and place in which we live; has become an object of attention and admiration. Let me suppose her attacked with disease, and that disease, perhaps, the effect of levity and dissipation. See, the roses are fading upon her cheek, her “beauty is wasting like a moth;” all her vivacity is reduced to the sudden glow of the hectic, which is gone, before it is well come; she feels the witness of death at her heart, she looks up to you with clouded, wistful eyes, and says, “Ah, my mother, you was too indulgent to me. You assisted the tongue of the flatterer, and taught me to forget myself. I was made to believe myself an angel, and now feel that I am a worm. Seeking to shine in the eyes of man, I have neglected the means of finding favour in the sight of God. I now wish I had frequented the house of prayer more; I wish I had not frequented the company of the giddy, the thoughtless, and the profane. I do not accuse my dear mother, of designedly misleading me; but would to God she had better understood her own duty and my real interest. Life had been more respectable, and death less frightful than I find it to

be. O my God, have mercy, have mercy upon me."——

It had been easy to have added to the strength of this address; but even from this the maternal heart recoils, and deprecates with horror, an hour so dreadful. Well, blessed be God, it is yet a great way off; and what is more, it is in your power to prevent it; I do not mean the stroke of death; but the arrow of death dipt in the poison of remorse. God grant that none here may ever feel it.

The criminality of Eli consisted, my brethren, in the neglect of his duty; and you have seen how fatal that neglect was to himself and to his family. Dare I suppose there is a father here, who has been more than passive in the corruption of his own child; who has been the promoter and the pattern of wickedness; who has with his own hand scattered the seeds of death in that precious soil; and trained up an immortal being to destruction? Pause, and consider. Are you prepared to meet the stings of an awakened conscience, accusing thee of murder, of foul-murder, the murder of thy own son, whom thou lovedst? Are you fortified against the cutting reproaches of that child, laying his eternal ruin to your charge? Have you prepared your defence against that awful day when a righteous God shall demand an account of the sacred trust committed to thee? If to contemplate his punishment at a distance be woe unutterable, what were it, to be at once the cause and the partaker of it? The terrified imagination flees from this hell of hells, and seeks refuge in prayer to a merciful God, that he would graciously save you from it.

Let young ones be persuaded to be patient of restraint, of correction, and of reproof. You are not grieved willingly, you are not afflicted unnecessarily, you are not chastised out of caprice. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. My son,

son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.”*—“A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.”† Venerate the name, the day, the house, the worship of God. Remember that want of decency is want of sense: that the immoderate indulgence of appetite is inimical to all true enjoyment: that what is renounced, from respect to reason and conscience, is enjoyed: that present comfort, and future happiness, are built on habits of order, self-government, justice, benevolence, and subjection to divine authority.

* Prov. i. 8—10.

† Prov. x. 1.

[I make no apology for giving this discourse from the press, under a title that bears the name of *Hannah*: The contrast which it presents being her highest encomium, next to the account given of Samuel, in the following Lecture, which, of course, closes her history, and fulfils our design.]

History of Hannah,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

L E C T U R E XXII.

I SAMUEL ii. 26.

And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord and also with men.

NO appearance of nature is more striking, no one affords a more complete demonstration of the great Creator's consummate wisdom and unremitting attention, than the gradual and imperceptible progress of every thing in nature, to its perfection, and to its dissolution. The dawning light insensibly advances to the perfect day, and the moment high noon is gained, an approach is made towards night. When the moon has waned, till she is lost in the sun's brighter rays, she begins to emerge into form and lustre again; having waxed till her resplendent orb is full, that moment she begins to decay. We are prepared to bear the raging heat of the dog-star by the grateful vicissitudes and advances of spring; and are fortified against winter's stormy blast, by the contracting light and the temperate cold of sober autumn.

Human life too has its morning, noon and night; its spring and fall; and empires have their infancy, maturity and old age. Time is the dawning of eternity; earth is the scene of preparation for heaven; and

and mortality the passage to life and immortality. Every thing is beautiful in its season, and every state is a preparation for that which is to succeed it. Nature and providence admit of few sudden and violent transitions; because the human frame, both of body and mind, is little qualified to endure them.

