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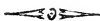
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The Author humbly hopes his friends will excuse every thing they may find incorrect in these Sermons, as a long and tedious affliction has prevented his giving that attention to their publication, he otherwise would have done:—an affliction, which has rendered him the more incompetent to the task, from the certainty of its being incurable, and the little hopes he had of outliving their publication. This must, in a great measure, also be the apology for the Sermons not being ready at the time mentioned in his prospectus.

Unambitious of literary fame, the Author submits these Sermons to the candour of his friends, and he hopes no exceptions will be taken to those he has published, as they are the Sermons, the partiality of his friends recommended to him, to lay before a candid and liberal public.

E R R A T A.



<i>Page.</i>	<i>Line.</i>	
11,	20,	For <i>avails</i> , read <i>avail</i> .
19,	8,	For <i>They are</i> , read <i>The words are</i> .
20,	17,	For <i>evolutions</i> , read <i>revolutions</i> .
31,	9,	For <i>a scene of felicity so vast</i> , read <i>a scene so vast</i> .
33,	2,	For <i>benefited little</i> , read <i>benefited but little</i> .
59,	12,	For <i>Being</i> , read <i>being</i> .
118,	5,	For <i>comes</i> , read <i>come</i> .
135,	17,	For <i>purposes</i> , read <i>promises</i> .
137,	3,	For <i>avails</i> , read <i>avail</i> .
155,	2,	For <i>who never</i> , read <i>who has never</i> .
165,	4	For <i>cerimonies</i> , read <i>ceremonies</i> .
167,	11,	For <i>though</i> , read <i>that</i> .
179,	6,	For <i>uniting</i> , read <i>we unite</i> .
231,	22,	For <i>befaling</i> , read <i>befalling</i> .

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II. Chronicles xxxii. 6, 7, 8.—*And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them saying: Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there is more with us than with him; with him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, King of Judah.*

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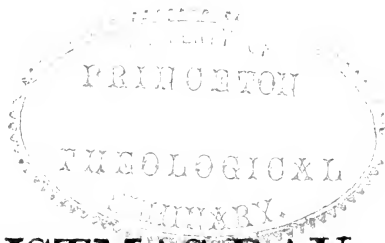
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CHRISTMAS-DAY.



HEBREWS XII. 2.

Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

IF mankind had any real desire to obtain that glorious crown of immortality—that inconceivable splendour and unutterable felicity purchased for our eternal enjoyment in the next life by “The Author and Finisher of our Faith” in this:—that faith would manifest itself by an implicit obedience to every divine precept, and as it “Works by love,” we should see universal concord prevail, and an anxious solicitude to practice those mutual good offices which ought to be observed between man and man. But that they have not any such real desire to obtain these eternal

blessings is surely apparent, either from their not having proper notions of the practical faith which christianity teaches, or that they are so engaged in the pursuit of their worldly advantage, as to pay little or no attention to those precepts, by the observance of which, they can only hope to “Work out their salvation.” For if a true spirit of heavenly love and gratitude enflamed the breast for the glory regained, by the coming of the Son of God on earth, we should see a religious sense of so great a sacrifice infuse itself into the actions of men:—“Looking unto Jesus,” every deed would carry the mark of an inward rectitude of thought, and indicate a zeal to act up to the tenets of the “Blessed Author and Finisher of our Faith.”

This day, my Brethren! presents to us reflections that ought to excite us to such a conduct, as would evince we have too just a sense of the goodness of the Almighty towards us, than to suffer the pleasures, the riches, or honours to get the ascendancy over that praise and gratitude due to the Father of Mercies, for sending

his beloved Son into the world to restore us to the felicity lost through the lapse of Adam, and who, by being the “ Author and Finisher of our “ Faith,” has shewn us the only way to prove the sincerity of that faith is, “ To fulfil all righteousnessness.”

Praise and gratitude for the blessings of our redemption ought certainly to appear in every instance of our conduct through life; nor can we better shew forth the praise of our Redeemer, or attest our gratitude to him, than by making the rules he has left us, and the pattern he has set us, our guide and example, to lead us from this world to that which, by his being “ Born as at “ this time of a pure virgin” he has obtained for us.

Man was created in innocence, and intended for a happiness, pure and without alloy—suitable to the dignity of his divine origin as possessing a portion of the celestial spirit, when his Creator “ Breathed into his nostrils the breath “ of life, and he became a living soul.” As free-agents, placed in a garden abounding with all things richly to enjoy; God, to shew his good-

ness to the favourite creatures of his bounty, would not controul their freedom of action; but in order to display the justice and liberality of his dealings towards them, and to give them an opportunity to manifest their gratitude and obedience for the blessings he had given, and further intended to bestow; he prohibited the eating of a certain fruit, harmless in itself, but once tasted would be the cause of their forfeiting their present and future felicity. Man disobeyed and he fell:—fell from a felicity which angels regarded with admiration, and wondering, beheld them sheltered under the protecting wings of the Almighty's love, and surrounded with every blessing an indulgent God could bestow:—they sought their converse, and man, highly favoured man! became the companion of those celestial spirits, who disdained not the fellowship of this favourite of the Most High. They left the abode of bliss to join their praises with the orisons of the first-created man, to the glory of their common Creator. Enviably felicity!—that disobedient spirit, for his rebellion, banished from hea-

ven with his apostate companions, and for ever excluded the presence of the Eternal, saw and envied their supreme happiness, and resolved on its overthrow. Man too soon gave proof how liable he is to yield to temptation; and that very power of acting freely, given him for the gracious purpose that his obedience might have the merit of being uncontrolled, and consequently have a juster title to the recompense intended, proved the means of his undoing, and his enemy thereby for a while triumphed in his victory. No prospect of his being restored to his former happiness could have been discovered, but that the God of Mercy, whose throne is founded in righteousness, beholding the degradation of that nature, on which he had bestowed a LIVING SOUL, ordained from that very woman, by whose means Satan had worked its overthrow, should spring a Saviour that should restore man to his former felicity, and satisfy the offended justice of Almighty Wisdom. But as no created being could offer an equivalent sacrifice to atone for the transgression, how admirably does Providence carry on the mighty work of man's re-

storation, at once to evince his mercy and to satisfy his justice! Through the mysterious, but sublime language of prophecy, the mode in which it should be accomplished gradually opens, till at last, the whole is unfolded to the astonishment of man, the joy of angels, and the confusion of our infernal enemies. With an ecstasy of amazement mixed with awe, we see that nothing less than one “Equal with the Father as touching his Godhead,” could make an adequate atonement: and that atonement could not be complete, unless it was made in that nature which had offended, that so it might undergo the punishment of death due for its transgression.

As the time of man’s redemption drew near, the prophecies become more clear, and point out in express terms, the union of the divine with the human nature—“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name **IMMANUEL.**” And when this evangelical prophet contemplates his mysterious dignity and exalted prerogatives, he bursts forth into all the sublimity of language that can convey an idea of the excellence and divinity of his character:—“Unto us a Child is born, unto

“us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

What tidings could be more acceptable to man, fallen as he was from his former dignity, than these prophecies with many others that so clearly pointed out the Deliverer of Sion—the Messenger of the Covenant who brought the news of the accomplishment of man’s restoration! Yet though God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, with what a strange indifference did man receive the annunciation of the divine forgiveness! The Redeemer “Came to his own and his own received him not.” Not so the celestial spirits, as by the fall of man they had lost his converse in paradise, they now see him by the bounty of heaven restored to the divine favour—and one of them, as harbinger of the birth of this great Restorer, appeared to some shepherds who were watching their flocks by night:—“Fear not,” says he, “for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day a Saviour,

“which is Christ the Lord.” Surrounded by a celestial brightness that shone around, others now join in a choral hymn of triumph and of praise, and hovering over on suspended wings with united voices proclaim, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace—good-will towards men.”

Yet notwithstanding man will not be made sensible of his own happiness. The Saviour of the world—the Messiah foretold by the prophets—the Desire of all Nations, he, for whom they waited in anxious suspense, when he comes on the work of man’s redemption, makes his first appearance in the stable of an inn: the heavenly attestation of his divinity by angels is disregarded, and the intelligence excites only a moment’s wonder at what the shepherds told: and though a star was ordained to be a guide to the Magi who came from the east to pay their adorations, and to offer *frankincense*, *gold*, and *myrrh* to this God, this King, and Priest; yet this certain and indubitable proof of the divinity of the babe, instead of exciting an enquiry into the cause, and searching into the prophecies concerning so wonderful a prodigy, produced a decree

from HEROD, that “ Every child in Bethlehem, from “ two years old and under, should be massacred.”

Astonishing blindness! What could be more obvious than the union of the two characters divine and human!—In the former nature, he could only consistently with the divine justice, be deemed a sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the world: and unless clothed with a mortal body like ours, he could not have undergone the punishment of death for man’s transgression: nor could he have entered his kingdom, till he had risen a conqueror from the prison of the grave; the bars of which having burst asunder, he now reigns in Mount Zion gloriously, “ KING OF KINGS AND “ LORD OF LORDS.”

Such benefits did the coming of our Saviour on earth bring to man, that we cannot too highly value the glorious restoration of our nature. Sin debased its original purity, and sin alone can again pollute it, and render it unfit for those refined enjoyments for which it is restored by our Redeemer. We are ready to blame the hardness of belief, which characterized the Jews when our Saviour appeared,

and are astonished they should not understand their own prophecies, which so clearly point out the time of his coming, his earthly abasement and heavenly kingdom; but we never reflect, that we are daily rendering ourselves unworthy of all the blessings obtained for us.—Are we christians?—Do we believe the Messiah is come?—Why then do we not act worthy of that belief?—Why do we not “Look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith?”

Alas! the extraordinary purpose of our Saviour’s taking upon him the nature of man, is still, by the malice of our adversary, rendered abortive. Some there are, and not a few, who believe that as Christ came to bring salvation by being made a sacrifice for sin, suppose that nothing more is necessary to obtain it, than having a faith in his merits; never once reflecting, that he also came to be “An example of godly life.” Is this then the faith of which he was the *Author*?—Is this what he declared to be *finished* before he expired on the cross?—As a Finisher of our Faith, his precepts and example can alone stamp it perfect and complete.—“Faith with-

“out works is dead,” as wanting those proofs that can alone demonstrate its existence. Our Saviour’s coming on earth only restored us to the capability of obtaining that which had been lost, and cannot produce salvation without our testifying proper qualifications for it, and that can only be evinced by “Looking unto Jesus,” and following the commandments and the example he has set us. It is sufficient it is in our power to obtain it; and in a world where there is a reciprocity of want, mutual good offices must be performed: and it is a great kindness in the Almighty to accept our performance of actions, wherein he cannot be benefited, but ourselves are rendered necessary and useful to one another. Our blessed Saviour’s life is of no consequence, if a mere belief that he came into the world to save sinners, be all that is necessary to salvation; his death in the manger, or rather his murder with those innocents massacred by the cruel HEROD, would have been of equal efficacy. What avail§ his growing up in favour with God and man!—his going about doing good!—his miracles of mercy!—and those divine precepts which prompt to virtues

which can have no existence amongst men, but as living in society, where an interchange of mutual good offices must take place!—Fruitless, and without one cheering hope of future approbation, are all our exertions to promote each others felicity:—The tear of sensibility is shed in vain, and the hand is extended in charity to no purpose, if a bare leaning on Christ be effectual to salvation. The sullen un-social character, insensible to the pains or pleasures of his fellow-creatures, wrapt up in his own pharisaical importance, ascribing to himself a superior sanctity—affixing to his opinions the seal of inspiration, and arrogantly presuming on his own interpretation of the gospel, having this inactive faith in the merits of Christ, not only rejects the works of righteousness, but blasphemously denounces damnation on all the workers thereof.

As our Saviour Christ was the *Author* of our Faith, when he became incarnate, so was he also the *Finisher* thereof, by shewing us both by precept and example, that our faith cannot be complete, unless like his, our lives be filled with good works, which alone can prove its sincerity:—“Ye are my

“disciples indeed,” says he “if ye do my commandments.”

But the principal and most general means, by which our *Adversary* renders abortive the design of the salvation procured by the coming of our Saviour on earth, is to wrest the passions of men to their own destruction, and to enkindle them to that height, that neither precept nor example will avail to make men see their own real felicity. The freagency of man, given him for the wisest and best of purposes, turns to his prejudice—reason is perverted, and the coming of our Saviour on earth—nay, even his sacrifice on the cross, is of no avail with too many. Alas! the enemy of man still prevails, and we are too apt to yield to his temptation.

But, my brethren! let us not suffer ourselves to be seduced to a faith that is lifeless and void of the genuine proof of its sincerity, nor be subdued by the tempter, to seek our own sensual and worldly gratifications in despite of the gospel of benevolence, but “Let us look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith.” At this *season* in particular, when his *incarnation* is set before us,

for our contemplation, surely we cannot reflect on the wonders of his love and condescension without an ecstasy of admiration, and feeling our hearts impressed with the most lively gratitude:—nor can we meditate on the benefits we reap therefrom, without feeling every string of the heart accord with the example and precepts he has left us. While our fellow-creatures, on all sides around us, feel the heavy burden of various woes and afflictions—and distress in every shape meets the eye—Oh “Look to Jesus,” and by acts of kindness and humanity, as far as your capacity reaches, strive like him to give consolation to the children of calamity. It is not merely the distribution of alms—advice, tenderness, friendly treatment, are no less acts of charity, than pecuniary donations. And not only to the distressed, but fulfil every precept with regard to others, as they invariably relate to men living in society—and thus by acts of kindness to one another, and walking in uprightness and true holiness, you will best prove the sincerity and perfection of your faith.

Who can meditate on the blessed effects of our

Saviour's *incarnation*, and not attest his gratitude by every possible means? Had he not completed our faith, by giving us the example of a life led in actual services to mankind in general, and to every distressed individual in particular; we ought still to have done much more than barely to rely on his merits; how much more, when he has shown us, that by our love to each other, we best prove ourselves to be his disciples, ought we to shew forth our gratitude, by a lively and active principle, and evince to our fellow-creatures, that love which is the fulfilling of the law?

But there is a selfishness in man, that prevents his imitation of this example and obedience to the precepts of the gospel. The pleasures, the riches and honours of the world, are the strongest temptations our adversary sets before us, to destroy the benefits of our Saviour's *incarnation*. Why will not man be more circumspect in what concerns his everlasting interest? Reflect, my brethren! Man was created in innocence, and surrounded with every blessing he could either want or enjoy—yet he sinned and fell into the snare of the tempter, and by that means

forfeited the vast bliss which had been vouchsafed him. God, still indulgent, sends his Son to become his ransom, who to redeem him from eternal death, suffers the punishment, and so satisfies offended justice. Man again sins, being “Tempted of his own lusts,” when mercy is still held out and pardon promised on his repentance. Oh, let us not thus abuse the long-suffering of God, but let us “Look up to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith,” who in the days of his *incarnation*, fulfilled all manner of righteousness. His precepts and example are registered in the gospel for our observance: let us make both the one and the other our guide, to lead us to that happiness which he took our nature upon him to procure:—let us abhor all manner of sin, which could render so great a sacrifice necessary as a God incarnate:—let us by every means resist the temptations of our unruly appetites, knowing that these are the instruments used by Satan to render abortive that sacrifice:—let us prove our faith by our works, and promote happiness and mutual good-will as far as our influence reaches:—and for our encouragement therein, let us recollect

that although sin procured the exclusion of man from paradise, after he had eaten of the tree of knowledge, lest he should also take of the TREE OF LIFE, yet man has now, since a sufficient atonement has been made, the same offer placed within his reach.—“Blessed are they that *do* his commandments, that they may have a RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE, and may enter in through the gates of the city.” Which may God, &c. &c.

NEW-YEAR'S-DAY.



JEREMIAH XXVIII. PART OF THE 16TH VERSE.

This Year shalt thou die.

THESE words were spoken by the prophet, after Hananiah had broken the yoke from off the neck of Jeremiah, which he wore by the command of the Lord, to typify the yoke under which the Israelites should serve Nebuchadnezzar—saying, that in like manner, the Lord would break the yoke of that monarch from off their necks:—
 “Hear now, Hananiah,” saith the prophet, “the Lord hath not sent thee, but thou makest this people to trust in a lie:—Therefore thus saith the Lord—behold I will cut thee off from the face of the earth:—THIS YEAR SHALT THOU DIE. So

“ Hananiah the prophet died in the same year in
“ the seventh month.”

Such was the occasion on which the words of the text were spoken!—Hananiah fatally proved by his death the truth of the prophet’s prediction. It is to be hoped he made the most of his time, to prepare for the event, by a speedy repentance, after receiving so solemn a warning:—They are replete with abundant reflection, and to render them as instructive as possible, let us consider them as addressed to each of us on our entering upon a new year, and in that view, you will allow, they demand our most serious meditation.

Time is a thing of which we are most prodigal, yet nothing demands our attention more—in childhood, in youth, in manhood, and even in age, we let the golden moments pass, and let our pursuit of trifles, pleasures, honours, and riches, occupy all our time, and leave very little thereof, in comparison, for the preparation of the greatest of all concerns. Days, weeks, months, and years pass away neglected and unimproved:—we provide only for a precarious existence in this world, and seldom

think of the future—let our object be what it will, we devote more time to it than we do to that which ought to engage it the most.

Could the great concerns of eternity be transacted when every other object is gratified, we should want no warning voice to inform us either of the velocity of time, or the certainty of death; for a man knowing these truths, would reserve his preparation for these events, to those moments when he felt fatigued with business, or satiated with pleasure:—But as the contrary is a truth confessed by all—every day, month, and year turns into a monitor, and reproves our waste of fleeting time.

When we survey the *Sun*, placed in the firmament, as the original source of light, with the planets, performing by stated revolutions in their respective orbits, their diurnal and annual courses, measuring the times and seasons by immutable laws; is it in the power of the human mind to reflect on the regularity with which they dispense spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and the truth with which they mark out days, weeks, months, and

years, and not carry his thoughts to that Eternal Being, who formed them for his use?—Shall the Creator of these wonders have less attention paid him, than we pay to the meanest of his works?—By the aid of this luminary, time is divided to us in such portions, that we can exactly adapt our pursuits in life to certain periods. We embrace with ardour, the stated return of those seasons most favourable to the objects we have in view, and will not neglect the opportunity they afford to procure them. We have our fixed intervals for pleasure and for business; but, for the Creator of the *Sun*, and of all the host of heaven, by which we distinguish the periods of time, we have only *one day* in *seven*, and that we devote to his service with such coldness and indifference, as if we regretted that any day should be set apart, to worship the God who made us.

But this glorious luminary, the *Sun*, who governs the day, and the *Moon*, who governs the night, with all those glittering *Stars* that sparkle in the canopy of heaven, must one day terminate their courses, when the firmament shall depart as a scroll:—This *Earth* too must perish, and all its

beauties fade away :—nay, that period is hastening, when the mighty “ Angel setting his right foot
“ upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, shall
“ lift up his hand to heaven, and swear by him
“ that lives for ever and ever, that EVEN TIME
“ SHALL BE NO MORE.”

But man shall not perish along with this general wreck of nature, nor become as though he had never been, for “ God created man for immor-
“ tality, and made him to be an image of his own
“ eternity,” and though in consequence of the fall of Adam, the sentence of death is passed upon all men—yet through that gloomy passage shall he regain the eternity lost—shall enter on that state where the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS illumines the glorious splendour of the eternal throne, and shines in ever-during brightness.

Exalted privilege!—Worthy of man’s utmost efforts to obtain it: with this view, can the objects which must be left, when we are about to exchange this transitory life, for one that is eternal, engage our chief attention?—Let it not be a continual reproach to us, that we prefer them to our everlast-

ing interest—"Seven times a-day do I praise thee," said David, in his pious addresses to God, but I fear too many of us let day after day pass over, and never offer even an ejaculatory prayer or thanksgiving to our Creator and Preserver. Surely when we rise from sleep, a few moments on our bended knees might be devoted to the praises of our God, for our preservation through the night, and the same when we retire to rest, for the blessings daily vouchsafed us: And besides, if we spared a few hours during the day to the closet, it would better prepare us for our worldly pursuits of business or relaxation; and when the sabbath returned, we could with a secret assured confidence of having done our daily duty, unite our voices with the assembled congregation, to give praise to God; thanking him for the blessings received, and praying for others that are needful.

With a mind thus habituated to a daily practice of praising God, and occasionally joining in the service of the temple, we could not but feel the pleasing reflection of having done our duty to our Creator, mingle itself in our transactions with our fellow-

men: and as our prayers and praises were offered through the mediation of our Intercessor and Redeemer, his precepts would be our constant guide, and insensibly prompt us to act with uprightness and integrity in our dealings with others, and with sobriety and temperance in regard to ourselves:— And mindful of the high privileges obtained by his most precious blood, we should so act, as not to lose the blessings of eternity, for all the enjoyments this sublunary world can afford.

To a man who regulates his life in this manner, death is no more than a passage to a life that is eternal;—he therefore is always prepared for that event:—he needs no prophetic warning to tell him he must die:—he knows its uncertainty, and expects it daily. It is the men, who are so immersed in pleasure or in business, as to have no leisure to attend to their future inheritance in another world, that a prophetic warning, like the one in the text is necessary; and it need be sounded in their ears, not only at the commencement of a year, but daily. In vain doth the year revolve round, and bring with it the sad appearance of universal decay:—

The leaf is dead and fallen from the sapless branch;—the flower is faded on the withered stem;—and vegetation is at a stand:—Yet man will not receive instruction from the objects which surround him at this season:—Unmindful of the desolate appearance of every scene, where “A seeming death reigns over the faded landscape,” he seeks only the gratification of his ruling appetite, and how to render the season subservient to his sensual and worldly enjoyments.

This is not the practice of the good and religious man:—This with him is the season, when the inclemency of the weather prompts to search for objects, to whom he may impart the overflowings of his hospitable board:—he has also his relaxations, his amusements, and his pleasures; but they are rational and suitable to the dignity of his nature, and the claims of religion; following whose dictates, he experiences that delight, known only to the truly beneficent, of seeing objects of happiness multiply round his dwelling.