The passage before us presents one of the most pleasing objects of contemplation—human life at its happiest period, and in its most smiling aspect—early youth, increasing beauty and strength, gradual and regular improvement. While the family of Eli was exhibiting multiplied instances of the fatal effects of neglected infancy and unrestrained childhood, the son of Elkanah was silently demonstrating the importance of early culture, and modestly reproofing grey hairs, by exemplifying the lessons which his pious and prudent mother had taught him. The self-same ideas are here employed to describe the early progress of Samuel in wisdom, beauty, and goodness, which are afterwards applied to Christ himself, at a similar period of his earthly existence, and they furnish us with many excellent additional hints respecting the important subject of education, which now deserve to be more at large unfolded. “The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men;” and “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

Observe here, first, What is the work of nature, namely, to grow on, to “increase in stature.” The moment, O man, thy child begins to breathe, a progress commences which nothing can stop. Grow he will, and must; cease from all solicitude on this score. These feeble limbs will gather strength; by stumbling and falling, he will learn to walk and run; after stammering for a while, he will come to speak plainly, and he who seems at present hardly to possess the faculty of sight, will soon distinguish object from object. Cease from the vain imagination of assisting or improving nature.

nature. Assist nature! If you try to mend that shape, trust me, you will spoil it. Every violent attempt to quicken growth will but retard it, and an over-solicitude to preserve health, will infallibly scatter the seeds of distemper. Toward the improvement of the bodily faculties, the most anxious and intelligent parent can do just nothing at all; "by taking thought he cannot add one cubit to the stature;" it is by cultivating the mind, only, that the features, shape and person can be improved.

The reverse of this is the practice of the world. The whole attention is directed to personal accomplishment. Nature is cramped, stretched, distorted, to humour an absurd taste and an erroneous judgment, and she avenges herself for the unwise encroachment on her province, by encroaching, in her turn, on the province of reason and discretion; rendering all their late efforts useless and unprofitable; making education, which is clogged with so many difficulties already, absolutely impracticable. What can the wisest master do, I beseech you, with a temper soured by habits of unnatural restraint, with a mind rendered sickly by petty attentions to punctilio, with a spirit swallowed up in a sense of its own importance? And yet the master is blamed for the fault, which parents themselves have committed. Guard your child as well as you can from accidents. See that his food be simple and wholesome, and administered in due season; let his body be free and unfettered; his cloathing light and easy; his exercises, both as to kind and duration, of his own choosing; and he will grow on, and increase in stature, he will acquire vigour, will preserve sweetness of temper, will be happy in himself, and a source of happiness to all around him; he will pass with cheerfulness, like Samuel, into the hands of his instructor, without any prejudices, but such as are on the side of goodness, and, through the blessing of Heaven, will day by day fulfil a parent's hope, and constitute a parent's joy.

There

There is a fruitless, perhaps a sinful anxiety, of another kind, which parents sometimes express, and which often becomes a source of distress to themselves, and of partiality and injustice to their children. I mean the sex of their offspring. The expectation of pride, avarice, ignorance, or caprice, presumes to usurp the prerogative of omniscience, and, in the event of disappointment, cruelty and injustice to an innocent babe are superadded to impiety toward a wise and righteous God. It is dangerous, as well as criminal, to assume the incommunicable attributes of Deity. The man is equally unhappy in attaining or missing his object, if he pursue it, neglecting, defying, or accusing the interposition of Providence. There is an instance of goodness in the divine administration which is too generally overlooked, too little prized and acknowledged; namely, the perfect and exact conformation of children, both in body and mind. Among the myriads which are daily born into the world, how rare are the exceptions from the general rule! Every one bears the marks of sovereign wisdom, is the production of omnipotence, has the image of God impressed upon him. How few exceed or fall short of the just standard in respect of stature! How few are born deprived of the use of reason, how few deficient or redundant in their bodily organs! And, may not even these few deviations from the general rule, these acts of divine sovereignty in the government of the world, serve in a future economy, more gloriously to illustrate the perfections of Him who has formed all things to the honour of his own great name.