But these are pleasures the worldly-minded men cannot understand:—Neither the pleasures of de-

votion, nor those of benevolence, have any charms for them:—The gross delights of sense and appetite have taken such hold of them, that the awful sound of “THIS YEAR SHALT THOU DIE,” would be no more regarded, than the daily spectacles of mortality around, where numbers are cut off from the land of the living, at all ages and all seasons.

One would imagine, that this awful warning coming to any individual, would awaken him to a due sense of his folly, in disregarding the superior calls of religion upon him, for the preference to any other object:—But what need is there of it?—Every thing around him is perpetually giving him this warning, and seems to say to him, not only this *year*, but this *moment* “Shalt thou die.” For what can he view that does not carry the symptoms of decay?—The impregnable fortress—the strongest edifice—the stateliest structure, and the most magnificent pile, fall into ruins around us:—And not only the works of art, but those of nature, moulder away under the destructive hand of time: mountains crumble or sink into unfathomable caverns, islands are swallowed up by the surround-

ing element, and even the continent imperceptibly loses vast portions of its land, by sudden and unseen excavations. But if he looks to his own species, his fellow-creatures around him, still less does he want this warning voice. “In the midst of life we are in death.” The King of Terrors is perpetually scattering his darts around, and no age is exempt from his fatal stroke, and which, if he strikes not in the midst of health and vigour, his ghastly train of dire disorders seize on all, and stretch them on the bed of sickness, that they may fall easier victims to his unwearied arm:—How then can man want this warning voice?—Nay, does not every year bring along with it, this certain truth, even to ourselves?—Who does not feel his vigour decline as years increase, till tottering with disease, he feels the effects of not attending to this warning voice in his earlier age?—But flushed with youth, and in the spring of life, the gay visionary dreams of imaginary bliss, in the pursuit of pleasure, so play before the deluded fancy at that season, that no one will regard his mortality, till sinking in years, he accutely feels

in some lingering disease, the effects of his preference of the pursuit of pleasure, before the calm delights of virtue.

With the prospect of a year before him, the man of business speculates how he may improve his temporal advantages;—and to provide for all unforeseen exigencies, he carefully watches wherever he can see the least likelihood of a failure in his schemes; and he looks with certain hope to the end of the year for success, from his care, to guard all accidents that may happen. It is the same with the man of pleasure—he lays out schemes for amusement—plans for a succession of pleasures, adapted to the seasons as they follow in rotation:—he allows nothing for that variety of intervening circumstances, that perpetually thwart the best laid plans, but imagines pleasures will rise out of pleasures, and thus differs from the prudential caution of the man of business:—and yet both, while thus provident for future profit or pleasure, never reflect farther on the circumstance, that death may frustrate all their schemes, than that in case such an event *should* happen, they will provide

for it in such a manner, that as little prejudice shall accrue to their *worldly* interest as possible:— but as to their *eternal* interest, it is seldom taken into the account:—it is left to those casual opportunities, that may occur when business stagnates, or pleasure cloy.

Now, my brethren! we ought so to act with regard to our eternal interest, as the men of business or pleasure, act for their temporal profit or sensual gratifications. We have only to suppose that the prophet's warning is spoken to each of us, that we shall die this year, upon which we have now entered; and, as we cannot but be sensible that such a circumstance may happen, we ought to adopt the prudential caution of living, so as to be at all times prepared, let death come at what season he may.

As a traveller, at stated periods of his journey, looks back on his past road, and recollecting the dangers he has gone through, resolves to avoid running the same risks in future; so ought we, now we are arrived at the end of what may properly be deemed a *stage* of our journey, to take a view

of the years that are past, correct what has been amiss, and carefully observing where dangers have beset us most, prudently adopt a wiser course, and resolve that the *stage* or the year we have begun, should exhibit that religious wisdom we ought to preserve, the nearer we approach to our journey's end, praying that the grace of God may be with us in all our steps; that if it should please him to permit us to see the end of this year, and to indulge us with a few *stages* more, we will strive that every succeeding one, shall see us improved in virtue, as we increase in age.

In our present state, we are obliged to divide time into several regular portions, in order to ascertain the dates of events; and to regulate our proceedings through life, we take advantage of the rotation of the planets which the God of Nature has appointed, for the purpose of the division of time:—But when this world is finished, which will be eternally so to ourselves when we die, no division of time will be wanted, for an immense, boundless, expansive æra will be before us:—In vain would the fancy grasp it:—Millions of years added

to millions, can give no adequate idea of the eternity for ever before us:—The same eternal God, whose throne has been from everlasting, and will endure to endless ages, with countless multitudes surrounding and for ever singing hallelujahs, still before us, whose goodness, praise, and power shall be our eternal theme; what tongue can express!—what pen describe!—or what idea of ours can embrace a scene of felicity so vast, so glorious, and so happy!—If from this view of inconceivable bliss, we can draw our intellectual eye to this ball of perishable earth which we inhabit; what are the objects on which men set their hearts in this world, compared to the scene I have imperfectly endeavoured to set before you:—a scene, that shall continue for evermore, and where the blessed enjoy the beatific presence of our God, whose inconceivable glories will occupy their united praises throughout all ages.

I have little more to add; for with this view of that eternal happiness, which awaits those who so improve the years they have to live in this frail transitory world, as to secure its enjoyment; surely

we shall avail ourselves of whatever portion of what we call *time*, we have to live in future, so as to devote it to the duties of our religion, the service of God, and the salvation of our souls.

GOOD-FRIDAY.



HEBREWS XII. 2.

Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.

IN the primitive ages of the world, mankind seem to have benefited little by the miseries of others; and notwithstanding they could not but be sensible that every man was liable to misfortunes, and sometimes no doubt beheld him rising above them; yet they appear not to have known how properly to apply that consolation which the afflicted find in looking up to some eminent example, whose sufferings, long and tedious, have been borne with becoming patience, and at length recompensed with a distinguished prosperity:—We cannot suppose they could want such patterns in a world

where misery has been the portion of mortals ever since the lapse of Adam.—“Man is born to trouble”—it is as natural to him, as it is for the “sparks to fly upward:”—And it was with a view to impress upon the children of Israel, whilst they were amongst the Madianites, so useful a lesson as patience under affliction, and to exhibit before them a noble example of that virtue under a severe complication of distresses, that Moses proposes to them the history of Job, taken no doubt from real life.

In distress—in affliction, the knee would bend; the hand would be raised in prayer to heaven with earnest entreaty; yet still the knowledge of others in similar distress, as having no better consolation than himself, would yield no hope to the mind in its affliction.—The short-sighted reason of man could not discover the ends God has in view in sending calamity; despair would render his sufferings insupportable, and he would be too apt to murmur at the dispensations of Heaven:—But point out to him a man eminent for his piety, goodness, and virtue, enduring every affliction that could befall

him, with patience and resignation;—bearing every insult and sustaining the foulest reproach with fortitude and equanimity, and at last rising superior to his misery, and rewarded with unexpected prosperity; and he would with steadfast hope look for similar relief in God's good time, from his affliction.

How advantageous then is it for us, my brethren! who, when the bitterest storms of adversity descend with fury on our defenceless heads, and plunge us in the depths of misery—when keen want preys on our famished frame, and all around is a scene of wretchedness and woe—when slander, malice, persecution, combine to aggravate the sharpness of our affliction:—how advantageous is it to have a pattern before us, who has trod in the lowest vale of humiliation—tasted of the bitterest cup of human misery—had not where to lay his head—was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—and to close the melancholy scene, expired under the tortures of an ignominious crucifixion.

To this exalted pattern, this day's commemoration leads our meditations. Though through his life, even from the manger, we might trace the va-

rious afflictions which on all sides beset him, yet we will confine our reflections to those unparalleled sufferings more immediately belonging to his crucifixion—here they converge to one point—here every thing that could add poignancy to human misery, was united to pour on him its utmost fury:—Persecution, malice, envy, revenge, nay, every direful passion the Adversary could raise up in the bosom of his enemies, was enflamed against him, nor abated till he had brought him to the fatal cross.

As the time approached when our Saviour's sufferings were to begin, that were to be inflicted on him, as the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, his magnanimity in meeting them was extraordinary:—"Behold," says he to his disciples, "we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of the Chief Priest, and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, to scourge, and to crucify him." Yet with this view of his sufferings, he shrinks not from the death that awaits him, but proceeds to Jeru-

salem, with a great multitude of followers, who “Spread their garments and strewed branches in “the way,” and he makes his entry into the city amidst the shouts of “Hosanna to the Son of “David—blessed is he that cometh in the name “of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest.”

He then proceeded to the Temple, and cast out them that bought and sold therein, and overthrew the tables of the Money-Changers, and the seats of them that sold doves. Having thus purged the Temple of those who had polluted it, by making it a place of traffic—the blind and the lame here resort to our Saviour and are healed, while the children uttered the same acclamations as when he entered the city: “And when the Chief Priests and Scribes “saw the wonderful things that he did, and the “children crying in the Temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased, and said unto him, hearest thou what “these say?—and Jesus said unto them—yea—“have ye never read, out of the mouths of babes “and sucklings hast thou perfected praise?—And “he left them and went out of the city into Bethany, and lodged there.”

We now come to the commencement of our Lord's sufferings leading to his crucifixion:—The Chief Priests, the Scribes, and Elders, with the High Priest, forming a Sanhedrim, instigated by Satan, enter into a consultation how to murder him of whom their own Prophets had spoken. Dictated by motives of revenge, they listen only to the suggestions of malice, but fearing the people, whose acclamations still sounded ungrateful in their ears, “They consulted how they might take him by “subtlety.”

When Satan has enslaved the heart, to what meanness does not the mind descend to indulge its malice!—The Jewish Sanhedrim, the superior council of the nation, dare not seize our Saviour openly—“Not on the feast-day,” say they, “lest “there be an uproar among the people.”

Mean while the innocent object of their resentment had retired to Bethany, to the house of *Simon the leper*—when Mary, the sister of Lazarus, came with an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head—this enraged the covetous Judas:—“To what purpose is this waste?” says

he—"for this ointment might have been sold for
"much and given to the poor. This he said,"
says St. John, "not that he cared for the poor, but
"because he was a thief and had the bag, and
"bare what was put therein." To this reproach
our blessed Lord thus pathetically remonstrates—
"Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought
"a good work upon me—for ye have the poor al-
"ways with you, but me ye have not always: For
"in that she hath poured this ointment on my body
"she did it for my burial."

These expressions, which would have soothed an ingenuous mind, enraged the traitor Judas only the more: and listening to the malice that lurked in his breast, he rose and went to the Sanhedrim, and covenanted with them to betray his Master to them in the night-time, for thirty pieces of silver: with malicious joy they received his proposals. Here one would be astonished at such a combination of malice in the heads of the Jewish nation, if it were not to be accounted for, from their being under the influence of diabolical agency, and the permission of the Almighty, to render their perse-

cution of the innocent Jesus, a means of his being made a sacrifice to redeem us from all sin: our wonder therefore gives way to admiration of the mysterious ways of Providence.

Thus was our blessed Lord and Saviour, the holy and innocent Jesus, betrayed and sold by a companion—a disciple, and one of the twelve whom he had chosen to be an Apostle: But Satan had so far blocked up his heart, that our Saviour, when eating the passover with his disciples, uttered this awful denunciation against him without making the least impression on him—he heard it with an unfeeling disregard—neither blushed, nor repented of his traitorous intention:—“ The Son of Man indeed goeth as it was written of him—but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed, it had been better for that man had he never been born.”

Our blessed Lord then instituted the Sacrament of the Supper, to be a perpetual commemoration of his sufferings, and after a hymn was sung, he went out to the Mount of Olives;—he then informs them, that they all should be offended that night, because

of him—when the too confident Peter asserts—
“ Though all men should be offended because of
“ thee, yet will I never be offended.—Jesus said
“ unto him—Verily I say unto thee, that this night
“ before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.
“ Peter said unto him—Though I should die with
“ thee, yet will I not deny thee.—Likewise also
“ said all the disciples.”

He then cometh to Gethsemane, and bidding his disciples sit there, he retired to a private place with Peter, James, and John; to these confidential disciples he declares the anguish of his mind:—
“ My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.”
Who could hear this complaint unmoved! yet no sooner was our Saviour retired, than the disciples, being weary, sunk into sleep. But what must his feelings be to produce such a complaint!—We may perhaps have a faint idea of their poignancy from the agony which followed, which was so great, that he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground:—prostrate on his knees before his Father, in all the violence of mental anguish, he begs with earnest supplication, that “ If it were

“possible the cup of death might pass from him” —but with pious resignation adds—“Nevertheless, “not as I will, but as thou wilt:” Thrice does he utter this prayer, and thrice does he return to his weary disciples. The conflict was painful, but his divine nature overcame the sufferings of his humanity, and he rose with firmness, and calling to his disciples—“Arise, let us be going—behold he “is at hand which doth betray me.”

The agony over, we again behold the magnanimity of the Hero fortified by prayer, he approaches the band without fear—“Whom seek ye?—They “answered, Jesus of Nazareth—he replied I am he.” Confounded at such heroic firmness in one whom they took to be a malefactor, they retreated backwards:—he repeats it a second time ere the traitor Judas ventured to approach, and give to the band the pre-concerted signal by a treacherous salute of his innocent master. “Then came they and laid “their hands on him and took him.”

The manner in which our Saviour was taken he felt very sensibly; he barely notices the treacherous Judas with a slight question: But to those who

came to apprehend him—"Are ye come out, says he, as against a thief with swords and with staves to take me.—I sat daily with you teaching in the Temple and ye laid no hands upon me.—But this is your hour and the power of darkness.—Then all the disciples forsook him and fled."

The *power of darkness* now indeed prevailed—he was then led bound as a malefactor alone to the Judgment-Hall, where sat the council ready assembled; and *ready*, by the influence of Satan, to pronounce sentence: But that their proceedings might have some shew of justice, they suborned false evidence, to whose accusations Jesus was silent:—"As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth"—till the High Priest adjured him by the living God—"Tell us whether thou art the Christ."—To this solemn adjuration according to St. Mark, Jesus answered—"I am—and hereafter, ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power and coming in the clouds of heaven."

The High Priest adjures him with no design to believe on him, in case he acknowledged himself to

be the Christ, but as he knew the evidence was too slight to take away his life, he adjures him in that solemn manner to extort from him an acknowledgment, that the council might hear what he deemed his own condemnation from his own mouth: And when he heard him apply to himself the prophecy of Daniel which he knew related to the expected Messiah—he rent his clothes and said—“What further need have we of witnesses?—Ye have heard his blasphemy—what think ye?—” “They all answered he is guilty of death.”

Mean while Peter who had followed our Lord at a distance, and gained access to the Judgment-Hall, was present at this mock trial, and being accused of belonging to Jesus, thrice denied that he knew him—but recalled by a look from Jesus to his recollection after the crowing of the cock, he remembered the words of his master—and he went out “and wept bitterly.”

Now, my brethren! we come to the most grievous sufferings that could be invented by Satan wherewith to torment our Saviour: unparalleled were they in number and degree:—Many of us

may perhaps have been in the lowest depths of misery—felt all the smart of poverty—the stings of reproach and the slanders of enemies—been betrayed by friends and forsaken in the hour of trial: These are circumstances that are continually occurring to most, but our blessed Lord underwent such relentless barbarity from his persecutors in addition to these, as renders him the chief of sufferers;—we shall briefly note them, though they would take a volume to note their malevolence and infernal cruelty,

“ When the morning was come, all the Chief
“ Priests and Elders of the people took council
“ against Jesus to put him to death.” How implacable their resentment!—They sit up all night rather than their victim should go unpunished;—and when they had bound him, they led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, who, though but an indifferent character, yet could see the injustice of putting an innocent man to death, who had done no evil; in vain he remonstrates with the Chief Priests—the clamour of “ Crucify him, crucify him,” overpowers his arguments; and being

according to annual custom, obliged to set a prisoner free, whom they should require at that feast, he proposed Jesus—when the multitude, who had before greeted his entry into Jerusalem with loud Hosannas, now headed by the Chief Priests as loudly cry, “Not this man, but Barrabas: now “Barrabas was a robber.—When Pilate saw that “he could prevail nothing, but that rather a “tumult was made—he took water and washed his “hands before the multitude and said, I am innocent of the blood of this just person—see ye to it, “—then answered all the people and said—his blood “be upon us and upon our children.” Pilate then released Jesus, and when he had *scourged* him, he delivered him to them: the bodily torments of our Saviour now begun. Scourging was thus performed—two men first scourged the condemned person with rods of thorns—then two others with whips of cords full of knots—and lastly, two more with whips of wire:—All this did our blessed Lord undergo;—’tis too horrid for the mind to dwell on—imagination shudders—let us however profit by it and learn to abhor that sin which could render

such punishment necessary to be borne by him who was our Redeemer—"By whose stripes we are "healed."

He then was cruelly mocked—had a scarlet robe thrown over his lacerated body—a crown of thorns placed on his head—and a reed, as a sceptre put in his hand:—all mock emblems of regal dignity, when in derision they bow the knee before him and insultingly exclaim—"Hail King of the Jews! They then spit on him, and took the reed and smote him on the head;"—this over, they strip him of these mock ensigns of royalty, and putting on his own raiment, led him away to crucify him.

To complete the catalogue of his sufferings, he was forced to bear his own cross, the ignominious tree on which he was to suffer; and under that burden he was led towards the place of crucifixion; but a Cyrenian was compelled to bear the cross, which Jesus fainting with, the smart of his torn flesh could not support.—Being come to Calvary, the cross was there erected, and he was nailed thereto by his hands and feet. "He was numbered

“with the transgressors” also, being crucified between two thieves.

The malicious triumph of Satan was not yet complete—he utters these taunts by the mouth of the Chief Priests, the Scribes, and Elders—“He saved others himself he cannot save: If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross and we will believe on him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he will have him: for he said I am the Son of God. The thieves also which were crucified with him cast the same in his teeth.”

Now from the sixth hour to the ninth there was a darkness over the land. Nature seemed to mourn its expiring Creator, who, though the nails pierced his hands and feet, yet felt keener anguish in his mind in being in those awful moments apparently deprived of his Father’s love, as the mournful complaint he uttered before he expired testifies: —“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! After this, Jesus knowing that all things must be accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled saith, I thirst—now there was set a

“vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge
“with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it
“to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received
“the vinegar, he said, it is finished, and he bowed
“his head and gave up the ghost.”

Thus, my brethren! have we gone through the painful sufferings of our Saviour, and throughout the whole, what magnanimity, what patience is exhibited! Every virtue to which we can give the epithet either of heroic or amiable, shone forth in him with tenfold lustre. Being “Manifested that
“he might destroy the works of the devil,” the object he had in view was our restoration, from the fatal effects of the trespass brought upon the whole race of mankind, by the contrivance of Satan. This was “The joy that was set before him,” the glory of God and the redemption of Man, for which “He endured the cross, despising the shame,” and which inspired him with such invincible fortitude, that the malice of the infernals, and all the tortures they could invent, could neither shake nor terrify him.

Exalted goodness! “Looking up to Jesus, the

“ Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame,” what, my brethren! can shake our constancy!—What are all our sufferings compared with what our Saviour endured, when “ The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all!” He has shewn us the way to triumph over the artifices of our spiritual enemies; let us then strive, as far as our weak endeavours can, to suppress the violent emotions of every lawless passion, which are their instruments by which they tempt us to sin. In our dealings with each other, let his precepts be our guide, and under every trial and difficulty, let his example teach us fortitude and resignation; by so doing we shall manifest, that “ For the joy that is set before” *us*, we can *rejoice in hope* and be *patient in tribulation*. Now to God, &c. &c.

EASTER-DAY.



ISAIAH LXIV. 6.

We all do fade as a leaf.

NOTHING can be more beautiful or judicious, than the comparison which is so frequently made in Scripture of the life of man, to the productions of nature. The circle of a single year is supposed to comprehend every thing emblematical of our natural life. The Seasons, exhibiting in their rotation, the influence which time may be supposed to have upon it at different periods, are not inaptly compared to the four remarkable divisions of the life of man. The gay verdure of *Spring*, when every bud begins to expand, and all nature serenely smiles around, represents the sportive age of youth,

which beholds every thing decked in the most beautiful colours—the fond imagination opens to the most flattering ideas of pleasure, and nature seems to wear the face of enchantment. *Summer*, when every production has attained its perfect growth, and arrived at full maturity, is then competent to answer the various purposes for which it was designed by Providence:—So we, arriving to a state of manhood, become capable of those rational duties for which we were permitted to arrive at the full meridian of our years. *Autumn* is that season, when nature having flourished through the summer, and produced its ripened fruits and gayest flowers, gradually loses every attractive charm, and withering, droops into that decaying state which marks its swift decline. Man in a similar manner having flourished through the summer of his years, now by degrees, declines into the solemn season of life;—he droops, he begins TO FADE AS A LEAF, and to put on the symptoms of a rapid decline. Then comes *Winter*, when the whole vegetable kingdom dies, and leaves not a trace of its pristine beauty remaining:—Thus man

sinks into the hoary winter of his age, the last concluding season of life, when he falls like the leaf—dies—and his former gaiety, activity, and decline, are totally obliterated and obscured by the shades of death. How just a comparison! and how exact an emblem of human life! To shew us its shortness still more, it has been compared even to a day—morning, noon, evening, and night, like spring, summer, autumn, and winter, equally represent the life of man. “In the morning “ it is green and groweth up, but in the evening it “ is cut down, dried up, and withered.” And again the Psalmist says in another place, “ As “ for man, his days are as grass—as a flower of “ the field, so he flourisheth, for the wind passeth “ over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof “ shall know it no more. Man,” says Job, “ comes “ forth like a flower and is cut down, he fleeth “ also as a shadow and continueth not.” The prophet Isaiah in a similar comparison remarks, “ All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as “ a flower of the field—the grass withereth, the “ flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord

“bloweth upon it, surely the people is grass.” And in the text he observes, “WE ALL DO FADE AS A LEAF.”