Is thy child, O man, born complete in all his members; is he endued with the ordinary intellectual powers, is he like the children of thy neighbour? How much art thou indebted to the goodness of Heaven! Are his faculties, corporeal or mental, as parental partiality is frequently disposed to believe, superior to those of others? Remember, it is a great addition

to thy charge; see that thou mar not the work of God, disfigure not that fair fabric, pervert not talents peculiarly precious and rare, let not thy glory be turned into shame. Has Providence, O woman, wounded thee there where thy sensibility is greatest, in the fruit of thy womb? Be of good comfort, he in whom thou trustest, on whom thou hast believed, saith, "Behold I make all things new." Then "the eye of the blind shall be opened, and the ear of the deaf unstopped, then the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." "The vile body shall be changed and fashioned like to Christ's glorious body." Then the soul which scarcely awoke to reason, shall discern judgment, and the wandering spirit shall be brought back to composure and tranquillity. Young man, young woman, hast thou received from the bountiful hand of nature; a sound mind in a sound and well-proportioned body? Defile not, destroy not that fair temple; let it be "an habitation of God through the Spirit;" let the image of the divine inhabitant shine serenely on that forehead, beam benevolence from that eye, distil in accents of kindness from those lips. Force not upon the beholder the humiliating contrast between a lovely form and a hateful disposition; be all of a piece.

Observe, secondly, The work of education, the influence of virtuous habits and example. Samuel not only grew *on* but grew *gracious*, grew in favour. There is naturally a prejudice, in the first instance, in favour of youth and beauty, independent of other qualities; but that prejudice quickly dies away, where personal comeliness is unsupported by corresponding goodness. But if it be found disfigured by vice, not only is the favourable impression effaced, but exchanged for a counter impression of detestation and contempt. As, on the contrary, the prejudice against ordinary looks is also momentary, when we find them allied to sense and talents, piety and modesty; and

our esteem and veneration of the character are highly increased from our expecting less.

Poor indeed is that virtue which lives only in the estimation of the world, which aims only at the approbation and praise of men; but, on the other hand, true virtue will always be concerned to preserve reputation, will ever prefer a good name to great riches, and unaffectedly rejoice in the esteem of the wise and good, as part of its reward. What a motive was it to a youth like Samuel to persevere in well doing, to grow in grace, to have his decency of behaviour, his filial affection, his docility and submission to Eli, his unassuming piety, his growing wisdom, his expanding faculties, observed and commended by all who came to attend the service of the tabernacle! This is not pride, it is the honest consciousness of a worthy mind, loving and seeking what is good, not for the sake of fame, but its own; yet rejoicing in fame as one of the fruits of goodness. That boy, that youth, that man, that woman, is lost, who is, or who professes to be, indifferent about the opinion of the world. The love of reputation is one of the trees of nature's planting, and none of her plants are easily rooted up; it often survives the hope of life itself, and the man discovers an earnest concern about his memory, after he has resigned his head to the executioner, and his body to the grave.

I recommend not to you, my young friend, that servility of deportment, that fawningness of submission and compliance which aims at the applause of every one alike, which is continually fearful of giving offence, which shrinks from doing good, lest by some it might be misconstrued; but that steadiness and perseverance in rectitude, which looks, and goes, straight on, which neither courts nor shuns the public eye, which can rejoice in the addition of the praise of men to the testimony of a good conscience, but trembles to think of purchasing the one with the loss of the other. It generally happens, in this case, as
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it did to Solomon in another. Young men who pursue virtue on its own account, and ask wisdom of God in the first place, certainly obtain what they seek and pray for, and they also obtain what they neither asked nor sought; the love of their fellow-creatures: the favour of man, comes unsolicited to him, while he was pursuing a much higher object, peace with God, and peace with himself; while he who aimed at the inferior object alone, misses even that little, and thus becomes poor indeed. The foundation of Samuel's future eminence and usefulness, was thus laid in the early and tender care of a wife and pious mother. The youth had never been respected in the temple, had never been the object of general favour abroad, had the child learned to be froward, petulant or peevish in his father's house. O woman, would you have the world to think of your darling son as you do, put yourself betimes in the place of an unconcerned spectator, view him as an entire stranger would do, and let discretion regulate the overflowings of your heart. Ah, had Hannah favoured her child more, Israel had favoured him less! How ample and how sweet, even in this world, are the rewards of self-government, of self-denial, of moderation! Men literally, in many instances, enjoy what they reject, and lose what they gain. He who lendeth to the Lord, lays out his property on the best security, and to the greatest advantage. Samuel is infinitely more his mother's at Shiloh than at Ramah; his worth is multiplied in proportion as it is communicated, and enriches the public fund without impoverishing the private stock. The eyes of a whole people are already to him, the expectation of man keeps pace with the destination of Providence; and the child, ministering in a linen ephod, becomes more gracious, from comparison with the polluted ministrations of ungracious and ungodly men.

Observe, thirdly, Youth's highest praise, the most glorious reward of goodness, the happiest effect of
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good education, Samuel was “in favour with God.” To obtain this most honourable distinction, much more was requisite than a regular and modest deportment, much more than promising talents, and childish innocence, and the other qualities which attract and captivate the eyes of men. The love of God has been, sometimes shed abroad in that heart; Hannah has been mindful of her vow, and taught her son to remember his Creator in the days of his youth; and how grateful is early piety to Him who saith, “My son, give me thine heart!” Lo, God has impressed his own image on that tender mind, and sees, and loves, and approves his own work. The great Jehovah has designed this wonderful child for high things, from the very womb, has raised him up to be the “rising again of many in Israel,” to purify a polluted church, to save a sinking state, and is fitting him, from the cradle, for his high destination.

The eye of the Lord observes with delight the progress of this plant of renown. He is hastening his own work in righteousness, is ready to perfect, by heavenly visions, the instructions of a pious mother, is preparing to crown the gracious with more grace. The favour of man is frequently the child of ignorance or caprice. They love and hate they know not why. Sometimes they hate where they ought to love, and love where they ought to hate; but the favour of God is ever founded in knowledge, is undirected by partial affection or personal regards, is the result of reason, the applause which perfect wisdom bestows on distinguished excellence. Samuel must have merited praise, else this praise had not been conferred on him. And singular must that merit have been, which could unite judgments so different, interests which so frequently clash. He who makes it his study to please man, can hardly be the servant of God; and to aim at pleasing God is not always the road to the favour of men. Nothing but genuine, unaffected goodness could have procured this joint approbation of God
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and man; and there is a charm in true goodness, which is irresistible. It may be overlooked for a season, it may be borne down, it may be obscured, it may be misrepresented, it may be hated and opposed; but it will prevail at length, will force itself into notice, will arise and shine, will command respect, silence envy, triumph over opposition; rejoice the wise and good, and keep the wicked in awe.

What mode of address shall I employ, to engage, for a moment, the attention of young ones; and to impress upon their hearts the importance of my subject? Would to God I could again become a little child, that, with the lessons of experience, I might regulate my own future conduct, and be an useful monitor to the simple and inexperienced. I would in that case say, My little friend, God and nature have made you lovely. The candour, and frankness, and benevolence of your heart shine upon your countenance. Every day discloses some new grace. You are increasing in stature: you are growing in favour with all who behold you. Every one thinks well, speaks well, hopes well of you. Grow on. Preserve that amiable simplicity. Let it be the charm of advancing years, of expanding faculties. Let that blooming face be still raised to Heaven with modest confidence; and those gracious eyes still beam goodwill to men. May I never see that open forehead clouded and contracted. What, shall the horrid traces of vice disfigure that form? Shall every one that passeth by be constrained to turn away with loathing and aversion? Shall the mother who bare thee, have her face covered with a blush when thou art named? Must she be made to mourn the day which was once her joy? Angels will behold your progress with delight; they will rejoice in ministering unto you: they are ready to receive you into their number, when your course is finished. God himself regards you with smiles of complacency; he is ever ready to assist, to counsel, to protect, to receive you. Let there be
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joy in heaven concerning you. Now, now is the season for laying the foundation of useful life, respectable age, comfortable death.