But the most melancholy consideration, and the most awful warning to human nature is, the reflection suggested daily to us by the loss we sustain of our friends, at all ages;—that numerous disasters often befall us in the helpless age of infancy, nip the bud of youth, or crush our riper years. The infant is snatched in all its innocence, from its doating parents’ arms. The youth is reluctantly dragged from the gay allurements of pleasure, and man, in his best estate, is arrested in the midst of his fond schemes and plans for the future. Few are permitted, comparatively speaking, to enter into the concluding season of life, or even to reach the autumn of their age. Few attain to the meridian of their strength, and still fewer pass through the first season—the verdant spring of life.

To add to this melancholy consideration, on the uncertainty of life, the reflection that it was brought upon the whole race of mankind by sin

and disobedience, must double the bitterness of its remembrance:—That man was created for immortality, with a nature suitable to such a state;—that he was surrounded with every thing pleasant to the eye, and for the supply of every appetite, with innocence and virtue;—seated in a happy abode, where the most High God deigned to visit him:—How painful the reflection! How odious the sin that corrupted human nature, must we needs exclaim, that lost it the enjoyment of paradise, the fellowship of Angels, and the converse of God! How lamentable the state of man, who, even in the days of innocence could be subdued by the Tempter! Children of the same frail parentage as we are, we must find it still more difficult to overcome in the hour of trial: but let us not despair, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. We are all created anew in Christ Jesus.” He is the second Adam, and like the first, was tempted and overcame. The first was made a living soul, when God breathed into him the breath of life:

the second Adam is a quickening Spirit, or a Restorer to a life eternal of that soul, dead through the fall of the first, in trespasses and sins.

But to carry forward the comparison in the text, and prove the justness of the emblem, we are to consider, that when the leaf falls, and winter rages with a tyrant's sway over the whole vegetable system, the nutritive juice of the plant recedes to its primitive recess in the earth;—the sap dries up, and the tree in appearance dies:—The cold-chilling frost holds in firm compact the parent stem, and binds it with its icy powers. All nature seems to be under the iron hand of winter, and every thing we see, wears a withered aspect. Thus man falls, and is buried in the silent tomb, and death seems in triumph to hold him in his adamantine grasp, and he is left to moulder to his native dust, and mix with the terrestrial element, out of which he first was formed. But as the tree revives, when the genial sun, with his all-cheering beams brings on the verdant spring, and draws up the sap through the opening pores; so man revives at the command of him who is the first-fruits of them that slept;

whose awakening summons shall reach the remotest caverns of the dead:—"Awake thou that sleepest—arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life."

This argument, St. Paul, in the lesson appointed for the burial service, urges by a similar comparison:—"But some man will say, how are the dead raised up?—And with what body do they come? —Thou fool! that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."—Proving from this argument, that as a seed sown in the ground, must there die before it can be quickened: So man must die ere he can be revived, or his original nature restored: For though we deposit in the grave a corrupt and perishable body, not having the nature in which it is to be raised; yet God will give it at that time, "A body as it pleases him, and to every seed his own body:—It is sown," (or put in the ground) "a corruptible body, but it will be raised an incorruptible one:

“ It is sown in dishonour, it will be raised in glory :
“ It is sown in weakness, it will be raised in power :
“ It is sown a natural body, but it will be raised a
“ spiritual one.”

Thus what we lost by the first Adam, we gain by the second, who, as he was “ The first-fruits of “ them that slept,” is called the second Adam, as being the first who rose from the dead, and Lord of the new creation, whose nature, like his, should hereafter be raised, incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual.

BLESSED BE THE SAVIOUR! who thus restored our fallen nature to its capability of enjoying the immortality for which it was created: let all nations give him praise for his boundless love to fallen man; even to our “ Lord Jesus Christ, the faithful “ witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and “ the Prince of the Kings of the earth. Unto 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, unto him be glory and “ dominion for ever and ever.”

How inestimable the fund of consolation here

set forth in this doctrine, of the restoration of our nature, when it shall be raised from death, and clothed with immortality. The soul that mourns the loss of friends here below, will consider death as a messenger that is conducting him to that blest abode, where they reign in bliss unspeakable—enjoy the presence of God and their Saviour, and partake of all the joys of heaven.

Happy thought! To the good and virtuous, this reflection, so far from producing sorrow, ought to be a source of endless gratitude. What is life and all its follies, compared to that eternal Being, our friends are now enjoying? Then arm yourselves with patience, and ere long, the sorrows of this world will terminate in the joys of the next.

A bright example our Saviour hath set us;—by the way, he has pointed out, we can alone accomplish that preparation for the glorious change in our nature he has obtained for us; even that change, when in the grave, we leave our corruptible body on being summoned from the sleep of death, and assume the blessed robes of immortality.

With the glorious light of the gospel illuminating

the path that leads to immortality, who can err? None can, but the wilful and obstinate infidel:—none but he, one would imagine, would wilfully shun the path: But alas! we find too many who are so immersed in other cares of a temporal and sensual nature, though they know the path, yet avoid it for the present, as chusing to walk in the dangerous mazes of sin first; and when the wild career of carnal indulgencies are over, then to pursue the path that leads to immortality.

Is this the way, *O sinner!* you requite the goodness of God?—Was he nailed to the cross?—Did the blood stream from his wounds?—Did he yield up the ghost amidst all those torments, in order to make satisfaction for your sins?—And do you prefer the course of wickedness still?—Nay more, after having made this atonement—did he rise from the dead—ascend up on high—enter the everlasting doors, and take his place on the right hand of God, to intercede for you, and plead his blood shed for your redemption, in order that you may enter by the same path—be clothed with the same effulgent robes of immortality, and dwell with him

in the presence of his Father for evermore?—And do you set at nought all this, and pursue a course that will lead you to unheard of misery, and defeat the very gracious purpose for which he underwent all these sufferings? ; Forbid it gratitude! Forbid it every thing that is honourable to your character as men! No, my brethren! let us remember, that although sprung from the dust, yet God gave us immortal souls—and though through Adam we became corruptible, yet our nature was restored through Christ—is divested of its sinful and mortal principles in the grave, and will have the glorious privilege of living with him in the kingdom of his Father. How then can we continue in sin, and forfeit this invaluable title to immortal bliss, and a life that will know no end, gained through the life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of our Saviour Christ?—A contrary conduct is thus pronounced by the Psalmist, to procure us many estimable privileges in this life:—“ Blessed is the
“ man that hath not walked in the counsel of the
“ ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, and
“ hath not sat in the seat of the scornful: but his

“delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law
“doth he meditate day and night. And he shall
“be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that
“bringeth forth his fruit in his season. HIS LEAF
“ALSO SHALL NOT WITHER; and whatsoever he
“doth shall prosper.”

Though the *leaf* may *fade*, yet it shall not *wither*—though it may for a time lose its beauty by the natural decay of age, yet it shall not everlastingly perish, but, refreshed by the waters of life, it shall be restored to the gay verdure of spring, and bloom for ever in immortal beauty, in the garden of our God.

Let those then who mourn the loss of friends, behold what consolation is shed into their bosoms, by the resurrection of our benevolent Redeemer: He by that has proved his power to restore beauty to the *faded leaf*:—And let us not despair of his goodness, but that he will unite us to every friend we have lost, provided we live according to the precepts he has laid down.

A regard to our future felicity was the aim of his whole life—his words and actions all proclaimed

his zeal for our everlasting salvation: he embraced every opportunity to give us information of the way in the which we should go to attain it; and frequently gave us striking instances how we might lose it. The fig-tree cursed by him, because it bore only *leaves* and produced no fruit, is an illustration that practice must prove our sincerity—that we must perform the precepts he has laid down, and follow his example, in doing good in our generation, and not rely upon a bare profession, if we would reap the benefit of his resurrection—the restoration of our nature, in order to its being admitted into the society of the blessed, where the friends we have heretofore lost, now invested with glorified bodies, mingle their praises with the Hosannas of the countless multitudes that continually surround the throne of God and of the Lamb. Which that we may do, may, &c. &c.

DUELLING.



PROVERBS XX. 3.

It is an honour to a man to cease from strife.

THE false ideas of honour which prevail in the polite and fashionable world, or in the higher circles of society; cannot be an improper object for the preacher's reprehension, when the happiness of a number of his fellow-creatures is at stake;—And although those whom I now address are not likely to carry their ideas of honour to that foolish height, which those who would be thought to entertain the strictest notions of it, erroneously do; yet, after I have reprobated their mistaken opinions, I will endeavour to shew you that *true honour*, which you as well as they may possess, consists in a “Man's ceasing from strife.”

It will be readily understood, I allude to the practice of *duelling*, than which a more heinous transgression against the laws of God, religion, and society, cannot be committed. Amongst nations which are styled barbarous, whoever heard of men calling one another out to mortal conflict, for a word spoke in jest, a trifling raillery, or an insulting speech. For those therefore who call themselves civilized—who profess a religion revealed and dictated by heavenly wisdom, whose prominent characteristic is forgiveness and an unresisting patience under injuries; for them not to pass by an affront, but to yield to an implacable resentment, deserves the reprobation of all who would wish to see the gentle spirit of our religion, breathe its mild influence on all ranks and degrees of men.

The ridiculous and extravagant pitch to which these false notions of honour are carried, is truly lamentable, as if there were any honour contradictory to that reason which is given to every man. Well might the Apostle speak of the tongue in the manner he did, when we see the least word spoken amiss, even unintentionally, shall provoke a chal-

lenge, and no concession, but either the most humiliating, or your life will suffice to answer for the affront: It is true, the offended person puts his own life in equal danger with yours, but this only shews its folly the more, that in order to avenge what he deems an injury done him, the *duellist* will expose his life to the same hazard with the offender, whose blood he is determined to spill.

Let the plea of the dread of being stigmatized as a coward be urged in its defence; and we allow that no passion is so shameful, so abject, and so disgraceful, as to be under the influence of base and dastardly fear. But does the shewing an impatience at a trifling offence—a warmth of temper, that cannot brook an injury, nor be appeased without the offender's blood be shed, does this manifest that the duellist is no coward?—By no means. On the contrary, it clearly proves him to be deficient in true courage, which consists, if we may credit our bibles, in a quite different conduct. Ask the resigned christian, who has manfully fought under the banners of Christ—has subdued his own passions, and triumphed over every unruly

affection, and he will point to his Saviour expiring on the cross, whose courage and magnanimity bore him through his sufferings from his enemies; and yet, with the heroism of true greatness, and with a noble elevation of mind, that spoke him truly divine, could exclaim—"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But that which rarely fails to provoke a challenge is, when the *lie direct* is given. One would gladly congratulate the polite world on their abhorrence of so odious a vice, did it not, instead of exciting contempt, produce an immediate challenge from the offended party: But, I would ask, is the duellist a man of less truth, because another has, with the grossest effrontery, called him a liar?—And does he manifest to the world his innocence, by demanding the satisfaction he thinks due to his offended honour?—Far from it!—Though the duellist would have the world to believe, he has the same disgust to a lie which all good men have, yet by challenging the offender, he clears not himself from the imputation: what he said may still be an untruth; the world therefore cannot acquit

him of the falsehood, but it may justly accuse him of endeavouring to deprive a man of life, merely because he had not the courage to suffer an imputation; of which, if he had been really innocent, he would have despised; well knowing, that it is much wiser and better to bear a reproach, than to deserve it.

It is said, that there are cases in which it is impossible to avoid *duelling*, as the accusation of cowardice, or some opprobrious epithet, which may wound the feelings of a man whose character for *honour*, nay even his bread, depend upon his reputation: If there be such cases, they are a disgrace to any code of laws whatever, and are a reproach to any nation professing christianity. No argument can be offered in extenuation of this practice. The duellist knows this, but the world having imbibed such false notions of honour, he will fly in the face of every divine precept, and forfeit his character as a christian, rather than undergo the shame of acting in opposition to their opinion. Did the ideas of mankind in this, or in any other instance, produce that happiness, which it is

our aim to fix in our bosoms, and could secure a lasting peace to our consciences, we could allow the duellist right in grounding his sentiments of honour and shame on their opinions; but we know the contrary to be the case:—"A wounded spirit "who can bear?" And the blood of the offender will in this, as in every other case, of premeditated murder, cry out for vengeance.

But how shall I enter on a subject, that naturally presents itself, without feeling those emotions of painful regret which arise in the mind, on reflecting, that a man should be so lost to every moral feeling, as to pursue the offending culprit, till he has put him in a station where either of them may fall. Surely Satan could not have invented a custom so destructive to human felicity as this, nor one in which he can take more delight. To see a man in cool blood, deliberately take the weapon of death in his hand, and in defiance of the gospel of peace, endeavour to deprive a fellow-creature of life.

If the consequences of this folly (to call it by no harsher name) terminated with the death of the

duellist—when he fell he had met with his just punishment, and had been his own executioner: but alas! he frequently involves many in misery, by sacrificing their felicity to his own rash impetuosity of temper.

Suppose a man in a quarrel unintentionally provokes a challenge from an overbearing tyrannic character, and in compliance with these erroneous opinions of honour, thinks himself bound to accept it, and in consequence is mortally wounded—how shall the challenger avoid the reproaches of the disconsolate relatives of the victim of his resentment?—Perhaps an affectionate wife is deprived of her husband—children of an indulgent father—and an aged parent of a dutiful son, all rendered miserable from his inflexible ideas of what he judges to be due to his offended honour. Such are the consequences, when a man is under the controul of passion, and his anger (not courage) will not be appeased but with the blood of the unfortunate offender, who being the pride of his family, the boast of his friends, and the ornament of the circle in which he moves; no amends can be

made them for the blank made in their felicity—the loss of their associate, companion, and friend. How distressing such an event is to any family, may be conceived, but not expressed, where a parent, a son, a brother, or a husband, is thus torn from his distracted relatives. Nothing remains for them, but to submit their cause to that God whose sole prerogative it is to repay, and who has declared, vengeance belongs to him alone.

The duellist may allege, he puts a similar weapon of offence in his antagonist's hand:—Alas! this will have no avail in the eye of an all-seeing God. If the man whom he has challenged fall, he is still a murderer;—if he himself fall, as he challenged the conflict, he can only be considered as having fallen a victim to his own resentment, and like the self-murderer, may risk the eternal punishment of coming uncalled for into the presence of his Creator.

I am aware of the relentless force of custom, and that there are many, no doubt, while they reprobate the practice, yet from a mistaken notion of honour, are induced to seek this unchristian-like

redress of an injury. Still these reflections cannot be deemed too severe upon a practice so repugnant to religion, and so disgraceful to the national character. Would we profess true courage, look to those heroes who have fallen in glory's brightest cause, and like them, manifest it against the enemies of our native island. Heroism and magnanimity are best displayed by bearing up under injuries; not in yielding to resentment. True courage knows how to suffer, and I am confident, is nowhere perfect, but as united with the christian character. Honour is but an empty name, if virtue be not its basis; and when under the influence of religious motives, it is then that it shines with exalted lustre, and gives dignity to man in every sphere of life.

The superior ranks of society ought to set examples to the lower orders, but in this respect they are not to be imitated. Many are their virtues, no doubt, and I should have no greater pleasure, than to point out such ornaments to your observance; but this vice that now falls under our reprobation, is peculiar to the higher degrees of society, although

by *you* as well as *them*, the possession of true honour is only attainable according to Solomon, by “Ceasing from strife.”

To “Cease from strife,” is certainly the best way to live peaceably with all men; but there are so many contentious spirits to deal with, it is difficult, at all times, to observe this maxim of Solomon’s. “A soft answer will sometimes turn away “wrath,” but not always. Some men are so headstrong, that “A soft answer will only inflame the “more;” and the more submissive and patient you are, the more will their wrath be kindled. To “Cease from strife,” with a man of this stamp, you must retire from his presence—shun his company as you would a firebrand. Reason and persuasion are ineffectual, he is too browbeating and insolent; he utters his threats with that vehemence, that the less wise among mankind may esteem him a man of courage and jealous of honour, when, alas, he is far from it. You have shewn more true honour, according to Solomon, in retiring from his presence, and thereby “Ceasing from “strife.”

But with cooler tempers, this observation of Solomon's is the best preservative of that peace and quietness, in which most men delight to live. It does not so much mean a "Ceasing from strife" with a contentious, peevish character; as it is comprehensive of every thing that can be intended in that apostolic precept—"Giving no offence." It is the being studious of quiet. I am far from recommending that tame acquiescence, as cowardly to submit to every insult and indignity that may be offered; but I warn you against yielding to anger in return, or having recourse to any unwarrantable means to vindicate yourself. Shew yourself a man, but let it be that character that can defend yourself, as far as your religion justifies. And here I cannot but recommend to you, our Saviour's example:—on every proper occasion, he never failed in courage, as far as was requisite, and yet his patience was extraordinary, and in every respect exemplary. Hear what he recommends:—"I say unto you, "that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite "thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other "cheek also," meaning thereby, that we ought

rather to suffer a double injury, than to seek to avenge ourselves.

But these maxims, excellent as they are, and conformable to that genuine spirit of meekness and forbearance which characterized the divine Author in every trial—who never shewed any want of real magnanimity when necessary, will have no effect on those men who have fixed certain rules for their observance, independent of any systematic code, how excellent soever: by these their conduct is invariably governed. They will just keep within the boundaries of those common rules of right, which every man ought to observe for the general safety. They will be civil, courteous, and even condescending, so long as you pay a deference to their station, whatever it may be. They will observe the laws of integrity, so far as to let others see that as they do not touch your property, you are not to infringe upon theirs. Of real friendship they have no idea, but if prompted by ostentation to do an act of kindness, so well do these men know the world, they will do it in such a manner, that it shall appear an act of extreme liberality.

In short, they will act in every thing as having the form of virtue, without its reality, and what is still more dangerous, “The form of godliness without its power,” for if they have any religion at all, it is according to the fashionable term, PURE DEISM. But as no hypocrite can long hide his natural badness of heart, and his total want of every worthy principle, on a thorough investigation, the mask drops off, and he appears in all his deformity:—you then discover his motive for aping a virtuous character is, to convince you, that it is possible to perform worthy actions without regarding the precepts of the gospel. How inconsistent!—Let us ask this Deist, what knowledge he would have had of virtue, had it not been for the revealed word of God. As to Deism, I shall not stop now to refute so dangerous and blasphemous an opinion, else it is easy to shew, that a man who denies the divinity of Christ is, to all intents and purposes, a professed Atheist. For my own part, as a believer in the Trinity, I cannot understand the term Deist as any separation from the character of an Atheist: Atheism is the disbelief of a God—Christianity

displays our Saviour as God, therefore to deny our Saviour's being God, must be Atheism. But leaving these professed infidels to the consequence of their stubborn foolishness and absurdity, I have only to note, that these are characters which are perpetually meeting you in the higher walks of life, and it is they who are a disgrace to any state of life, however dignified and exalted by birth and rank. These are the characters among whom a pretended sense of honour is carried to that height we have reprobated, but not with greater severity than it deserves, but yet, very many whose manners they would imitate, are worthy of the rank they hold—rich in every good work—willing to communicate—ready to distribute.

How prepossessing is he who is possessed of a calm and peaceable temper! The conversation—the friendship of such a one is to be preferred before all others; and he who would wish to dwell in unity with his neighbours, will ever check the least promptitude in his disposition, to disturb the tranquillity of those with whom he usually associates. Formed on this plan, every man may have round

him a circle of friends, where the only strife is to promote each others cheerfulness and happiness by civility, kindness, and acts of friendship. Should unfortunately, a turbulent contentious spirit break the peace of this happy circle, let him be struck out from the list of your companions. The journey of life is, alas, strewed with too many thorns, to be rendered more painful by a quarrelsome intruder on your hours of relaxation. Say unto such a one, as Abram said unto Lot, "Separate thyself
" I pray thee from me: If thou wilt take the left
" hand, then I will go to the right, or if thou de-
" part to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

The dispositions of men are so various, that it requires a long intimacy before we can form a just opinion of another man's temper. But "If it be
" possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably
" with all men." Avoid disputing with any man, especially with your intimate companion, if you find him tenacious of his opinion; for one word insensibly begets another, as Solomon well observes: "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out
" water," it bursts forth like a torrent, and carries

away all before it, “therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with.” Anger is the parent of strife, and a man of hasty spirit is ever the destroyer of his own happiness, as well as that of others. Should you unfortunately and unintentionally provoke a man, as is not unfrequently the case, with whom you are in habits of intimacy, consider if he have many other valuable qualities, and lose not a friend for the sake of an opinion; and in “Ceasing from strife,” you will gain more honour in the opinion of all good men.

In those meetings where your affairs may call you to mingle with men of different characters, deliver your opinions always, upon general topics, with a due deference to the sentiments of others, however contrary to your own, for here every man claims, and has certainly a right, both to civility and respect. If he should deliver his opinions with too much self-confidence in his own judgment, avoid asserting yours with equal obstinacy, for when once a dispute is begun, you know not where it may end: besides there are many men who have an emphatic way of delivering their sentiments,

even upon common topics of conversation, that a stranger would suppose them either to be in anger, or to be too decisive in their opinion, when they mean no more, by the impressive tone they assume, but to convince you they are serious in their assertions, as believing what they advance to be real facts, as may be soon proved, if they be open to conviction, on your adopting a cool, dispassionate tone of persuasion.

To conclude.—Could the men of the world once be persuaded, that “It is an honour to cease from “strife,” we might expect to see a custom, so disgraceful to a nation professing christianity, utterly banished from the kingdom. We all delight in a peaceable temper, unruffled by any contentious spirit. Meekness is the ornament of our religion, and doubtless, a serene mind is the best preservative of that tranquillity necessary to our happiness in this world, and to our obtaining that of the next.

SUICIDE.



PSALM XXVII. 16.