—But what do I see? That youthful face already degraded by vice! so young, and so horrid! Unhappy youth, the depravity of thy heart is painted on thy forehead. The sight of thy own countenance filleth thee with horror. Shame and remorse are preying on the marrow in thy bones. In the hours of solitude and retirement, stretched on thy bed, to which sleep is a stranger, thou art constrained to reflect on the wretchedness of thy condition; thou feelest thyself unworthy of the praises bestowed upon thee, by the partiality of those who know thee not; thou blushest in secret, and art filled with indignation against thyself, on calling to remembrance the innocence and simplicity of happier days. Thou givest up thyself as lost. No, young man, do not abandon thyself to despair: add not this to thy offences; there is help for thee, let it re-animate thy courage. Though “cast down,” thou art “not destroyed.” However debased that face, it is in thy power to amend, to enoble it. Thou wert not destined always to remain an innocent child, nor couldest thou: by stumbling and falling thou wert to be instructed how to walk and to run. Wert thou wounded and bruised; wert thou plunged into the abyfs? there is an arm nigh thee, which is able to raise thee up, to strengthen and to heal thee. Multitudes like thyself have been recovered, restored, established. “As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord” will have mercy upon thee, and forgive, and receive thee. The impure, the profane, the blasphemers, the chief of sinners, have repented, have returned, have found favour; and there is hope also concerning thee. Only, for the Lord’s sake, and for thy soul’s sake, proceed no farther, persevere no longer in an evil course. One step forward may be fatal; to-morrow may find thee in the place where there is no hope. “Behold *now* is the accepted time,

time, behold *now* is the day of salvation." "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." "The wind is boisterous," the sea rages, thou art "beginning to sink," thou art ready to perish; but shalt not, whilst thou art able to exclaim, "Lord save me:" for behold "a very present help in trouble;" that helping hand which snatched Peter from the roaring gulf. "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"*

—I conclude with calling upon parents, and guardians, and instructors of youth, seriously to consider the importance of the trust committed unto them; and to discharge it under a sense of responsibility to God, to their pupils, to their country. The history under review presses one point upon you, as of singular moment, and closely connected with every article of education and consequent improvement; I mean the study of the happy, but difficult medium, between excessive indulgence, and oppressive severity. The steady firmness of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, furnishes an useful example. If ever there was a child in danger of being corrupted by indulgence, it was he. But no symptom of it appears. He is treated as a mere ordinary lad, and from his earliest years, to old age, evinces, by his conduct, the excellence of the precepts, and the steadiness of the discipline which formed his character, and laid the foundation of his eminence. He leaves home, and parts with his parents, while yet a child, with manly fortitude. Already under habits of submission to parental authority, he cheerfully transfers that submission to a stranger, to Eli. Untainted by imaginary terrors, the darkness of the night, the solemnity of the house of the Lord, silence and solitude, and sleep disturbed by extraordinary and unseasonable voices, excite in him no silly apprehension, draw from him no childish complaint,

* Matt. xiv. 31.

plaint, deter him from the performance of no duty. In all this we cannot but recognize the wisdom, the constancy, the fortitude of his excellent mother. Had she been foolishly fond, he had been peevish, and petulant, and timid, and discontented. Take a lesson from her, ye mothers of young children. If you would have these children happy, they must betimes be inured to subjection, to privation, to restraint. To multiply their desires by unbounded gratification, is the sure way to multiply their future pains and mortifications. Reduce their wants and wishes to the standard of nature, and you proportionably enlarge their sphere of enjoyment. Let them contract no fear but that of offending God, and of committing sin. Let them learn to consider all places, all seasons, all situations as equal, when duty calls. Impress on their opening minds the two great precepts on which "hang all the law and the prophets," to love the Lord their God, and their fellow-creatures. Lead their infant steps to the Friend of little children, to the Saviour of mankind; to the knowledge, the belief, the love, the hope, the consolations of the gospel, and thereby preserve them "from paths wherein destroyers go."

The profligate character and untimely end of Eli's sons, on the other hand, afford a solemn admonition of the inevitably ruinous effects of unbounded indulgence to the passions and caprices of youth. Had they been early habituated to the wholesome restraints of piety, decency and justice, they could not have become thus criminal, nor would have perished thus miserably. In the excesses which they committed, we clearly see the relaxed government, the careless inspection, the unbounded licentiousness of their father's house. Neglect, in this case, occasioned the mischief. And the neglected field will soon be over-run with noxious weeds, though you sow, designedly, no poison in it. Fathers, see to it that your instructions be sound, that your deportment be regular, that your discipline be exact. Account nothing unimportant that affects the moral and religious character of your

son. Precept will go so far, example will go farther; but authority must support and enforce both the one and the other. You cannot, indeed, communicate the spirit of grace, but you can certainly form youth to habits of decency and order: and habitual decency is nearly allied to virtue, and may imperceptibly improve into it. Do your part, and then you may with confidence "cast all your care" on God.

May it not be necessary to throw in a short word of caution against the opposite extreme, that of excessive severity to offending youth? This indeed is not so common as corruptive indulgence; but this too exists. How many promising young men have been forced into a continuance in an evil course, have been driven to desperation, have become "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," because the first deviation could find no mercy, because a father armed himself with inflexible, unrelenting sternness, for a slighter offence? Alas, how many amiable, excellent, promising young women have been lost to God, to their families, to society; have been dragged into the jaws of prostitution, and infamy, and disease, and premature death, because a father's door was shut, and a mother's heart hardened against the penitent; because her native refuge was no refuge to the miserable? She returned to her own, but her own received her not. Instances, however, might be produced of wiser conduct, and happier consequences; of mercy extended, and the wanderer reclaimed; of human parents working together with "the Father of mercies," and succeeding, in rekindling the sacred flame of virtue, in restoring peace to the troubled breast, in recovering the fallen, to reputation, to piety, to comfort, to usefulness. So long as God "waiteth to be gracious," surely it well becomes man to "put on bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, and charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Thus have I finished what I proposed, in attempting to delineate the female character, by instances taken

from the sacred record. In these, and in the case of every virtuous woman, we see the great Creator's design fully justified, in making for man "an help-meet for him." That which is necessary cannot be despised; that which is useful ought to be valued; that which is excellent commands respect; that which is improveable calls for cultivation. Bad men only revile and undervalue the other sex: the weak and ignorant idolize and worship it. The man of sense and virtue considers woman as his equal, his companion, his friend, and treats her accordingly; for friendship excludes equally invective and flattery. In the education and treatment of females, too much attention has, perhaps, been paid to sex. Why should they be forever reminded that they are females, while it is of so much more importance to impress upon their minds, that they are *reasonable beings*, endowed with human faculties, faculties capable of perversion or of improvement, and that they are accountable to God for them? Wherefore obstruct to them one path to useful knowledge, one source of rational improvement, or of harmless enjoyment? If they are despised they will become despicable. Treated either as slaves or as angels, they cease to be companions. Prize them and they will become estimable; call forth their intellectual powers; and the empire of science will be extended and improved.

And let them learn wherein their real value, importance, and respectability consist. Not in receiving homage, but in meriting approbation; not in shining, but in useful employment; not in public eminence, but in domestic dignity; in acquiring and maintaining influence, not by pretension, vehemence or trick, which are easily seen through, and always fail, but by good temper, perseverance in well-doing, and the practice of unfeigned piety.

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