O tarry thou the Lord's leisure:—Be strong and he shall comfort thine heart:—And put thou thy trust in the Lord.

NOTWITHSTANDING that a want of patience under the calamities of life, which we are doomed to suffer, and from which no man can be said to be exempt, adds weight to the pressure laid upon us; yet it is certain a contrary disposition, though it might not remove it, would often render it tolerable. We cannot want proofs of the Almighty's wisdom and goodness; and therefore can allow no plea in excuse for the indulgence of a melancholy, which often springs from a fretfulness of disposition, that renders us dissatisfied with every thing around

us; because we have not that thing granted, on which we have placed our affections. “Who knows,” says Solomon, “what is good for him in this life?” He may pray for that very thing which, if granted, would prove his eternal ruin, and yet man will murmur, because God has not vouchsafed to grant him that for which he prays.

Why should man doubt the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty in any point whatever? Look round and see where he has placed you!—In the midst of a world abounding with all things that can conduce to your happiness. Nature smiles at your approach, and the aspect of every thing is enchanting. The heavenly orbs roll over your heads to give you light—the herds and flocks are for your nourishment, and the ground yields its various fruits in their seasons for your sustenance: Contemplating these wonders of nature, David exclaims—“O Lord, how manifold are thy works, “in wisdom hast thou made them all.” His goodness is equally manifest:—When man had fallen from the happy state in which he was placed, and for which he was designed, God sent his Son to re-

deem him, and by his death to atone for his transgression, and to restore him to that happiness which he had forfeited. If God has then thus shewn his wisdom and goodness towards us, as creatures formed by his hand, and ransomed us from the punishment of sin by the death of his Son, “How,” as the Apostle argues “should he not “with him freely give us all things?”

But the mind, in its despondency, will not listen to the persuasions of calm reason. Religion has lost its force upon a man bent on his own misery. The mind, weakened by a silent grief, long indulged, regards neither the wisdom nor goodness of God. Every thing begins to wear the appearance of gloom. Nature spreads her beauties round, and offers her bounties in vain, and he sinks a willing prey to that melancholy, which soon brings on a wish for the place where the weary are at rest.

Alas! that man, formed for the noblest of purposes, with a soul capable of penetrating into the glories of eternity, and intended for the enjoyment of the presence of the Great God of heaven, and to worship him, encircled with the angelic host—

should despise these proffered blessings; and because the trial of his virtues to qualify him for this eternal happiness, requires a few years of disappointment in this world, he will fling away his hopes of happiness—embrace death—and welcome misery!

Did man become utterly extinct by braving this King of Terrors, and his miseries terminate with his life, it might sometimes be desirable perhaps, when there is no other remedy—“When trouble is hard at hand and there is none to help”—to court the stroke of death and perish like the brute; but when man cannot but know he has a soul destined to live for ever after the death of the body, what must we think of him, who, to avoid a temporary misery, courts that which is eternal? Conceive the heaviest stroke of affliction you can, to fall on any man, which God has intended for the trial of his patience, in order to prepare him at some future period, to enter through the gates of death into his kingdom—to enjoy blessings inconceivable to the ideas of human beings:—conceive this man setting at nought this kind intention of the Deity—impatient under his discipline, and re-

garding neither the wisdom nor the goodness of God, determined to rush headlong into the presence of that God whose mercies he has despised, and whose blessings he has rejected; aggravated by the sin of coming uncalled for before his judgment seat! Who does not wish he could be averted from his fatal purpose, by such comfortable words as these:—"O stop unthinking man! add not the "guilt of *self-murder* to thy other sins, but tarry "thou the Lord's leisure:—Be strong and he shall "comfort thine heart:—And put thou thy trust in "the Lord."

That duty which I owe to the eternal welfare of all whom I address, constrains me to warn you against listening to the suggestions of despair; and without adverting to any one particular circumstance, I must place before you, the horror of an act which is too often committed in these days, to be passed over by the preacher. Do we not daily hear of persons throwing away their lives, as if they had bestowed them upon themselves, and were absolute masters of them, regardless of the laws of God and man?—Would to heaven that we

had not one instance of *suicide* amongst us! and then a crime of so disgraceful a nature, would not characterize us as a nation, nor call for the severest reprehensions of the preacher. I will not pass sentence upon any unfortunate man who has been induced to commit it, yet as a deed at which all men shudder who have any sense of God and religion; I must warn you, as it is my duty, and as you value your eternal salvation, to beware of the sin of despondency. It is then, when a man has cast off all hopes in God, and yields himself to despair, that Satan seizes on the wretch, and urges him to throw back the gift of life into the hands of God who gave it, and to precipitate himself unbidden into the presence of his Creator, which is a sin of such a nature as admits of no repentance, as no man can hope for the pardon of a crime before its commission.

But let us proceed in the more agreeable part of our subject, which is the consolation with which the Psalmist cheers the desponding mind:—"Be strong and he shall comfort thine heart." What can we suffer, that we may not be able to arouse

all our faculties to bear up against them? It is in general a weakness that renders us incapable to stand up against the assaults of calamity: we sink on their approach, and yield without resistance to their attack: but let us behave ourselves manfully, and meet them with the courage becoming christians, and God will support us through them, and will “Comfort our hearts,” so that no evil shall assault and terrify us. Let us put on the whole armour of God, and they will vanish from before us. The elevated hopes given by our religion, ought never to render us liable to the least degree of despondency. Christianity abounds with consolations for every species of distress: It is its peculiar care to guard us from despair, and not “To break the bruised reed.” It is the advice of St. Paul to “Watch—stand fast in the faith, and quit ourselves like men.—Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more eternal weight of glory.”

“THE LORD IS A GOD OF KNOWLEDGE.” He knows the properest time to dispense his blessings, and to relieve us from any affliction of mind or

body, why not then “Tarry the Lord’s leisure?” The discontented and the fretful will not, but will be the arbiter of his own fate; and if he cannot immediately see the end of his afflictions, he will terminate them his own way. But as afflictions, of what kind soever, are trials of our patience, we certainly evince a want of that virtue when we murmur under them; and therefore under the trial, we render ourselves unworthy of the favour which God intended. But the sincere and patient christian considers tribulation as a mark of God’s kindness, and will “Tarry the Lord’s leisure” for the removal of it, and if not removed, he will patiently endure to the end, that he may receive a crown of life. Nothing can shake his confidence in the Lord: he is strong in faith, and he sensibly feels that God comforts his heart, with a consciousness of his bearing up under his afflictions, with that stedfastness becoming the elevated hopes which christianity affords. And surely, my brethren! “Looking up to Jesus, the Author and “Finisher of our Faith, who, for the joy that was “set before him, endured the cross, despising the

“shame, and is set at the right hand of God.—We ought to run with patience the race that is set before us: for consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.”

The confidence which David placed in the Lord, is manifest in almost every psalm, and he declares it in such heart-cheering language, as might arouse the most desponding soul to put his trust in the Lord:—“I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my stony rock and my defence; my Saviour, my God, and my might, in whom I will trust; the horn also of my salvation and my refuge.” In every season of distress, in every trying calamity, God was his *upholder*: and the same trust in God must be our support. Who would do any kindness for one who doubted his word, or discredited his promises? To doubt therefore the goodness of God, is to suppose that he is as capricious in his dealings with us, as we are with each other.

What distresses did not the holy men of old endure, with which our sufferings are not worthy to be

compared!—They relied upon the promises of God, and therefore were able to sustain them; and if they did this under the dark ages of the world, surely we, living in the glorious display of the gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light, ought to trust in the Lord, that he will make good his promises: and if we patiently abide in the day of tribulation, he will give us a reward beyond our highest hopes. O then, let us not yield to the tempter—let him have no advantage over us—let us put our whole trust in the Lord!—Mercy and long-suffering are the attributes he delights in most; and though he delay the promised blessings, it is because we are either unworthy of them, or that they would not in the end be for our advantage. Well then has he reserved his choicest blessings for a better world, where death shall not put any period to their enjoyment. No man therefore who looks forward to the joys of another life, would wish to have his reward in this, which must terminate with it:—No! he takes tribulation of what kind soever, however grievous, as a trial of his virtues, his faith, and trust in God; and his

whole study is to suffer with patience and submission:—"To tarry the Lord's leisure," who will not fail "To comfort his heart," with the hopes of immortality. He puts his trust in the Lord, and "Does not faint, but he verily believes he "shall see the goodness of the Lord, *in the land of "the living."*

The real christian is the noblest of characters; he has duties to fulfil, and virtues to practice, that qualify him for a throne in heaven:—"To him "that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in "my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set "down with my Father in his throne." How unspeakably glorious this exalted privilege, to participate in the glories of our Lord, who endured every temptation, and has gained a crown of immortality for himself and his faithful followers!—Patience, submission, humility, resignation, and all the nobler virtues of the soul, would have no existence, if prosperity attended us through life;—if success in all our schemes and projects met us in every undertaking for our temporal interest, and no disappointment thwarted our endeavours, there

would be no exercise for their trial; and yet they are the only virtues that are to qualify us for the kingdom of heaven. How gracious then is Providence, to give us, by afflictions and disappointments of any kind, an opportunity to practice them; to shew by our example, we are not unworthy of them; that we have a firmer reliance on his promises than to sink under the trial; and that our aim is that excellence of character, exhibited by our Saviour on earth, through all his temptations, that so we may, "Inherit the promises," and reign with him in his kingdom for evermore.

With these expectations—with these glorious privileges awaiting him, the christian is led through every trying scene: From the furnace of affliction he comes forth purified and prepared for the splendours of a heavenly crown. The world and all its vanities fade away from before him, and enraptured with the glories awaiting to reward him, he *endures to the end*, and obtains that recompense of reward, for which all the saints and holy men, the prophets, apostles, and martyrs so triumphantly passed thro' the manifold afflictions of this transitory life.

Who then would faint under any calamity or distress of body or mind, with these examples before him, and this prospect in view? The goodness of the Almighty is the same yesterday, to-day, and for evermore. Jesus Christ, his blessed Son, and our Redeemer, is our Leader and Guide: He passed through every temptation, every trial, every sorrow that could befall the children of Adam, who are “All born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;” but for whom he has obtained a seat in heaven, and those blessed robes of immortality, with which all his faithful followers shall be invested who *endure to the end*:—“Tarry thou then,” O man! “the Lord’s leisure:—Be strong and he shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord.”
Amen.

BENEFIT-CLUB.



PROVERBS XV. 16.

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith.

THROUGHOUT the whole of the Mosaical dispensation to the chosen race of the Israelites, and from them to all mankind, is seen the peculiar care taken by the Almighty, to secure to man every blessing his nature is capable of enjoying; and to guard him against every thing that would not only endanger its loss, but embitter its enjoyment. All his commandments have a regard to us as fallen creatures, and are calculated to lead us to a felicity, both pure and perfect, by the safest and most easy steps: and would we but suffer ourselves to be guided solely by his will, happiness

would be our portion in this world, at least, as much so, as in our fallen state we are capable of enjoying. There is not a law given us, but in its obedience, we should reap more solid satisfaction at the moment, than in its transgression; even without any regard to the future recompense of another life, or to the soothing consciousness of a mind at peace with itself, in having fulfilled its duty. God created man for happiness, but he himself forfeited the blessing; yet he gave him rules, by the performance of which, he might regain it: And would man but pursue the path pointed out, he would find it, every step he took in his varied journey through life. It is this sense of the divine goodness, in the promulgation of his laws, which have a view throughout to man's happiness in this world, that has induced the wisest amongst the lawgivers of the world, to devise a system of morals, that shall stand the test of ages; grounding them upon this evident proof of God's peculiar regard to man, as revealed by inspiration: And amongst those wise and sententious maxims that have been delivered for the instruction of man-

kind, the proverbs of the enlightened Solomon may be ranked amongst the chief. When he uttered them, he possessed a wisdom given him by the Almighty, surpassing the common understandings of men, with this advantage, that to this knowledge he could add a judgment, founded on the valuable lessons of experience. Living in the magnificent style of ancient splendour, amidst all the exterior pomp, the empty glitter and parade, that then reigned throughout the gorgeous palaces of the east; he could neither want experience of the cares and wearisome pageantry of royalty, nor observation of the troubles attendant on the treasures of the wealthy. He clearly perceived that happiness was seated in the mind, not in the accumulated possessions of grandeur, or in the riches of the opulent, which brought along with them their consequent troubles and uneasinesses:—that neither pleasure, enjoyed in all its tempting diversities and changes, nor any thing the world so eagerly search after, could produce real happiness; but that it was oftener found at the frugal board of him who possessed only the bare necessaries of life, and whose

trust in the Lord, produced in his mind that contentment, for which he had in vain sought, amidst the glare of regal prosperity, and the alluring blandishments of giddy pleasure. “Better is a little,” says he, “with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith.” As if he had said—if you have but a just sense of the fear of God, and of his righteous judgments, you will see it nothing but proper for you to submit to whatever he decrees, as founded on his known goodness to fallen man. If he have given but little, as it is his doing, and he intends your happiness, (which he himself could certainly see the best means of procuring) you will be perfectly satisfied with the small portion he has shared you amongst his numerous creatures, dispersed on the globe; and be content in that state allotted you. You will also labour to adorn it with industry, prudence, and frugality, under a religious sense of the goodness of the Almighty; who, if he had seen that a more elevated situation of life, would have been for your real happiness, would have placed you therein: And duly sensible of this, and of the

cares and troubles attendant on superfluous wealth, from which you are exempt, you will be convinced, that—"Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, "than great treasure and trouble therewith."

Impressed with these sentiments, *contentment* will infallibly ensue, and you will experience that peace of mind which is the source of every happiness; as the contrary disposition is ever productive of misery. Envy, the companion of the dissatisfied mind, can never disturb the harmony that reigns in the cottage, nor destroy that peace which fills the bosom of its contented owner. Whilst frugality and industry procure him the means of sustenance, every corroding care which superfluous wealth produces, can never detract from the serenity of his tranquil mind.

Here then is the advantage of possessing but *little* of what are called the good things of life. When the wishes and desires are moderate, nature is easily satisfied. We want not that variety which overloads the tables of the rich and voluptuous; and therefore when labour produces the frugal aliments of our board, health will give an additional relish to every morsel.

Not but there are casualties that may destroy this happiness, and spite of the moderate wishes of the humble and contented man, produce sufficient cause for affliction: but whilst the fear of the Lord prevents him from murmuring and repining, he will endeavour to obviate the sad consequences of those accidents, which are as likely to befall the man of affluence as himself: And of all the casualties that can happen to him, surely *sickness* must be considered as the most deplorable. Happy then are they who wisely unite, and timely contribute, a part of the produce of their labour, against such a calamitous event.

Though at first sight it may appear a hardship that, in the curse denounced against man for his disobedience, he was doomed, “To eat his bread “in the sweat of his brow,” yet, by the goodness of the Almighty, that very cultivation which the ground was in future to require at man’s hands, is made productive of health. Labour, in any occupation or calling, is an exercise which banishes many disorders, to which those who are exempt therefrom are liable: And when cheerfulness,

peace, and content fill the bosom, health is the most certain consequence of such a tranquil state. But as *sickness*, from innumerable causes, befalls us daily, and is, in general, the harbinger of death, how beneficial must it be for a man in a humble station of life, to have a fund, to which he can at all times apply, and which, by his stated contributions, can hardly be missed from the common wants of a family! There is something in these societies that gives pleasure to a benevolent mind, in seeing a body of men contribute the overplus of their industry to relieve one another, at a time, when the sickness of a brother-member prevents him from labouring to supply the wants of his own family. It attracts our applause, and every good heart must be pleased in seeing these societies flourish, and universally prevail.

It likewise evinces a sense of brotherly love and humanity towards one another in the humbler walks of life, which cannot be too much encouraged. It has been lamented that no institution of man has yet been formed, capable of softening the natural asperity of the uncultivated mind, and infusing a

spirit of humanity into those, in whom a brotherly feeling for the distresses of their neighbours can rarely be found: but if we consider the probable effects of these societies, the complaint must cease: for not to mention their rules, which have a particular regard to the morals of their members, there is no one, I should suppose, if attacked by illness, that has deprived him of strength and ability to provide for his own family, and has reaped the benefit of his brother-member's contributions, but on his recovery, must be awake to every sentiment of kindness and good-will; and feel a pleasure that his own contributions can now yield a brother a similar return, when it pleases God to stretch any of them on the bed of sickness.

But when we consider, that the benefit of these societies extends to their respective families, when death takes away a member, and sees him deposited in the grave, at a time when his loss must be felt in all its severity, it strikes us with admiration of these benevolent associations, which, after having supported their members through sickness, pay them the last tribute of their mournful assistance.

“ Better is a little with the fear of the Lord,” when thus prudently used, and rendered productive of a future assistance when most of all needed, than the treasures of the opulent, which are too often squandered in pursuits and amusements, that promote not the welfare or happiness of any individual. It is the doing good in our generation, for which we shall be applauded by God himself at the last day, as far as our humble capacities extend. Prudence and forethought are supereminently useful to every member of the community, but to no one more so, than to the members of a society of this kind. It behoves them therefore to proceed as they have begun, and by industry and sobriety, continue their contributions: so shall they by the *latter*, render themselves less obnoxious to many disorders, and by the *former*, secure to themselves a ready assistance, whenever sickness overtakes them.

I have observed that the goodness of the Almighty had a regard to the felicity of man in the present world, as is manifest by the rules he has prescribed for his observance; and demands there-

fore a ready acquiescence in all he appoints, as being certainly designed to promote our *present* happiness. But when we carry our meditations further, and consider that the fulfilling of his commandments, not only procures our felicity in this world, but obtains for us the invaluable and inexpressible happiness of a future and a better world, what have all the treasures of this world to compare therewith? When man had transgressed the law given him, and forfeited his innocence, and with it the felicity with which he had been favoured in the Paradise of Eden, God not only sent him laws by the mouths of all his holy prophets, by which to rule his conduct; but in the fulness of time, sent his Son to make atonement for the sin, and to shew him by his example, the sure method to regain his former felicity, and to obtain far more valuable and glorious privileges than he had lost; even a place among the blessed inhabitants of heaven, and the enjoyment of the unfading pleasures of eternity, in the presence of God and his holy angels. *Consider this, my friends!* and when you reflect that you are entitled to the benefits of this redemption, and as

much the heirs of these eternal glories as the most wealthy; while you live righteously, soberly, and godly in the present world, and you fill up the duties of your respective stations, whatever be their estimation in the scale of society, *contentment* must fill your bosoms with the most solid satisfaction.

But let me remind you that you have other duties to fulfil besides those of industry and sobriety. Your stations in this world are ordered by the wisdom of the Almighty, and although your privileges, as christians, rank you with the highest of the children of men as to the next; yet to those whom Heaven has in any way placed above you, there is a becoming respect due, and he who has a just sense of the fear of God, will never fail to pay it. All subordination, and the different ranks we find in society, are the work of the Almighty, for purposes which are best explained by their beneficial effects, as we daily perceive their utility, and sensibly feel their necessity. You have therefore submission, reverence, and other duties of the same kind to discharge as members of a community, in which all of us have our respective parts to perform: and while each man acts up to the

part and station assigned him, he has a claim to that respect due to the rank he holds in public; and if in his conduct to you, he is mild, affable, and condescending, he certainly merits both your submission and esteem. Consider then all above you, whether in the enjoyment of wealth and honours, as entitled to respect and submission in those matters, in which they have also their parts to act for the good of the whole: and while with industry, prudence, and temperance, you follow your respective occupations, you may be assured of that protection from those who are in superior stations, your worthily filling up the duties of your callings justly demand.

By the most enlightened of the children of men, *contentment* has ever been placed in the humble walks of society. Few are your cares in comparison of the troubles attendant on superior stations; and had Solomon known where else to have placed it, he never would have made the declaration in the text. From the natural evils of life you cannot expect to be free; but if upon the whole, you have less of the cares and anxieties of

the world, and are rich in the divine gift of *contentment*; blest with the moderate desires which temperance and industry inspire; you will sooner reap that solid satisfaction, which being seated in the mind, will give such a relish to your simple and homely fare, as they are not able to enjoy, whose stations in many instances, demand such a perpetual care and attention, as to exclude all hopes of a tranquillity, peace, and satisfaction, like that which you may experience. To add to this happiness, or rather to fix it more firmly in the mind, you have only to let your duties be conformable to the precepts of that God and Saviour, who has given you all things richly to enjoy, and has not withheld from you any thing necessary for your happiness in that station he has allotted you, which you may be assured is the only one, wherein you could have been either happy here, or have rendered yourselves worthy of being eternally so hereafter.

Our blessed Lord himself, by chusing the lowest degree of society, amongst whom to appear, when he came on the great work of our redemption, in order to confound the pride of earthly pomp,

has given a dignity to that station, which you will do well to consider, demands duties of a superior kind; and which he has shewn us by his example, cannot appear with equal lustre in the higher walks of life. Humility, patience, submission, meekness, shine forth in the most amiable light, where the riches of this world least are found: not but these virtues may, and do shine, where opulence and wealth abound, and give lustre to earthly rank and dignity; but they attract our esteem the most, when we see a man humble, resigned, and content, whose station is far removed from all possible hope of ever enjoying more than the bare necessities of life.

It is this character that rises in the estimation of all good men, who delight to see industry and sobriety flourish amongst the lower orders of society: and when to these are added, the virtues just mentioned, the *continual* regard of our God may be justly expected, agreeable to the apostle's declaration to the Hebrews, with which I conclude: "Be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will *never* leave thee nor forsake thee."

CHARITY.*



ACTS XX. 35.

*Remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said ;
It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

IF with regard to the happiness of this world only, the truth of the text will be found incontrovertible. In the Mosaical dispensation it was the promise, that “ He who gave to his brother sufficient for his “ need in that which he wanted, the Lord would “ bless him in all his works and in all he put his “ hands unto.” The soothing reflection that we have performed an act in conformity to the dictates of our nature, is a proof that every man is *blessed in his deed*. Even amidst the accumulative distress that may befall us, we may find abundant consolation in having, during the season of prosperity,

* Preached at St. Paul's, Sheffield, for the benefit of the Boys' Charity School.

discharged this primary duty, as children with the afflicted, of the same universal parent. Why are our tenderest feelings excited at scenes of distress? —Why does the tear of sensibility start from the eye at the bare recital of the tale of woe?—As “The poor are never to cease from the land,” these tender emotions were given us, that in that compassion woven in our frame, those who are doomed to poverty and want, may securely appeal to the passion that prompts the ingenuous mind to commiserate and relieve: and no pleasure equals that mental transport which we experience in obeying these propensities of nature. Thus Job, under the complicated distress that beset him on all sides, grounds his consolation on those acts of kindness he had manifested to every species of distress: —“When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; “when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him; the “blessing of him that was ready to perish came “upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing “for joy.”

The beneficent man is also regarded with respect by others. Openly the illiberal mind may suggest calumnies to detract from the motive of real charity; yet he inwardly venerates a character he has not the heart to imitate, but lets his approbation be smothered by the malice that ever lurks in his bosom. Who can behold a good man dispensing the superfluous blessings with which Providence has enriched him, and not feel a respect for so benevolent a character?—Man has within him that internal evidence of what is just, good, and merciful, that it requires a long habitude of indulging selfish principles, ere he can refrain from giving that applause, which beneficent actions always excite in the mind. Thus again we find Job justifying himself to his friends by the reverence he met with when he appeared abroad:—“When I went
“out to the gate through the city;—when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me
“and hid themselves, and the aged rose and stood
“up;—the princes refrained talking, and laid their
“hands on their mouth;—the nobles held their
“peace and their tongue cleaved to the roof of
“their mouth.”

Although to us finite beings who cannot separate good from evil, nor positively say what are real blessings or otherwise, yet it is certain that we enjoy many blessings which are intended as rewards of our good deeds, but which we are apt to frustrate by an impatience under the dispensations of Providence, especially if the least afflictive to our feelings; though at the same time we must be sensible we cannot approach to happiness, but through disappointment, nor duly appreciate its value, but by a comparison therewith, of the afflictions we have gone through to attain it: and in truth, by what other estimate can we properly value the happiness of this world, transitory and imperfect as it must be, but by the reflection on the sufferings we have endured!—Nought else will give us a relish for those temporal enjoyments to which we affix the term happiness, were it not for afflictions; even riches would pall in the possession, or yield those cares and vexations, that would mar the relish even of the comforts they are intended to procure.

But with regard to the happiness of the next world, there are so many promises given in scrip-

ture to the charitable man, that no one can doubt the certainty of a reward that shall recompense him above any merit he may have; even if he surpass in deeds of *charity*, the most benevolent of the sons of men. *Charity* is the primary virtue in the catalogue of the christian excellencies, and sure I am, no character is held more dear by that God who created the world;—formed man from the dust;—compassionated his fall;—and with a *charity* surpassing human comprehension, redeemed him at the invaluable price of the blood of his only begotten Son. The whole scheme of the redemption is a stupendous act of *charity*. What indeed are all the glorious gifts we enjoy from all bounteous nature, but the gift of *charity*?—It sustains the fabric of the universe, and upholds the world it made, whose inhabitants restored to the divine favour shall, after this life is ended, enjoy the eternal presence of this GOD of *charity*, provided they trust in the word of their Redeemer, observe his precepts, and like him, practice the divine virtue of universal benevolence. It is certainly more pleasing to commend than to censure, to congratulate than to

reprove: and in this *godlike virtue*, I am proud in being able to assert without fear of contradiction, that no kingdom surpasses this in every work of *charity*. What nation can boast of so many public buildings, for the reception of every species of affliction, that can befall the children of men, whether corporeal or mental!—What a fund of resources for their maintenance!—What noble institutions are formed to encourage industry—promote useful learning—improve the morals—and meliorate the condition of the lower orders of society!—Happy, thrice happy nation, may I truly exclaim, whose *works of charity* exhibit the national character in the aggregate, to be conformable to the primary virtue of the christian religion!—Nor is it much less so individually; for although some may distribute *charity*, and perform acts of beneficence out of ostentation and other degrading motives; yet I am confident, that national *works of charity* would not have been so abundant, were it not that real benevolence and love to mankind, actuated the bosoms of the far greater majority of individuals.

Having thus seen, that either with regard to the

happiness of this world, or of that which is to come—"It is more blessed to give than to receive," I shall *first* speak of charity in general, and *then* apply the subject to the present occasion.

This divine principle is nowhere so ably described as by St. Paul: and it is impossible to read the many virtues it comprehends, without perceiving he had the transcript of our Saviour's life in his eye, when he drew so amiable a representation thereof:—"Charity suffereth long and is kind; "charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, "is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, "seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, "thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but "rejoiceth in the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth "all things." That is, the charitable man is patient, unenvious, boasts not of himself, nor is proud of any attainment; he is affable in his deportment, and is not anxious after praise; he is not easily provoked, but is meek and imagines no evil against any one; he rejoices not when evil is done, but rejoices when truth prevails; he bears all things

without murmuring; he believes every thing to be done with a good intent, and hopes all things will turn to good; and to conclude the whole, he endures all things with perfect resignation.

It is impossible to read the properties of this amiable virtue, without being filled with admiration at the description, which includes all the graces of the christian character. To confine it therefore to almsgiving, is to give it its least commendation, and to deprive it of the greatest: it is too narrow a scale for that diffusive benevolence, which ought to be found in all who would be thought to possess the real spirit of christianity. Almsgiving, or the distributing of pecuniary donations, has undoubtedly much merit. The alms of Cornelius ascended with his prayers “For a memorial before God;” Dorcas was “Full of good works and alms-deeds which she did;” and the poor widow, who cast her mite into the treasury, was pronounced by our Saviour to have cast in more than the rest, in proportion to their possessions, for she had cast in all that she had: so that almsgiving is not to be neglected; it is certainly a duty, but in

the comprehensive representation of *charity*, is of the least value, and will have none at all, even “ Though we give all our goods to feed the poor,” unless it is done from a proper motive—a real love of God and our neighbour.

But what is most to be lamented, not only in the giving of alms, but in most other donations of this kind, they too frequently fall to the share of the unworthy, who partake of your bounty to the loss of the really destitute: and indeed, in any kind of *charity*, though every possible care is taken to prevent imposture, yet, ingratitude too often repays your beneficence: but as this, in the eye of Heaven detracts not from your motive, it is your *duty*; nay, I will venture to assert that if real benevolence prompts your actions, it is your *pleasure* to give both comfort and happiness, in the way that appears to you most proper to produce these blessings to the objects, who present themselves as candidates for your charitable assistance.

Indeed, in many cases, there not being that real occasion for pecuniary donations, as there are for other branches of this virtue, the laws of the

land having provided for the maintenance of the poor, that they shall not absolutely want; discretion must in most, if not all cases, direct you to distinguish the objects proper for relief; and their respective distresses point out the mode of applying your bounty. The channels are innumerable in which your goodness may flow. Alas! poverty, wretchedness, and disease, are meeting our eyes daily:—where can we turn that the children of affliction do not challenge our pity?—And that object whose distress strikes you as the most calamitous, will soonest obtain your relief: and it is best on these occasions, to follow the immediate impulse of your benevolent feelings, and you will then know what our Saviour meant when he said:—“IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.”

In directing your steps to the habitations of distress, objects may be found no doubt who are really worthy; but these being in general more solicitous to conceal their misery than to expose it, they require some pains to search after; and when found, the utmost tenderness is requisite: a gentle

hand must administer the balm of consolation, and the relief must be imparted almost imperceptibly to themselves. The real objects here depicted, having known perhaps better days, are little able to meet the frowns of fortune, which comes upon them as an armed man, and will, if not timely rescued, sink them under the pressure of misfortune, and terminate in death, their lives and miseries together.

These are the objects that do truly claim your compassion. Poverty cannot be so afflictive to those who have been born and bred to a homely sustenance, and a scanty supply of necessaries, and are accustomed to brave its rigours by a constitution inured to labour, as it must be to those who have fallen from a more exalted condition, to a state, where having no resources to fly to, by which they may brave its violent assaults, their affliction must be the more poignant. I paint no fictitious picture of imaginary woe to affect the feelings; it must strike every benevolent heart, that there is no man, let his station be ever so exalted, or whose means are most secure, but may

suddenly be deprived of his affluence, and reduced to the very state I have depicted: then let him *now*, whilst secure in his wealth, and prosperity smiles around; let him search out the objects who have experienced like him, the favours of fortune;—have basked in the sunshine of affluence, but are now compelled to sustain all the hardships of poverty: and let him administer that assistance they need, but for which they know not how to ask. Then shall he experience, if ever reduced to distress, that divine aid promised by the Psalmist:—“Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord shall deliver HIM in time of trouble.”

But in all cases, relief must be applied according to the exigencies of the objects in distress; and this is therefore a considerable advantage of this christian virtue, and an observation peculiarly applicable to the present occasion. For on this account it is, that there are so many public edifices supported by voluntary contributions, and such excellent institutions to promote industry, and to preserve the morals uncontaminated by the prin-

ciples of a dissolute and extravagant age; especially among the younger part of the lower ranks of life, in every populous town throughout the kingdom; which certainly evinces a noble principle of this divine grace: and their number, and the variety of objects they comprehend, seem almost to exclude the possibility of finding out new channels, in which the streams of your beneficence may flow: but alas! the reflection will still wring the heart of the benevolent man, that numbers yet feel not the liberal bounty of these excellent and extensive institutions; whose sorrows and afflictions are almost beyond the power of human consolation to relieve: and in a world where misfortunes and trials are the portion of the best of men, who from the cradle to the grave know little else but disappointment, care, and anxiety, there must be many beyond your power to find out, and consequently removed from your benevolence to comfort or relieve: but still, if you strive as far as your power lies; search for objects to whom to impart what consolation your means will allow, and give to these institutions your charitable support; what shall prevent you

from enjoying the conscious satisfaction of having fulfilled every charitable duty, and entitled yourself to receive the approbation of him who has said—“IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.”

In this populous town, an institution established for the education of the children of the lower order of inhabitants, manifests a most laudable and praiseworthy disposition, and merits the amplest encouragement, as every possible care is taken, as far as their means will allow, of preventing the baneful effects of the want of education, pernicious in any place, but more particularly in manufacturing towns.

From the want of education and a due attention to the morals of youth, spring those vices that too much abound among the lower ranks of society. To enumerate these is unnecessary; every one who has any feelings of humanity; any love of decency and order, or any sense of religion, must be shocked at their prevalence, as he cannot but see the most flagrant acts committed daily, in violation of the laws of God and man. To lend his assistance

then, to aid an institution which designs the prevention of these evils, is to fulfil the great duties of *charity*, and to entitle himself to the blessedness of heaven: and when, from a laudable motive of procuring the objects of their benevolence every suitable accommodation, the managers have been obliged to enlarge the house, and have done every thing to promote health and cleanliness, which have caused the disbursements to exceed the receipts, surely no one will withhold his contribution from aiding an institution, which has such numberless benefits and advantages attending it. In a place so crowded with inhabitants, and with artisans of all descriptions, amongst whom though perhaps it is totally impossible to prevent those practices, which are in opposition to the general welfare, yet surely, to take care, as far as lies in their power, of the morals of the rising generation, and to “Bring them
“up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” should inflame each person with such emotions of true charity, as not to quit this place without contributing his mite for a purpose so laudable, and an institution so beneficial.

In what I have said, I have endeavoured to prevail with you to practice the duty of charity, from the hopes of obtaining the blessedness of heaven, and have refrained from urging you to its performance, by setting before you the awful denunciations of eternal punishment, which are threatened against those who neglect this primary duty of our religion; because I would not act upon your fears, but would have your bounty proceed from motives of liberality: I would have it flow, as it ought, from the pure, uncorrupted stream of benevolence, and from those sentiments of universal love, which alone can render it congenial to the *charity of the gospel*, or conformable to the example of its divine Author.

The blessedness of the text is as universal as the virtue it is meant to reward; and he, who in his deeds of *charity* acts up to the means allotted him, will as assuredly be blessed here as he will be hereafter. If his benevolence expand to the impulse of compassion, and he pursue the dictates of his feelings, and if he see the means, which he has adopted, succeed in giving the relief and assistance

he intended, what words can describe the mental transport of his bosom at the moment?—He knows the approbation of his God awaits him, and he has the assurance of being accepted by his Redeemer, whose example he has imitated in every act of charity: his days are cheered with the most enlivening hopes, and he meets death with the joyful expectation of being received with that welcome, which will be pronounced at the last day by his Saviour and Judge:—“Come ye blessed children
“of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for
“you from the foundation of the world: for I was
“an hungred, and ye gave me meat—I was thirsty,
“and ye gave me drink—I was a stranger, and ye
“took me in—naked, and ye clothed me—I was
“sick, and ye visited me—I was in prison, and ye
“came unto me.—Inasmuch as ye have done it
“unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye
“have done it unto me.”

HUSBANDRY.



ECCLESIASTICUS VII. 15.

*Hate not laborious work, neither husbandry, which
the Most High hath ordained.*

ALTHOUGH we cannot but lament the cause which excluded man from Paradise, where all things destined for his nourishment spontaneously grew; and where every variegated beauty, wanting no regular succession of seasons, afforded a perpetual ornament to the blissful spot appointed for his abode: yet we have ample cause to be thankful to God, who hath ordained, that notwithstanding the evil produced, many benefits should arise. For though beyond the boundaries of Paradise (into which the flaming sword forbade his re-entrance) the earth, which had received the

impression of the curse, presented nothing but a wilderness of thorns and thistles; and consequently required man's incessant *labour* to render it fertile: yet, by that *labour* he should preserve his body free from the variety of disorders, to which his altered nature now rendered him liable: and from this *labour* also, should proceed a spirit of industry and invention of all those different articles, necessary for the various purposes of mankind. Hence originated a multiplicity of arts to provide for the necessities of the community: and hence *labour* was protected and encouraged, as its advantages were found to be of such general utility to a world rising fast in population; and which, spreading into different parts, under different leaders, became in process of time, great and powerful kingdoms.

Labour, in general, when the constitution has not been previously impaired, is no more than an exercise that invigorates the body, and prevents numberless distempers, so that every man has, or ought to have, if only for his own health's sake, some kind of employment: but, more especially, as in a political view, the laborious, the diligent,

the faithful and the honest are protected, encouraged, and rewarded, in every civilized nation. *Labour* is the foundation of every production, that art can render profitable or convenient to man: it takes every thing from the hand of nature, and then adapts it for the general utility.

Labour, from the earliest ages of the world, has ever been found highly conducive to the prosperity of every community, and the wise son of Sirach, with the greatest propriety advises, not to “Hate “laborious work,” as being the basis not only of a man’s own health, but a means of obtaining many valuable blessings for himself and others. Indeed, when we consider, that employment of any kind, enables a man to be serviceable to himself and his fellow-creatures, it is no wonder, if, instead of finding it an irksome task, he should take a delight therein, particularly as it then must be attended with that pleasure, happiness, and contentment, “The Most High ordained” it should. Sensible that on himself depends the bread he is to eat, his *labour* is pleasant, and every morsel sweet: his industry renders him independent of others,

and affords him no cause to envy any one: his enjoyments are all attended with a conscious satisfaction of their being innocent, and suitable to that state in which he is placed; and because that state is become habitual to him, contentment gives him a serenity of mind, which industry establishes and no vexation destroys.

Besides this inward happiness and solid contentment of mind which attend his *labour*, he has the approbation of his equals, and the protection of his superiors, who all delight to see industry, and to recompense it as it deserves: above all, God beholds him with a benignant aspect: and when to the virtues of industry, faithfulness, and sobriety, he adds the duties of religion, he may, with confidence, expect success will attend his *labour*, and health, peace, and contentment, for the most part, meet him in every step he proceeds in his passage through life. It is true, industry is not always rewarded, nor does *labour* always succeed; but, as the practice of these virtues can never be prejudicial, but must be advantageous in some degree to a man's welfare, he may rest assured, that

contentment, and all its attendant blessings, must be found where he is, and would not attend him, even if one continued course of uninterrupted success, crowned his labour and industry.

Hate not then laborious work; pursue your avocations with diligence; and what happiness you are to enjoy in this life will be your portion, if you confine your views to your occupation, whatever it may be. Sickness and misfortune are casualties daily happening to all men: from these, therefore, you cannot expect to be free, but from other incidents your labour, industry, and temperance, will guard you as much as is possible, in a world where “All things come alike to all,” and where “There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.”

As the *industrious* are protected, so the *idle* are left to reap the fruits of their own folly and negligence. Justly is idleness esteemed the root of all evil: there is no vice of which it is not the parent, and from which, we may not expect every possible wickedness to be committed. Who will—nay, who can offer employment to one who will

not labour for the supply of the common wants of nature? While the laborious are everywhere patronized, and he that will work may find employment, an idle man is considered as the pest of society. Look around you, my brethren, examine every fatal register of crimes daily committed, and you will find they all originated in idleness. It is indeed a most melancholy reflection, that where industry is promoted and protected both by the laws of the kingdom, and by almost every individual amongst the ranks of men above the lowest, that there should be any, *willingly*, destitute of employment: but alas! our streets and roads give testimony to the fact, and evince the necessity of the severest correction, to curb the licentiousness of the idle and dissolute.

The character most estimable amongst the superior classes of men, and thank God, they are not sparingly diffused, is he, who offers constant employment to him who will work. This is to be a patriot indeed, and to be more truly noble than if a ducal coronet, nay, even a regal diadem encircled his temples! It is to be eminently useful, and to

spread happiness round his domain. It takes away from the idle all excuse, who would be left to perish deservedly in their own sloth and negligence, were it not that want prompts them to every kind of depredation on the property of others, rather than by honest labour, to procure for themselves, the common necessaries of life.

The general opinion of most men at the present day, justifies what has been advanced, of the encouragement given to labour, and the high estimation in which it is held almost universally. But the latter part of the text now calls us to confine our observations upon that branch of labour, which more particularly belongs to *husbandry*: and here, in this respect, as men of landed property naturally look to the improvement of their estates, it can be no wonder, if they give more encouragement to agriculture than to any other art, seeing by it alone they can be benefited: but this is no more than what the merchants or manufacturers do, in respect to the articles of commerce, or the persons they employ. It is no part of my intention to enter into a discussion of this subject, nor am I com-

petent to it; my only design is to consider it as a branch of the text, and after having shewn you, as I hope I already have done, that labour of every kind is a religious duty, to shew you that husbandry, as “**Ordained by the MOST HIGH,**” has many peculiar blessings annexed to it, in the opinion of all men, in every age.

In the primitive ages of the world, while many sought distant habitations, led by a spirit of novelty and enterprize, and turned their ingenuity to the invention of every useful article, for their fellow-creatures’ accommodation; God’s ancient people, the first descendants of Adam, still preserved their primary occupation, to which man was doomed before he could eat his bread. Husbandry was the employment “**Which the Most High or-**“**dained,**” and herds and flocks comprehended all their riches.

There is in this reflection on the patriarchal simplicity, a proof, that under the curse pronounced on the earth, they were convinced, the blessings of health, tranquillity, and contentment, could alone be perfectly enjoyed by a life led in hus-

bandry: and conscious of the truth, that God from evil had deduced good, they handed down from father to son, the same original simplicity and healthful employment: and accompanied with the blessings annexed to a life of labour and innocence, they carefully preserved in their families, the worship of the only true God.

The blessings of contentment have ever been deemed as more appropriate to a life led in husbandry, than to any other occupation, where laborious work is required. Health and tranquillity seem to attend it, from its office being amongst the beauties of the vegetable kingdom. The lives of shepherds have been the theme of every bard in every age; the muses have consecrated the lyre to pastoral subjects: a proof that heaven was thought to have cast a peculiar felicity around it, which no other occupation can boast. Indeed it is apparent, no small degree of honour was attached to it, for God in an especial manner has distinguished the followers of husbandry. If, after the Patriarchs, who were all husbandmen, we examine the lives of several of the most illustrious

characters recorded in Scripture, we shall find that Gideon was taken from the thrashing-floor, to be a leader of Israel. David was taken from the sheepfold, as he was following the ewes great with young. Elisha the Prophet, was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, and himself with the twelfth, when Elijah threw his mantle upon him. And many others, which evince how much the followers of husbandry were favourites of Heaven. Indeed, after the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan, it became their principal occupation. We may well suppose that the country of Canaan, wasted by war, must be neglected in its cultivation, and of course must want the labour of its new occupiers, to whom it was divided by lot, before it could be profitable to them: hence the patriarchal occupation was renewed: the land became fruitful in its produce, in vineyards, and oliveyards, in fruits, in corn, in herds and in flocks: from this it spread, till it became the chief employment of the mass of people, save of those who lived in towns, and pursued such other avocations, as were essential for the supply of the public necessities.

It is impossible to read the Scriptures without perceiving that all the allusions therein, do figuratively refer to the lives of husbandmen, shepherds, or their occupations. The language of the Prophets, in a more particular manner, is clothed with metaphorical allusions to agriculture, by which means, as it was the chief occupation of the Jews, they more readily understood and comprehended the meaning of those passages, which, relating to their duties to God and their neighbour, were easy, simple, and readily learnt: but when God would shut up his councils from the understandings of men, a mysterious sublimity is adopted, which future circumstances should alone unfold: teaching them that futurity was what they were not to pry into, but to leave the accomplishment of the divine purposes to God himself.

Hard as the lot of the laborious man may appear to a superficial observer, yet as a consequence of the curse denounced on the earth, we are all alike doomed thereto in some degree or other. Let a man's station be what it will, we are not to suppose he feels not this consequence: he has his

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cares, his vexations, and his labours, which, whether of body or mind, are as irksome to him as he whose labour is of the most wearisome kind. Every man from the crowned head has an employment assigned him by Heaven, for which he is accountable to God, and in which he is to labour as well for others as himself: and though he may be exempt from the bodily exercise of the common labourer or mechanic, yet, as living in society, he has offices to perform, and duties to fulfil, according to the station he therein holds. Consider no man, however abundant in riches or honours, as exempt from the consequences of the curse. The labour of the mind, in general, impairs the constitution more than the labour of the body: and he who devotes his time and his studies, to qualify himself for those various offices necessary in society, which his rank or fortune authorizes him to expect, is in the eye of Providence no more than a labourer in the vineyard of God, and will be entitled to no greater reward, than he who is doomed to manual labour. It is true he is placed in a situation superior to him, who is to earn his

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bread by the sweat of his brow, and he has the enjoyment of many things out of the reach of the common labourer. But what avails these? These are no advantages in the sight of God, any further than they enable him to apply with greater ability to the office he is to fill in society. For instance, you feel the necessity of a protector and dispenser of the laws; otherwise how could the hard earnings of your labour be secure from the rapacious hand of the midnight plunderer? But should this judge be necessitated to earn his bread as you are obliged to do, where would be either his qualifications for his office, or his leisure to attend to its several duties? No, my brethren! He has his labours, as well as you have yours; and probably not attended with that health, ease, and comfort, which you may enjoy: his real happiness can arise from no other source, but from what yours must do, viz. from the mental satisfaction of fulfilling your duty to God and that station you hold in society.

Consider then no man as an object of envy, but consider him in the station of one, whose duties, if worthily fulfilled, is entitled to respect. Subordi-

nation, or different degrees of men there must be, in all societies: take away these and your property will become the prey of every depredator, who has no law but his will, and whose strength is exerted to reduce the weak in subjection to his violence.

Few are the cares and anxieties of the laborious man!—What has he to torment him, who can relish the morsel he has honestly and industriously earned with conscious satisfaction? Cheerfulness exhilarates his spirits, and renders him perfectly satisfied with his station: if he have not the superfluities of life, he has sufficient to satisfy the wants of nature; and to these, it is in his power to annex the solid blessing of CONTENTMENT, which can only dwell in the mind, from a conscious sense of having performed every moral obligation and religious duty, and therefore its attainment depends upon himself. This is the balm of life, the richest gift that indulgent Heaven ever sent on earth to bless mankind! Let your station be what it will, CONTENTMENT will give every thing a double relish; it will tranquillize the storms of passion,

that ruffle the temper, and will hush to silence every murmur and every complaint. Happy, inexpressibly happy then is he who can thus say with the Apostle—"I have learnt in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

P E A C E.*



GENISES VIII. 11.

And the dove came in to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth, was an olive leaf pluckt off: So Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

THE dove announcing to Noah the abatement of the waters from the face of the earth, by producing a leaf which she had plucked from the olive-tree, intimated to him an approaching restoration of tranquillity to the agitated bosom of nature: even so, metaphorically speaking, has peace, like the dove, her truest emblem, having long found no rest for the sole of her foot, at length returned to our isle, while under the sheltering branches of the olive we may sit, and enjoy her serene and tranquil delights, “ And none shall make us afraid.”

* Preached June 1st, 1802, the Day appointed for a General Thanksgiving.

The turbulent passions of men, ever since the fall of Adam, from the tranquil state in which God created him, have been justly compared to the boisterous waves of the deep, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Every evil, every sin, which does so easily beset us, arises from the headstrong torrent of our passions, and till we admit the still small voice of reason, the dove with the olive of peace, into the ark of our bosoms, we shall produce nothing but “The overflowings of ungodliness.”

We have long, my brethren! seen the factious and discontented spirit of man produce such numberless causes of misery to mankind, during the war we have now terminated, as nothing parallel thereto can be found in history. The civil wars of our unfortunate monarch, Charles I., can alone bear a comparison therewith; which begun, not indeed with an open defiance of Providence, and an avowed blasphemous denial of the living God, but what was nearly as bad, they commenced with an hypocritical pretence of defending the reformed religion, while their restless spirits laboured only for the full and entire gratification of their boundless ambition.

Examine every history from the remotest period, and it has ever been the case, that men of ambitious minds have strove to shelter their arrogant designs under some plausible pretence. The destruction of empires and kingdoms, the fall of the greatest sovereignties have ever been brought about by men who endeavoured to give their ambitious designs some appearance of rationality; which plainly indicates an innate sense of a Deity being deeply and naturally engraven on the hearts of men: but seldom has it occurred, that a systematic unbelief, founded on a long-digested plan for the overthrowing all notions of God and religion, has stirred up in its votaries, a spirit of diabolical malice and persecution against principles inherent in the mind, and established therein, by the innate conviction of truth and justice. This was peculiarly the characteristic of the first promoters of the disturbances in France; for whatever causes of murmur and discontent might spring from arbitrary power, and abuses in the form of such governments; yet such a revolution would never have produced those sanguinary consequences

it has unfortunately done, to the disgrace of human nature, and the indelible infamy of that kingdom in particular, unless the belief of a God had been eradicated from the minds of the first instigators of it.

Long before the revolution in France broke out, with all its train of dire events, some men, whose learning might have taught them better, being at enmity with all religious establishments, which alone could check the indulgence of their licentious or ambitious projects, ventured to broach doctrines, which could only be suggested by that fiend, who, in these latter times, as was foretold, was to have rule in the councils of men: not content with denying their Saviour, but in direct opposition to the testimony of ages, in all the madness of Atheism, absolutely denied the existence of a God, and magnifying their own short-sighted reason above the revealed evidence of Scripture, blasphemously placed it on the throne of Almighty Wisdom.

To trace to you the progressive course of these hellish principles, how they begun, have been

carried on, till they gradually terminated in rebellion, in murder, and regicide, would carry me beyond the intent of this discourse, which designs only the warning you against those principles, which may deprive you of your expectations of that vast bliss, in the enjoyment of heaven, which the gospel alone promises to every true believer, and which, I would fain hope, every individual here present wishes to obtain.

To combat these dangerous principles, there have not been wanting the labours of many pious men, who have exposed their fatal consequences, and pointed out their destructive tendency: but as these are not within the reach of men in the ordinary course of life, it has been the preacher's care, and it surely was his duty, to caution his hearers against listening to opinions, which have been, with indefatigable industry, instilled into the minds of the unlearned part of mankind.

The blessings of peace, contrasted with the calamities of war, must make the return of it grateful to every well-wisher to his country, and sure I am, except the self-interested man, whose feelings

of humanity are absorbed in his own selfishness, there is no one who does not rejoice in the circumstance of peace.

Is it not a cause for our rejoicing that we can sit down in the expressive language of holy writ—“Every man under his own vine and under his own fig-tree?”—That we can, in the tranquil bosoms of our own homes, find that inward satisfaction resulting from the consideration, that peace is returned to our land, and that wild havoc rages no more?—Happy are we in our situation as an island! The dreadful scenes of war can but rarely reach our dwellings, while the invincible valour of the British navy guards our coasts. Let not this circumstance lose its energy on your minds; let it excite you to gratitude to God, who “Maketh wars to cease in all the world; who breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear asunder.”

With war, we may be assured, all its concomitant train of evils will vanish. Plentiful through the blessing of God, was the harvest of last year, and the dread of scarcity was thereby removed: let us but beseech the God, who crowneth the year with

his goodness, to make the next equally so; and then we may reasonably hope, the necessaries of life will be within the reach of industry and frugality.

Happy, unspeakably happy is that man, who can, with pleasure and satisfaction, enjoy the calm delights of a tranquil home; and with every pleasing reflection, that springs from a love of concord and harmony, can relish the fruits of his industry and sobriety; and with a truly tender anxiety for the peace of his native land, can rejoice in its possession of that invaluable blessing, and contribute to its preservation, by his duty to his God, loyalty to his sovereign, and love to his neighbour! Can he be impressed with these sentiments, which lead him to the adoration of the Supreme Being, the Deity, who beholds him with a gracious eye, and not be inspired with the liveliest gratitude for the blessings which surround his humble dwelling? Will he not rather be zealous to evince that gratitude by studying the precepts of his blessed Son, who has taught him to subdue the tempestuous passions of his nature, and to look beyond the tumultuous billows of this stormy life, to that celestial

shore, where serenity and love dwell eternally; where the God of peace displays his mild benevolence, and extends the sceptre of mercy to the penitent and believing christian?

When this is the case;—when we make the blessings we enjoy, in how small a portion soever allotted to us, a motive for contentment and resignation, by subjugating our passions, and by that means, make them conducive to our happiness in this life, and productive of our immortal felicity in the next; then do we prove ourselves worthy of the blessings of peace: but when we give way to the current of our passions, and suffer them to overrule the mild dictates of reason, we may then bid adieu to composure of mind: peace will fly from our bosoms, and we shall never be able to regain it in this life, nor enjoy it in that which is to come.

Let me here appeal to yourselves:—When you come hither to praise the God who has protected you through the week, and to thank him for your creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; do you not feel a conscious pleasure arising in your bosoms, from a conviction of your acting in

conformity with your obligations as a christian? And when this duty of praise and thanksgiving is performed as it ought to be, each morning and evening in your closets, can any thing equal the mental satisfaction you experience, when on your knees you pour forth the effusions of gratitude to the bountiful Providence of God, who has given you that peace which the world cannot give;—has filled your bosoms with tranquillity, and rendered you capable of relishing the calm delights of a christian life?

Then suffer no opinions, however speciously urged, to rob you of this felicity: the God who made you—the Saviour who redeemed you—the Holy Ghost who sanctified you, have done for you what a whole life spent in praises and thanksgivings cannot repay. Surely then, my brethren, while a pleasure is found in those moments you devote to their service, let nothing prevent—let nothing obstruct your performance of your duty, and then you may securely defy the attempts of the infidel, to shake your faith.

Look to the death-bed of the unbeliever—draw

back the curtain, and see him in all the agony of despair! Behold him tormented by his own uneasy reflections: his conscience bringing to his view the God he has denied and the Saviour he has renounced: his imagination paints, in the strongest colours, all the horrors of his situation, and the “Terrors of God are set in array against him.” Would you lose the tranquillity and composure of the humble and resigned christian, for the miserable state of this man, when death approaches to carry you from this world, where your probation is ended, and the reward or punishment is bestowed, according to your conduct under that trial?—No, my brethren! “Take unto yourselves the whole
“armour of God, that ye may be able to with-
“stand in the evil day, and having done all to
“stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt
“about with truth, and having on the breast-plate
“of righteousness, and your feet shod with the
“preparation of the gospel of peace: above all,
“taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be
“able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;
“and take the helmet of salvation and the sword

“ of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying
“ always with all prayer and supplication in the
“ Spirit.”

Every good man must rejoice in the return of peace to our country, and the thanksgiving we are this day called upon to give to God, who is “ The Author of peace and the lover of concord,” cannot be better performed than by observing that rectitude of conduct, which will preserve the peace of our bosoms; and so the better enable us to imitate the example of our Saviour, who, in all his words and actions, proved himself the Prince of Peace.

God Almighty, in the first lesson for this day’s service, makes the following declaration to the Israelites:—“ If ye walk in my statutes and keep
“ my commandments, and do them; then will I
“ give you rain in due season, and the land shall
“ yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall
“ yield their fruit. And your thrashing shall reach
“ unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach
“ unto the sowing time, and ye shall eat your
“ bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.
“ And I will give peace in your land.” Then fol-

lows a number of blessings, which would flow on them in consequence of peace; and therefore, when we consider that these blessings were only conditional on their walking in his statutes, and keeping his commandments; we, my brethren, may discern our duty, and the means whereby we may secure the same blessings to ourselves and our posterity.

The remaining part of the chapter is filled up with God's threatenings to the Israelites: if they would not hearken unto him, nor keep his commandments, then he would appoint over them terror, consumption, and the burning ague; and that they should sow their seed in the land in vain.

It would appear strange that the Israelites should stand in need of threatenings, to deter them from sinning against the Lord, after the gracious promise of so many blessings, in case they would only keep his commandments, and do them, did we not, at this time daily see, that the same disobedience is found amongst the children of the new covenant, as of the old.

But let the text recal to your remembrance the

dreadful punishment inflicted on the whole human race; with the exception of one family only, for their sin and wickedness.

When the impiety of mankind was risen to the highest pitch, God brought a flood to drown the world, and singled out Noah and his family as the only one meriting to be preserved alive. They continued in the ark, while the deluge swept away every other inhabitant of the earth. Till the dove brought the olive leaf, Noah knew not the waters were abated; but on seeing that token, he was convinced the anger of God was appeased, and that all nature would soon be reinstated in its pristine verdure and beauty.

In like manner, we have seen a deluge of infidelity and a flood of iniquity, overspread the nations of the earth, carrying a swift and irresistible destruction along with it; and we consequently must have seen the arm of the Almighty made bare, to avenge the honour of his name.

Aware of this, let us be cautious how we give way to the suggestions of those, who are ready to catch at the least deviation from that steadiness

we owe to God, to religion and ourselves: let us give the Holy Spirit admittance into our bosoms. It descended from heaven in the bodily shape of a dove upon our Saviour—in the semblance of that winged messenger which brought to Noah the olive leaf, to shew the abatement of the waters from the earth: so shall we by its influence find all harmony and tranquillity within; the stormy billows of this life will roll heedless over our heads, and with a steady composure, we shall smile at the approach of death, and welcome that stroke which bids the soul take her flight to those everlasting hills, where, in serenity and peace, we shall rest for evermore.

FAST-DAY.



2 CHRONICLES XXXII. 6, 7, 8.

And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him, in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying; Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him, for there is more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, King of Judah.

THE propriety of appointing a portion of the history of the invasion of Judah by the King of Assyria, for one of the lessons of this day's service, is peculiarly striking; and in conformity therewith, I have selected a passage from the same history, which, I doubt not, will afford abundant matter for

meditation, and excite us in our present situation, to rely on the Almighty, who never failed to work the most wonderful deliverances for his people, whenever they humbled themselves, and turned to him with sincere sorrow for past offences, and serious purposes of future amendment.

The kingdom of Judah was at that time governed by a pious monarch; but it had long been its lot to have a succession of wicked and idolatrous kings, with not above one or two exceptions, whose apostacy from the true religion, gave encouragement to the natural proneness of the Israelites, to follow after strange Gods; insomuch that the piety of the few good kings they had to reign over them, from David to Hezekiah, could not avert the final captivity of the nation, long threatened them by the mouth of the Prophets of the Lord, although they might protract the day of vengeance.

Hezekiah was now the King of Judah, when the Assyrian army under Sennacherib was brought up against Jerusalem, by the chastising hand of the Lord, to bring the inhabitants to a due sense of their sins; as had been usual with God; in the

reigns of the preceding Kings of Judah: and it is worthy of our observation, that the Israelites, notwithstanding they had experienced so many judgments of the Lord, and undergone so many scourges from the invading arms of both Egypt and Assyria; yet still persisted in their sins, and forsook the God of their fathers, and followed the idolatrous worship of the heathen nations that surrounded their kingdom.

The good and wise monarch seeing that the Assyrian army were entered into Judah, and were encamped in fenced cities, and threatened to lay siege to Jerusalem, took council with his princes and his mighty men, to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city; which was instantly done, notwithstanding these fountains, in that parched and sultry climate, supplied themselves with water; yet they utterly destroyed them, as we read in the fourth verse of the chapter from whence the text is taken, and we there find the reason likewise given, “Why should the Kings of Assyria come and find much water.”

Water in the eastern countries was, and is now,

of such value, on account of its scarcity in those parched and sandy deserts, as nothing could justify the destruction of their fountains, but the dread of their affording refreshment to the invading enemy, and thereby enabling them to continue their incursions and depredations with vigour and spirit: and for this reason it has ever been held as sound policy, to destroy what cannot be carried away, or to render useless what might prove in the hands of an invading army, a means to strengthen their power to continue their plundering warfare.

Hezekiah, after this precaution, repaired the walls and fortifications; he raised up the towers to the walls thereof, and made darts and shields in abundance, and then it follows as in the text:—
“ He set captains of war over the people, and
“ gathered them together to him in the street of
“ the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to
“ them, saying; Be strong and courageous, be not
“ afraid nor dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor
“ for all the multitude that is with him, for there
“ is more with us than with him: with him is an

“arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.”

The King of Assyria himself went from Judah and laid siege to Lachish, while he sent the rest of his army to Jerusalem, with that blasphemous message which Rabshakeh his general delivered, and to which Hezekiah prudently commanded no answer to be returned, but he repaired to the Temple, and poured out this prayer to the Almighty: “O Lord God of Israel! which dwellest between the Cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth—Lord, bow down thine ear and hear; open, Lord! thine eyes and see, and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord! the Kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their Gods into the fire, for they were no Gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, therefore they have destroyed them. Now, therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the

“ earth may know that thou art the Lord God,
“ even thou only.” This devout and sincere
prayer, offered up to the throne of the Almighty,
in the fervour of real piety, entered his ears who
is ever ready to hear the petitions of his servants,
when genuine devotion dictates the accents, and
obtained this encouraging answer from the Lord,
by the Prophet Isaiah:—“ Thus saith the Lord
“ concerning the King of Assyria; he shall not
“ come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor
“ come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank
“ against it: by the way that he came, by the
“ same shall he return, and shall not come into
“ this city saith the Lord.” And to fulfil this pro-
mise—“ The Lord sent an Angel into the camp of
“ the Assyrians, which cut off all the mighty men
“ of valour, and the leaders and captains of Sen-
“ nacherib their King, who immediately returned
“ with shame into his own land;” and there fell
by the hands of two of his sons, who slew him, as
he was worshipping Nisroch, the great idol of his
nation, and then escaped into Armenia, and Esar-
haddon, another of his sons, reigned in his stead.

From this example of the pious Hezekiàh, we learn to whom we must apply in our present situation. In many respects we are certainly unlike the inhabitants of Judah; we are not, nor is it likely we should be idolators; but we are sinners, and are this day called upon to humble ourselves before the footstool of the Almighty, acknowledge our offences, and earnestly implore him to avert his vengeance from a guilty land. If sincere in our repentance, and devout in our purposes of amendment, we may take to ourselves the words of comfort which Hezekiah spake to his subjects when he called them to him in the street of the gate of the city:—"Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the *enemy*, nor for all the multitude that is with him, for there is more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh, but with *us* is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles."

If then, my brethren! there is more with us than with him, who threatens to invade our isle: if he trusts only in the arm of flesh and with Rabshakeh exclaims, "With the multitude of my cha-

“riots am I come,” and we can assure ourselves that “The Lord our God is with us to help us, “and to fight our battles,” *then* we have reason neither to be afraid nor dismayed: but, alas! few there are who are not sensible of manifold offences committed against the conviction of their better judgment; and whose inattention to the high claims of their christian profession, does not render them forgetful of that “Holiness, without which, “no man shall see the Lord.”

War has ever been the scourge of the Almighty, to punish guilty nations. The ancient Jews were thus used as instruments of divine correction, to punish the heathen nations of Canaan, for their sins and idolatry; for thus God himself declares: “Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness “of thine heart dost thou go to possess their land; “but for the wickedness of these nations, the Lord “thy God doth drive them out from before thee: “understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth “thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people.” And now the Jews themselves, who were formerly

thus used as instruments of divine correction, to drive out the wicked and idolatrous kingdoms of Canaan, were in their turn chastised for their sins, by the arms of the Egyptians and Assyrians. Whether the sins and provocations of this nation have so far incurred the vengeance of the Almighty, it is not for me to judge, but it is my duty to point out to you, the necessity of a speedy repentance and amendment of life; and to convince you that the dreadful calamities of war have ever been the scourge with which God has punished guilty nations. Let not, therefore, the timid rail at war; let not the man of feigned sensibility, pretend to deplore the calamities of war, when the sword of divine vengeance passes through the land; but let him rather lament for the sins of the nation, which have provoked the Lord to mould the councils of the state, so that the purposes of his wrath may be executed. The councils of wisdom may appear the suggestions of a man's own understanding, but it is the Lord who renders them subservient to his purposes.

It is highly advantageous to consider war in this light, being in strict conformity with what we read

in our Bible, of God's dealings with mankind; and therefore we ought to provide for our everlasting security, by fervent addresses to the Almighty; with contrition for past transgressions, and resolution to act with better judgment for the time to come.

Our blessed Saviour prophesied, that wars and rumours of wars should prevail, before the day of his visitation came:—nation would rise up against nation. This is the case now, and who shall say that these are not the signs of the near approach of the “Day of his coming?” Come when it will, it will “Come as a thief in the night,” and therefore he bid us “Watch, for in such a hour as *we* “think not, the Son of Man cometh.”

The best preparation for such an event, is undoubtedly a good life; following the commandments of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ; and then we may rest on him, upon any emergency like the present, “To help us and to fight our “battles.” The arm of flesh, or the having confidence in our own power, valour, or strength, will be of no avail, unless the grace of God be with us.

We have justice on our side, and therefore our reliance should be stronger in the day of trial: and to add to this confidence, we have only to bring an unfeigned sorrow for sin, and serious purposes of amendment. Our enemy, by his own arm, will not then be able to do us any violence, nor be suffered to approach to hurt us; and perhaps, for our sincerity, the issue of the present contest, may turn out beyond our sanguine expectations.

The God we adore, is the same yesterday and for ever: he is a God of justice, and in his equal balance he weighs the merits of nations: he is the God whom sinful man offended, almost as soon as he was created; and yet so wonderful was his love towards him, that he sent his only Son to be a ransom for him; and to restore him to that innocence he forfeited by sin: and not only this, but by his example, his sufferings, and patience, taught him to tread in such steps, as would infallibly lead him to be crowned with glory and immortality.

Let us then look to this pattern, and imitate him to the utmost of our power. Had we only the bare transcript of his life, unblamable, holy,

and pure as it was, we should have sufficient to obtain us a place in his kingdom: but when we have rules laid down for our observance; rules that are unfettered with painful or wearisome ceremonies; for “His yoke is easy and his burden light;” and the whole of our conduct pointed out by such plain directions, as no one can mistake, who is sedulous in searching out the truth; surely it must be our own faults, if we fail of obtaining the glorious prize of an incorruptible crown.

To enjoy the everlasting presence of our Creator; to adore him encircled by all the host of heaven; to fall down and worship him on the throne of his Almighty power; to praise the Lamb who was slain, and has redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation; to sing eternal Hallelujahs to the glorious Trinity, with all the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the glorious company of the Apostles, and the noble army of Martyrs; to taste pleasure pure and unmixt with any alloy; to share in bliss unutterably great, and inconceivably happy, with those, to whom, in this world, we were bound by

the ties of amity and love, and that bliss to last for ever and ever. These are the peculiar privileges of good men after death: who then would hesitate with such a prize in view, to look beyond the petty disturbances of this world, and contend for it with every exertion in his christian profession! Our blessed Saviour is both our Leader and our Guide. He has marked out our line of conduct: and therefore, as we are candidates for an incorruptible crown, let us with stedfast faith pursue our way, and when death approaches, we shall welcome the stroke, that opens to us the everlasting gates which lead to its enjoyment.

If this view of our eternal inheritance in the next life, purchased for us by the blessed Son of God, do not inspire us with a firm reliance on him, who has done so much for us, nothing will. If God be with us, it is of no consequence who is against us: the arm of flesh may assault, but cannot hurt us, while we have "The Lord our God to help us
"and to fight our battles."

The prayer of the pious Hezekiah was successful, because he poured it forth in sincerity, and in

a firm reliance on God's supporting aid, in the danger he was in from the invading arms of the Assyrians. Let us be equally sincere; let us rely on the everlasting Rock of Ages, who will support us in the cause in which we are engaged. He is a sure refuge in time of trouble, and to whom can we better fly for succour to aid our arms? On whom can we rely, but on *him*, who can and will defend those who trust in him! Without his assistance, the arm of flesh will not avail: it will be to no purpose, though the blood of our defenders is shed in our cause, unless God be with us. But, my brethren, if we are duly sensible, that without the favour of God, we must cease to be numbered amongst the nations of the earth, and add to those who have been humbled by the pride and arrogance of *him*, who has threatened to bring fire and sword to our dwellings; we shall be sincere in our addresses, and steady in our purposes of amendment: and particularly as we are now assembled in his Temple, and in his presence; let us adopt the prayer of the wise King of Israel, which he used at the dedication of that Temple he had

built for the worship of God:—"If thy people go
"out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever
"thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord
"toward the city which thou hast chosen, and to-
"ward the house that I have built for thy name;
"then hear thou in heaven their prayer and sup-
"plication, and maintain their cause." *Amen.*

VICTORY.*



PSALM XCVIII. 1.

O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory.

THE occasion of our meeting this day, my brethren, is one of the most glorious circumstances which the Almighty has been graciously pleased to attest to the world, of the justice of our cause, and the valour of our fleets, ever since the British island rose to be distinguished among the kingdoms of the earth. It has, it is true, been dearly purchased, at the expense of the valuable life of the heroic commander; but while we mourn the loss we have sustained, we should reflect, he fell

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* Preached on the Thanksgiving-Day, December 5th, 1805, for the important Victory obtained October 21st, 1805, over the combined fleets of France and Spain, under the command of the late Lord Viscount Nelson, who fell in the engagement.

in the bosom of victory; at that moment, which the heroes of all ages have ever considered as the most glorious event which could befall them. A nation embalms his memory with her tears, and history will hand down to posterity his memorable achievements, by whose means the Almighty “Hath done marvellous things.” Let this be our consolation, and let us look up to heaven, and with unfeigned gratitude, praise him for his goodness, in giving us such a signal instance of his protection, as it is “His right hand and his holy arm,” which alone “Hath gotten him the victory.”

Gratitude for benefits received, evinces a real goodness of heart, and is the most acceptable service we can pay to God in our individual capacity: it reflects honour upon us, as dependent creatures on the mercy of a gracious Being, as debtors to him for creation, preservation, and every blessing we enjoy in life; for the salvation procured us by Christ, and the certainty of an everlasting felicity in heaven. To pay the grateful homage of a thankful heart for these and every other blessing we enjoy, is ever pleasing to the God of bounty; and I am perfectly convinced, that there is no person who

is capable of feeling the generous impulse of gratitude towards “ The Author and Giver of all good “ things,” who does not experience the highest degree of intellectual pleasure, when on his knees, pouring forth the effusions of his heart to the divine Founder of all his enjoyments: but this pleasure becomes more exalted and enlarged, in the public assemblies of the congregation, especially when, as at this time, he joins with his fellow-subjects in the Temple, and in the presence of God, falls prostrate, and unites in the praises given for the victory vouchsafed to the fleets of his native country.

Seldom have we had an occasion to meet on an event more illustrious in the annals of Britain, than the present: but I should neglect a most important part of my duty, were I not to point out to you, the very great cause we have to be thankful, not only for this victory, but for various other blessings conferred upon us as a nation; particularly that the dreadful scourge of war has not yet come home to our dwellings. The self-sufficiency of man may arrogate to himself prudence, foresight,

and courage; but as it is the Lord who sends war as a judgment upon an offending nation, he surely can avert the impending stroke, and arrest “The proud in the imagination of their hearts.” Surely then it must strike every unprejudiced mind, that God, who governs the nations of the earth, and discerns with an impartial eye their respective merits, removes far from us the dire effects of intestine war, and crowns us with victory on that element which encompasses our isle, because his religion is here preserved in its purest form, and bears the greatest resemblance to the Apostolical doctrine, taught in the primitive ages of the Church; and that, collectively considered, we have less to answer for, than those who have shook off the ties of religion; trampled on the rights of humanity, despised the laws of nations, and filled the world with the sanguinary marks of their blood-thirsty ambition. But though this is the case as a nation, and the daily practice of all manner of wickedness may seem to contradict the assertion; yet, from the manifold blessings we enjoy, in a superior degree to any other people, may

fairly be inferred the christian piety and devotion of the far greater part of the nation. Let us not then despair of the goodness of the Almighty, nor doubt, but in the progress of the present war, he will, in his good time, smite the vaunting foe, by the hand of our allies, and cause him to return with shame to his own land. But for the present, let us consider the glorious event that has assembled us together, as demanding our grateful tribute of praise and thanksgiving to God, who by the late success of our arms, has shewn to the world, the justice of our cause.

Not only have we reason to be grateful for the success vouchsafed us in the late engagement, and in the prevention of invading warfare, but for the benefits accruing to us, from the best form of government ever bestowed on mankind: I am far from thinking it, notwithstanding, so perfect as to need no reform: the best human establishments must have their imperfections, and for this very reason, because they are *human*. But still, thanks to the Almighty, our government stands on so firm a basis, as to deride the insulting attacks of licen-

tious freedom—a government which having religion for its foundation, and its sanctions supported by so divine an institution; so pure in its faith, and so sublime in its doctrine, will ever defy the secret attempts of evil-minded men;—will curb their boldness, and check their insidious arts to overthrow it: and was it suffered to have its due influence, would prevent bloodshed, and all the calamities of war.

The piety and wisdom of our superiors, have commanded us this day to assemble in the Temples of our God, to send up our united praises and devoutest acknowledgements to the Almighty, for a very signal and important victory—a victory indeed not unusual to the British fleet, whose valour, for a long succession of time, has been confessed to be invincible; but which is at this period peculiarly striking, considering the idle vauntings of our ambitious foe; whose aim to attain a place, even higher than the kings of the earth, has been marked with midnight murder, and the bloodiest deeds of the darkest assassin. Victory over such a foe, shews the immediate protection of Providence, and de-

mands a nation's praise—a nation's gratitude: and surely there is something noble in the idea, that, at the same moment, the religious of the nation in union join, to set forth the glory of their God, and in his Temples utter the voice of praise and thanksgiving: Angels themselves might behold the solemnity with pleasure, and our guardian God smile benignant, as the grateful accents ascend from the lips of every sincere worshipper.

The God of our forefathers demands our gratitude for giving them wisdom to raise a glorious fabric, on the basis of a religion, restored to its Apostolical purity: and while our governors and commanders are sensible of the inestimable value of our envied constitution, and of the excellence of that religion on which it is built; justly may we hope, that, with the permission of the Almighty, the valour and intrepidity of our arms will stand unrivalled to remotest time: but still, my brethren! to insure a continuation of such signal instances of his protection, while thus we return our sincerest acknowledgements, O let us not return to our former transgressions! To merit the continued

blessings of God's protection to our arms, we must henceforth forsake all evil ways.

Yes, my brethren! while every heart beats with triumph at the success of our arms in the late engagement, I am compelled to remind you, that you have other duties to fulfil, which more than ever demand your exercise of them: praises and thanksgivings ever indicate a generous heart, and are the noblest instances we can give of our sense of the divine mercies; but if this sense of gratitude is once lost in the round of sensual enjoyments, which usually bring on an inattention to our other duties, we may then expect to lose the future favour of our God; who has now shewn us, that if we will but persevere in our religion and in all its holy duties, he will continue to distinguish our arms with that success, with which thy have hitherto been indulged. Then let us shew we have minds deserving this favour—that we possess souls, whose hopes, soaring above this world, penetrate into the “Heaven of heavens;” and that the conscientious discharge of the duties of our christian profession, gives us confidence to hope that through

the intercession of our Redeemer, our devout prayers and praises, may reach the God of grace. Shining as piety does, from the *throne of these realms*, he must be depraved indeed, on whom that example has no influence: and I should hope, that those would be instigated to copy so illustrious a pattern, who are sensible of its efficacy, and disposed to reflect on themselves, as having little more to do with this world, its jars and discords, than to pass through it, as through a state of probationary exercise of duties, that are to qualify them for a better.

As “ Our rejoicing should always be with moderation;” knowing no joy is to be without its portion of bitterness in this world: so will every good man, while his loyalty to his sovereign, and love to his country, cause him to exult on the present occasion, drop a tributary tear over the ashes of the brave commander: but let us at the same time reflect, that we have no cause to be dejected, inasmuch as an equal spirit still pervades the defenders of our isle, as every day brings proof of their heroic bravery; and therefore we ought still

to place our confidence in God, that he will by their means, continue to crown our arms with their wonted success:—"Will fight our battles and maintain our cause."

But let me again remind you of your other obligations to God. You live under the best form of government, that ever was adapted for the security of the subject; and you possess a religion which the Son of God came down upon earth to institute: he descended from heaven to shew you the way to ascend thither. It is the master-piece of the works of the Almighty, wherein he reserved the manifestation of his wisdom and justice, and displayed all the mysteries of his redeeming love.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" while a nation, prostrate before him, pour out their sincerest acknowledgements, for the manifold blessings vouchsafed them. Blessed for ever be his most holy name, who hath bid us hope for his protection and favour, while we walk in the steps of his Son! The grateful effusions of every heart, pouring forth in sincerity, its praises before the throne of mercy, with all our fellow-

worshippers, who have shared with us in his kindness; magnifying the Lord our God, our Protector and Guide; present to the imagination a faint idea of what shall be our portion hereafter, when joined to the multitudes eternally surrounding the throne of the Most High, and uniting our Hallelujahs to the praise of God and the Lamb.

Exalted felicity! Yet notwithstanding all this happiness, which God intends shall be our portion in the next life, how effectually does the envious foe of the human race, mould the minds of the discontented, the restless, and ambitious, to defeat the gracious intention of Providence towards them! The glories of heaven are derided—the offers of mercy are rejected, and God, even the Most High God, is set in competition with that reason he himself bestowed, when he made man a little lower than the Angels. Shall he that was created from the dust, contend with his Creator, and dispute the decrees of his wisdom, because incomprehensible to his finite understanding? Far, very far be such blasphemy from any here! Let us, my brethren! with all humility confess, that having suffi-

cient light to shew us the path that leads to his presence, we will wait with *faith* the accomplishment of his promises, when all the wonders and mysteries of his Providence shall be unravelled, and mercy and truth conspicuously shine with effulgent splendour, to the utter confusion of every gainsayer.

Upon this *faith*, my brethren! christianity stands built as on a rock of adamant, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. The attempts of the infidel to overthrow it, are vain and fruitless, and will in the end, recoil on himself; when shuddering at his doom, with outstretched hands he flies for refuge, to that despised Galilean, whom he has so long persecuted. The libertine also, who with a seeming boldness, attacks its foundation, will at length find, when death approaches, arrayed by conscience in all his terrors, that the arrows of the Almighty, will pierce him through with many sorrows.

But let us, my brethren! act from better hopes, and let our gratitude spring from that devotion which we owe to God. Our holy religion requires

us to acknowledge our obligations to be infinite. We esteem it a reproach to a man, to be destitute of gratitude for favours bestowed on him by a liberal benefactor, especially if the favour be conferred unsolicited, and he promises a continuation of his kindness, so long as he merits his attention. What thanks, what praises then shall we not render to our supreme Protector and Benefactor, who hath not only made bare "*His holy arm*" in our defence, and "*Gotten him the victory*" over an insulting foe; but has translated us "*From the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of his Son, whom he delivered up for us, and with him has promised, freely to give us all things.*"

Shall we not then, my brethren! reckon ourselves eternally indebted to the infinite goodness of God, and stir up all that is within us, to bless and praise his holy name? Far be it from me, to depreciate the value of the blessing bestowed on us in the late success of our fleet: we have all of us great reason to laud and magnify the name of the Lord, and to rejoice in the occasion of this day's general thanksgiving: but at the same time,

we are not to forget our other manifold obligations to the Almighty, and never cease offering our praise and thanksgiving, for keeping from our dwellings, the sword of the destroyer—for the best constitution ever bestowed on a nation, and for the most perfect religion, that ever blest mankind with “The means of grace, and the hopes of “glory.”

INUNDATION.*



PROVERBS XXVII. 1.

*Boast not thyself of to-morrow: for thou knowest
not what a day may bring forth.*

“**I**N the midst of life we are in death!” an observation fatally verified by the calamitous circumstance that lately occurred in this place. Accidents, which are sudden and unexpected, shock and terrify us, especially when attended with the loss of life to our neighbours. There is no element, in these inland parts, from which we imagine we have so little cause to apprehend danger as water. On the maritime parts of our island, we expect, as the indubitable consequence of every storm, to see the most horrid devastations, where that element

* Preached at Silkstone May 10th, 1807, being the Sunday after the Funeral of the Persons who were drowned the 2nd of that Month by the Inundation.

rages in all its dreadful terrors, and almost continually exhibits spectacles of wreck, and wafts the bodies of the wretched sufferers on the shore. But to see a peaceful brook, that seldom rises above its usual channel, suddenly increase to a headlong torrent; sweeping every thing along with it; impetuously bursting through every obstacle; and in a moment rushing into the dwellings of the astonished inhabitants, allowing them no time to escape from the danger, but overwhelming them with a sudden destruction; fills every person with the most awful impressions, who has any feelings of humanity.

When the approaching tempest blackens the face of the sky, and the clouds are big with threatening storms; when thunders roll with incessant din through the troubled air, and the lightnings dart with tremendous flashes!—then we fly to our habitations, and beneath their sheltering roofs, we deem ourselves perfectly secure: but alas! this calamitous event shews us, that even there we are not safe, when the Almighty pursues to destroy. The clouds burst and the rain came forth—the tor-

rents poured down the hills; every brook swelled beyond its customary bounds; and uniting in the narrow vale, instantly rose to a rapid river, that destroyed every thing as it rushed onward, sparing neither man nor beast.

We, who have witnessed a scene so awful, and now deplore its fatal consequences, have here a lesson presented to us, which we cannot study too much, in order to profit by so clear a manifestation of the power of God. It is not the loss only of a neighbour we lament, or the commiseration we feel for those who have been deprived of their dearest relatives by this circumstance; but there is an indescribable awe impressed on the mind, on contemplating the operations of the Almighty Ruler, who directs the dreadfulest storm to fulfil his will; and who alone can arrest the hurricane, and calm the most furious tempest into peace.

Whilst under these impressions, we ought to carry our meditations to the throne of infinite Power, and to reflect how wonderful the Almighty is in his works! how wise in his councils! how righteous in his judgments! how sparing in his punishments! and how

boundless in his mercies towards us! but more especially, how frail and uncertain our abode is, in a world stained with transgression, and polluted by sin; and of which death is the certain consequence! It is not the natural decay of age; it is not the effect of some latent distemper undermining the constitution; it is not the numerous and melancholy catalogue of diseases, that alone take man from the world: a thousand accidents beset him daily on every side. He is exposed to the sudden attacks of every element. The *earth*, with convulsive tremblings, has overthrown the strongest foundations, and has swallowed up cities and their inhabitants: the *air*, when strongly impregnated with electric fluid, has shot forth its vivid flash, and in an instant, has stretched lifeless both man and beast: the *fire* has spread ruin and dismay around; has consumed the stateliest works of art, and devoured millions of our fellow-creatures: the *water*, with sudden inundations, has rendered waste the most fertile lands; and with impetuous torrents, has swept away herds and flocks; removed habitations; rooted up trees, that have stood for ages;

and in its desolating progress, has destroyed, with irresistible fury, every human being in its way. Who then can build any security on a life, whose period may be terminated in a moment, by one or other of these elements? Who is there so inattentive to the calamities of others, as not to have his feelings painfully and almost daily wounded, from men meeting death both suddenly and unexpectedly, from a variety of unforeseen casualties? Why then should we “Boast of to-morrow,” when we know not what even *this* “*Day* may bring forth.”

These words are not meant to set aside that care and providence, which every man is in duty bound to have, for the future provision of himself and family. Solomon, the wise monarch of Israel, blest with a wisdom from above, certainly intended not to advise a neglect of the future, but only not to boast of another day, as there could be no certainty that a man should live over the present, for as we know not what a day may bring forth, it is madness to lay out schemes for another, and to build upon the assurance of living till to-morrow:

therefore it behoves us so to act with that circumspection, as frail and mortal creatures, whom death may overtake in a moment, that our worldly affairs may not lull us into a fatal neglect of being prepared in our spiritual concerns, should a sudden stroke hurry us before the judgment seat of Christ.

How inimitably does the Apostle James, with the dignity of an inspired writer, reprove this boasting of another day:—"Go to, now ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and buy and sell and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow! for what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanishes away: for that ye ought to say, if the Lord will we shall live and do this or that." Here the Apostle suggests an amendment, and tells us what we ought to say on such occasions:—"If the Lord will we shall live, and do this or that." If it please God that we live over *this* day, as the issues of life and death are in his hands, and he vouchsafe us to see *another*; we will, bearing in mind that we live by his grace, so transact our worldly

affairs, with a sense of our uncertainty here, as that death may not come unawares; but find us prepared to meet our judge, with the conscious *boast* of having provided a gracious acquittal at his hand.

Sudden death is no otherwise shocking, than on the supposition, it may find us unprepared, and take us away in the midst of our sin and folly—at the banquet, at the assembly, in the hour of festivity and intemperance. Besides all men are conscious of innumerable sins known unto God and themselves alone, to whom they would be reconciled, and have leisure to atone for transgressions by repentance:—sudden death on this account, must be acknowledged truly alarming. The only way then to disarm death of this terror, is to live always so as to be prepared for his stroke, come when it will.

And what should prevent us from being so prepared? The concern we take to provide for this world, reflecting as we ought to do on its uncertain duration, ought not to engross our attention more than the great concerns of the next, which is

to be eternal. The religious man's first care, is to regulate his life in such a manner, as to ensure those everlasting treasures, which are of too precious a value not to be preferred to the perishable riches of this world: and then with a mind filled with the most cheering satisfactions, he endeavours to obtain with industry, and to preserve with frugality, those necessaries of life, which are for the support of himself and family; and which enable him the better to fulfil the duties he owes to his fellow-creatures, as living in society:—well knowing they must cease with this life, he regards them only as secondary objects, in respect to the essential duties, that are to procure him those invaluable treasures, which he shall enjoy throughout the ages of eternity.

Such should be our plan. We have our Saviour's express promise, that, "If we seek *first* the kingdom of God," then "All things necessary will be added to us." God has implanted in us a wish to provide for ourselves and families; in order, that as living in society, we may, in regard to necessaries, as far as in a world subject to calami-

tous circumstances can be, be independent of one another. “If a man,” says the Apostle, “provide not for his own, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,” but then this care for our families, is not to supersede our greater duties as dependents on a Being for life, health, and all things.

We lament that death, which suddenly deprives a whole family of a parent, by whose maintenance they are supported:—we are concerned for such a loss, as deeming it almost irreparable; and our hearts bleed at the distress to which they are reduced. This, so far as it is the genuine effects of real compassion, is honourable to our feelings; but we seldom reflect, that perhaps he is taken off, in the midst of his thoughtless negligence of God and religion, and hurried away without the power to utter even an ejaculatory prayer for mercy.

It is this consideration, that ought to awaken us to a proper sense of the awfulness of a death that finds us unprepared. When a sinner has lived long enough to discern good from evil, to know virtue from vice; surely he is abusing the long-suffering

of God, if he have not profited by the knowledge given him; and we ought not to call in question the goodness of God, if no longer respite be given in such a case, and a man be taken away without time to repent, and to reconcile himself to God.

Repentance can only be efficacious through the kindness of the Almighty, who is pleased to accept thereof, when the signs of its sincerity are genuine: when the sinner, abhorring his past transgressions, flies to him with intreaties for mercy, and vows of amendment: God Almighty then, who alone can discern its merit, may accept thereof in lieu of obedience. But this is no ground for the sinner, upon which to build any assurance of pardon, or that he shall have leisure to evince the sincerity of his contrition, which may flow more from a dread of punishment, than an abhorrence of sin.

God gave us life, and if he see that we abuse the gift, he has a right to take that away in any manner he judges best; and he certainly knows whether or not a longer life would avail to bring us to repentance: therefore he is good in depriving us of the means of further abusing his mercy, in-

curing greater guilt, and thereby provoking a heavier chastisement; and whether he takes us away in a sudden manner or not, his mercy is still the same. “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live?” He delights not in the death of a sinner; he would have him return from his evil ways and live: but when he, from his knowledge of the future, sees this would not be the case, he takes the sinner away from a farther commission of ill, and in a manner that his death may strike the living with a sense of their mortality, and cause them so to live, that needing no repentance, they may meet the stroke of death, with the conscious joy of being received with approbation by the God they love and have faithfully served, let them be summoned to his presence in any mode, or at any time he sees fit.

Let us not then complain, when God suddenly calls men to himself. Many, frequently, it is to be feared, are hurried away in their sins, but more, let us hope, are hurried away to enjoy his presence,

and to reap an early reward for their righteousness: but if borne away in the midst of their sins, we may be assured that God has tried all methods to turn them from their evil ways, and to lead them to repentance. His long-suffering is great, and his patience with transgressors beyond all example. How pathetically does he remonstrate with the Israelites, on their manifold provocations:—"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel."

Many are cut off to prevent future evil: we who cannot see beyond the present, mourn their untimely loss; but had they been vouchsafed a longer continuance with us, we should, perhaps, have had cause to regret their having lived so long. God foresees events and acts accordingly; and as he means our good, it is our duty and our happiness to submit. In the late calamitous event, the hand of the Almighty may be traced; and however awful and distressing, it behoves us not to confine

our meditations to the novelty of the circumstance, but to become wiser and better by the useful lesson it affords: for since God may adopt what means he chuses to bring us to himself, it is our duty to be prepared. If in our lives we take care that the principles of true wisdom, which consist in a religious conduct, so govern our actions to God and man, that we can with confidence look to Heaven for support in the hour of danger; *then* let thunders roll and lightnings blast! Let the earth quake and floods overwhelm—nay, let the elements melt with fervent heat; the sun be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and all nature indicate the immediate dissolution of this perishable world, yet, supported by our God, and cheered by our Saviour, we shall meet death with an assurance of being future inhabitants of those heavenly kingdoms of peace and joy, where storms and tempests shall affright no more. *Amen.*

DEATH.



JOB 21. 23.

*One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease
and quiet.*

THIS observation represents that solemn event, which frequently with a short, and sometimes with no warning at all, cuts off our days in the middle of their course. Many a man, as in the text, is “Wholly at ease and quiet,” and thinks not of death: yet, says Job, in a few verses following, “He shall be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.”

The truth of this observation is daily before us: we feel its force, and must acknowledge it a lesson of the most important use to mankind. When we are in our *full strength*, we reflect too little on our

mortality; we are “Wholly at ease and quiet:” we live careless of an event, that may suddenly deprive us of that *strength*, and reduce our mortal remains, till they mingle with their kindred dust. In vain does every day present to our view, the funeral procession of a friend or a neighbour, whom a little before we beheld animated with life and activity. We regard not as we ought, the instruction these scenes are meant to inculcate:—we sigh at the moment, but the reflection makes no lasting impression; at least, it produces not that improvement it ought, in causing us to meditate on the uncertainty of life. “One dieth in his full “strength;” who then can tell but before this day expires, he may be numbered with the dead. This is an awful truth, that cannot too often be impressed upon our minds. Death spares neither friend nor relation: our dearest connexions are suddenly broke asunder: we cannot assure ourselves of their enjoyment for an hour, though at present, in the prime and vigour of life. Our hopes and expectations are terminated in a moment; our fairest prospects blighted, and every comfort

which we promised to ourselves, is torn from our embrace, by the unwearied arm of death.

Two or three instances will prove the justness of these observations. The parent, solicitous for the welfare of his child, labours incessantly at his employment, and wears out his strength for his future establishment in the world: he grows up beneath his eye, and he watches over his education with a parental anxiety, that he may answer the fond expectation he entertains. Every event that befalls him, alarms him for his safety, and his perpetual care is to ward off every threatening danger: at length he is repaid by seeing him settled in the world:—all is smiling; all his hopes terminate in prayers, that the cares and anxieties he has felt, may be repaid to his child by a long life of success, health, and prosperity. This is the common wish of every parent; but alas! soon, in the very midst of all these flattering expectations, a sudden stroke of some unforeseen illness, shall stretch his child a lifeless corpse, and bury in his tomb, every anxious hope along with it.

A son whose filial piety delights in beholding

the parent, whose care watched over his infant years, enjoying his health and vigour, and proceeding with alacrity in his calling, has no greater pleasure than to join him in the labour of his occupation, and ease the burden of his employment. His sole pride lies in the hope that he shall one day be able to recompense his beloved and indulgent father, with every comfort and support, in his declining years, for all the pains and tender apprehensions, with which he nurtured him up through infancy, and guided him through the maze of inexperienced youth; when suddenly the King of Terrors arrests his beloved parent, and his whole comfort in following him to the grave, is, in having fulfilled every filial duty.

When a man is established in life, and entered into all the cares of a domestic union, and is become the master of a family, he begins to feel himself of some consequence in that society of which he is a member. He has a part to act, and a station to fill, that establish his use in the community, to whom he is accountable for the well or the ill filling up the duties of his calling. In this

he is assisted by the members of his own domestic circle, who have their respective offices assigned them, according to the relation they bear to the principal. Now let us imagine a man thus surrounded by his family; sharing with him in his toils; filling their respective places with attention and alacrity;—in the midst of all this family anxiety to ease each others burden, and to alleviate the cares of all; if one branch of this circle of domestic happiness and content, should be seized with illness, and precipitately carried off by death, what a gap is made in their comforts! and what a flood of grief overwhelms that family, where peace, content, and joy before serenely dwelt! To the survivors all is lonely; there seems a vacancy; a want of something to fill up the space wherever the eye turns;—missing their wonted object, recollection comes across the mind, and the tear starts at the remembrance of the loss.

Again. Suppose a man has lived to see every branch of his family grown up, and all settled to his amplest wishes, and become the heads of other families; he sees peace, love, and harmony reign

amongst them; and success attend their industry in every line of their respective callings: he flatters himself they are permanently established; and that, with the blessing of God on their endeavours, they shall live and flourish in their respective generations. How natural the wish! but yet a train of melancholy events and fatal distempers, shall scatter the darts of death around, and spread grief and dismay through every branch of his once happy domestic circle.

Here is the “Sting of death,” and the “Victory of the grave.” It is here the ghastly tyrant stalks from family to family; and armed with all his terrors, sweeps whole generations to the insatiate tomb.

These are common circumstances daily occurring, and many others might be drawn equally as true, and equally as calamitous: but it is sufficient to have recalled to your minds, those instances where death smites in the midst of the most flourishing hopes—blasts the fairest expectation of our fondest wishes, and plunges whole families in the deepest sorrow. Sorrow is natural, nor can it be blameable,

only when carried to excess; for to bemoan the dead is useless, unless we carry our meditations further, and reap the benefit intended. We should reflect not only on the death of those we have lost, with seriousness becoming christians; but also on our own, as not far distant; and with that advantage, as to assure ourselves of meeting them in another and a better world.

What I have already advanced must have proved to you, that the words of Job are founded on the daily instances of mortality we see occurring in every family. “One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet.” We should therefore improve every event of this kind, so as to be the better for it the short time we have to live on this side the grave.

“*At ease and quiet!*” It is astonishing that any man should live so, when he knows from daily experience, that “One dies in his full strength”—in the midst of his most vigorous years, when he appears in the possession of both health and strength; enjoying the blessings of good spirits and cheerfulness, and seeming to bid fair for a long and happy

life: yet one stroke of a latent disease, or contagious malady, shall suddenly extend him pale and emaciated, till he falls an easy victim to the fatal stroke, that cuts him off from the land of the living.

But the words of Job do not so much mean that “Ease and quiet,” which denote a carelessness and inattentiveness to our latter end, as they signify that state of mind, at rest from the cares of the world, and as possessing, whilst in the strength of manhood, the comforts of life, and the sweets of a decent competence. But as mankind in general, enjoying either the inheritance of their forefathers, or the fruits of their industry, are “Easy and quiet” about their eternal interest, I wish to take them as indicating that indifference to their mortality, too much the case with men at ease in their circumstances: urging *you* by no means to be careless of an event, which is to consign you to a place of happiness or misery, according to your conduct before that event, as the uncertainty of the time when it shall happen is totally hid from our knowledge.

Indeed, did we know the precise term of our lives—that our death would occur on some known day; what better should we be? Alas! experience shews us, that it would be an useless knowledge with regard to our preparation for it: but where, let me ask, would be that future regard to the welfare of succeeding generations, so essential to a world that subsists only by the continuation of arts and sciences, which would be checked in their progress towards perfection; as a spirit of enterprize would be damped by the idea of death, were the days of men known that they should live on the earth? Improvements in any thing would never take place; life would be painful in many instances, as no hope of a future enjoyment would stimulate us to procure more than the bare necessities of life.

It could neither answer the ends of Providence, nor of the world we live in, to know the day of our death; and it is kept from our knowledge for the most gracious purposes. It is sufficient for us that we know we *must* die; and as the ends of society are best promoted by a man's living righte-

ously, soberly, and godly in the present world; and as neither happiness nor real pleasure is to be found, independent of virtue and goodness; we must be convinced that it is best to live uprightly, and in the fear of that God, who can at a moment summon us to appear in his presence, to answer for every deed done in the body, whether it be good or bad. But, blessed be God! we are not left to this; God Almighty has not left us to wander in the dark: he formed us for happiness; and though we sinned, and for a while lost the path that leads thereto; yet he graciously sent his Son to shew us the way to regain the road that leads to immortality—to light ineffable, and to a glory that knows no termination.

In proceeding onward along this path, surely we must be encouraged when we regard him who has gone before on the rugged journey of life; and though he suffered much, yet, he is now restored to the glory he had before the world was, and to his place at the right hand of God most high. He has obtained the glorious end he had in view, which is to reward his faithful followers with a

crown of life, for all the evils they have sustained, in their passage to immortality and bliss eternal. Let us look then to this bright pattern, whose example has dignified the path of suffering, and rendered it the surest way to obtain a participation in his glories, provided we govern our conduct by his precepts, and take him for our guide in every step through this troublesome world; and to the end of our journey, where peace and joy, freedom from pain, anxiety, and sorrow, eternally dwell; we shall hold on our way rejoicing, with the confidence becoming travellers, only passing through this vale of tears, to enjoy a life that will know no end, and a bliss that has no bounds; and to which death is the certain entrance.

“ But as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall “ all be made alive.” Here, my brethren, is our hope and confidence! Let every mourner who has lost the friend of his life, and the partner of his soul, here pause: let the afflicted parent, husband, or child meditate on these words, and whatever be their loss by death, consolation will infuse itself into their bosoms. If a parent is taken from them;

if a husband or wife is snatched away, and they seem to be left solitary; if a child is removed from the world, and torn as it were from their arms; let them consider, that although by *Adam* death reigns over all, yet by *Christ* they are made alive, and live for evermore. We convey their mortal remains to the grave; we deposite them there with all the solemn rites of a christian burial; we shed the genuine tears of sorrow for their loss, from a world of pain, grief, and anguish: but we never reflect on the unspeakable advantages they have gained: that while their bodies are dead to us, their immortal souls have taken wing, and ascended up into the presence of God, to enjoy the light of his countenance for evermore.

Instead of mourning their deaths, let us rather congratulate them on their arrival at a world, where everlasting peace and happiness reign without alloy; and only let us take care, that if we are summoned in our "Full strength," we may not be found at "Ease and quiet" about our eternal salvation: but that we may with confidence take to ourselves the words of Jesus, as addressed to all

his faithful followers, just before his sufferings: “I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also.”

Happy thought! Surely my brethren! with this idea, that with all those friends and relatives gone before us, to that place which our blessed Lord has prepared for us, we shall no longer mourn; but endeavour so to live, by the example he has set us, that we may rejoice in receiving that stroke of death, which is to usher us to the friends we love, and the Saviour we adore. *Amen.*

PRIDE.



ECCLESIASTICUS XXIII. 4.

O Lord, Father and God of my life, give me not a proud look, but turn away from thy servant always a haughty mind.

WHAT is Apocryphal is not always to be slighted. Jesus, the son of Sirach, in the book of Ecclesiasticus, has published many wise sayings, that would not have disgraced the enlightened monarch of Israel, whose Proverbs make a part of our sacred volume; and which, though not of equal authenticity with the other parts of sacred writ; yet as possessing sound maxims of piety and wisdom, perfectly conformable to the moral law, were deemed too beneficial to be disregarded, and were therefore placed amongst the Addenda of the Old Testament, for the benefit and instruction of future ages.

The wisdom of the prayer of the text will be seen, I hope, by what I shall now offer against the detestable sin of pride, as no man can give a greater affront to his Maker, than to have a “Proud look,” that regards his fellow-creatures with disdain; and a “Haughty mind,” that considers every mark of humility in others, as the characteristic of a mean and grovelling spirit. To rescue the humble from this unjust reproach; to set this most amiable virtue in its true light, by a representation of pride in its most odious colours, shall be the business of the following discourse.

That a man, formed from the dust of the earth, should arrogate a dignity to himself, because the Almighty hath given him a “Reasonable soul,” and “Placed him a little lower than the Angels,” is a proof of his ignorance of the divine economy, who made all mankind of the same dust, in order that no pre-eminence of one man over another should be arrogated, beyond those subordinate distinctions essential to the security and welfare of men living together in society.

But we are not here speaking particularly of

pride, on account of any superiority as to rank or station a man may chance to hold in society, but of that innate self-arrogance, which assumes a "Proud look" and a "Haughty mind" towards all, with whom it hath any thing to do.

This vice assumes many forms, according to the possession it has taken of the soul. In some it shews itself in a supercilious air; an affectation of the politeness of the gay world; and clothing itself in smiles, endeavours to hide its ignorance in the ridiculous gestures of a fashionable coxcomb. No man indicates more inconsistency: one day he condescends to be familiar, the next he passes you without the least notice. Ask a favour of this man, he wonders at your presumption; claim your due, he considers himself as having conferred the obligation. In others it shews itself occasionally, but in all it is contemptible.

But where it has taken deep root, and the mind is become haughty, sour, and morose, we always find such an insufferable self-conceit of his own imaginary consequence, as to brow-beat and tyrannise over every one that falls in his way: and woe

to that man, whose unhappy lot it is to fall into his power; for, of all the means to tyrannise in the hands of a proud man, the worst, and most suited to the blackness of his soul, is the power to oppress: this is his favourite weapon, and he wields it with an unrelenting arm, that knows no abatement, till the object of his hate is humbled in the dust: for whenever this man, in his self-sufficiency, deems an affront is given, no conciliatory measures can appease his offended pride. Forgiveness, that genuine offspring of heaven, the blessed tenet of the religion of the merciful Jesus, he knows not. Instigated by the most inveterate malice, he pursues the offending culprit, till he sinks under the rod of oppression: then will he add insult to cruelty, and exult over the victim he has ruined: and as his malignant spirit cannot be appeased by the lowest dejection and abasement, when his arm can no longer crush, his envenomed tongue, poisoned with the deadliest hate and malice, asperses the humbled object of his unrelenting fury.

Detraction suits the gloomy malice of his soul: every virtue is wrested by him to a different mean-

ing, or it is only with him another name for vice. According to him, it is weakness of mind, to be open and candid; to be generous, is the height of extravagance; it is folly in the extreme, to shew the least compassion to the misfortunes of others, or a disposition to assist them in distress; to condescend to the civility of inferiors, is low and vulgar; and should you enter their places of concourse, you shew an attachment to low company. In short, to the jaundiced eye of this man, every virtue is but vice, concealed under a more specious name; for having no other standard to judge of others, but by his own rancorous disposition, he considers all mankind to be hypocrites like himself.

This is a vice that may most truly be called diabolical: it procured the banishment of Satan from heaven, and transformed him from an Angel of Light to a Fiend of Darkness. The bosom of the proud man, bears such a resemblance to his own, it is there he delights to dwell; to shew his influence, and to exercise his power.

But with all his arrogance, the proud man is always the *meanest*. Could your eye follow him to

where his interest lies, who so supple, so fawning, so servile! There is nothing that is degrading or debasing, to which he will not stoop to gain his ends. He is also a prey to the most abject cowardice, and will himself suffer any indignity or affront, from the instruments of his oppression, rather than his iniquities should be brought to light: and this, as he practices to others, either through fear or interest, he requires all, of whom he has no such expectancy or apprehension, let their rank in life, or superiority of talents be what they will, to pay to his self-created sufficiency.

The gloominess that sits on the countenance of the proud man, constantly betrays the darkness of his malignant mind. No smile ever brightens his sullen features, but that of disdain or self-complacency. He is a prey to a thousand anxieties: the workings of his haughty mind, which cannot stoop to acknowledged merit, renders him the malicious persecutor of the unhappy victim, whom a train of unfortunate circumstances may have placed within his reach. This vice is throughout Scripture, pointed out as a sin of the most pernicious

cious tendency, as hateful both to God and man. It is the fountain of all the wickedness that has stained the world from the beginning. In short, pride is the root of every vice, whether riches or honours be the object, for the man in whose bosom this detestable vice has found a place, will stop at no crime to attain to the possession of either, in order that he may arrive at a distinguished superiority over his fellow-creatures, by their means; being conscious that in sense, goodness, and merit, he is inferior to most: and if his insidious artifices are crowned with success, there are no bounds to his tyranny, oppression, and malice.

This representation is not overcharged: it is the picture of the really proud man. There may be some modifications, but in all, in what degree soever it is found, it is a sin: therefore, in order to paint it in its most hideous colours, was to shew you to what a dreadful degree it reigns in the bosoms of some men.

Never did pride receive such a complete overthrow, as when our blessed Saviour was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the

Devil, who offered him all the kingdoms of the world, if he would fall down and worship him: “Get thee behind me Satan,” said our Lord to him:—and to this exalted pattern, I would point out to you the only method we have to conquer the suggestions of this infernal fiend:—“Resist the Devil and he will flee from you:” and not only in this instance, but look at our Saviour’s conduct through life; and from the cradle to the cross, his example calls out to you in the beautiful language by which he himself pathetically invited all that are weary and heavy laden:—“Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls.”

By pride man fell, by humility he was to be raised; a decree founded both in wisdom and in justice, passed from the Almighty, that it should be so: and that man might learn the heinousness of that sin, through which he fell, God Almighty permitted his only begotten Son, when he gave him up, to be an atonement for the sins of men, to tread in the lowest vale of humiliation: and accordingly, when he came into the world, he de-

spised its pomp and its splendors, and all those gaudy insignia, with which we decorate the trappings of grandeur, and chose to appear in the lowliest condition. He preferred its poverty, and would have none of its riches or its honours; and the same lesson which through life he exemplified in so beautiful a manner, he taught his disciples: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”

Our blessed Saviour’s humility was of that amiable nature which dignifies humanity: it partook not of that servile dread that the feeble-minded experience at the “Proud look” and “Haughty mind” of a man like themselves: his conduct was firm and unshaken—he bore all with an unparalleled patience, yet with a courage and magnanimity that confounded his enemies: he fled from no persecution, but met their combined malice with resolution and fortitude: his behaviour in every trying scene, was calm, collected, and dignified: he exhibited no cowardly fear, but met

their cruelest treatment with a composure, that spoke him above human resentments: and what must for ever set the inveterate malice of the proud in its most diabolical light, and give dignity to persecuted humility; he, with a sentiment that proclaimed him truly divine, could utter, before he expired on the cross, where he was suffering all that their malice could inflict—"Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Here is a lesson which the proud man would do well to contemplate, till he learns to subdue the arrogance of his haughty mind: but this he will never do; his self-sufficiency renders him blind to the pride that sways his actions; and not unfrequently he deems himself only preserving what he calls his dignity of character: and while he did this and no more, he would be doing, perhaps, not much amiss; but in his acting up to that dignity, he too often despises his less assuming neighbour; as much depends upon what he may think necessary to maintain that dignity. There is a becoming pride no doubt, necessary for the preservation of respect, and which is both amiable and proper;

and which will always prevent a man from acting derogatory to his station and character: but this by no means, is what we are inveighing against, and dissuading you from; it is that disgusting haughtiness, which in look and gesture, has its origin in meanness, and in every dispicable passion that can lurk in the heart of man: in all its actions it is offensive and ridiculous, and would be scarcely worth the moralist's attention, were it not that in some bosoms, it reigns with a terrible ascendancy, and with infernal fury, persecutes the meek and humble. Indeed, could any thing mortify the pride of man, it would be the reflection, that God has expressly denounced it to be a sin of a most diabolical nature, and placed humility as the first of virtues, and in fact, as the only path to obtain the invaluable treasures and honours of an eternal life. As by our Saviour's life and example, by his doctrine and parables, he hath taught us to despise and contemn the "Proud looks" and the "Haughty minds" of men; so has he shewn us, that although humility must suffer persecution from the vain and arrogant in this world, yet he has proved it the

only way to obtain the unfading honours of an incorruptible crown, in that which is to come. “God,” says St. James, “resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. A proud look,” says Solomon, “is the first of the seven things which God hates.” And again he says, “Every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord;” but of the amiable virtue of humility, he declares, that by it and the “Fear of the Lord, are riches, honour, and life.” In truth, there is not a vice of a more destructive tendency than pride, to the soul of man; for in his self-conceit, the proud man despises the lessons of virtue and wisdom: his own understanding is his counsellor, and like the sluggard, mentioned in the Proverbs, “He is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men, that can render a reason. Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit,” says the same wise monarch, in a few verses preceding, “there is more hope of a fool, than of him.”

Thus, my brethren! we have seen the wisdom of the prayer of the son of Sirach; and from the description of the proud man, and setting before you

the example of our Saviour, we see the great contrast, and the folly and sin of pride: let us, therefore, banish all ideas of self-conceit, that may kindle in our bosoms the latent sparks of pride, which may there lie hid even to ourselves. We have nothing to boast of or to call our own: why then should we be arrogant over our neighbour? Why assume a "Proud look," or a "Haughty mind," towards any man, whom, though God has placed below us in the scale of society, or depressed by misfortunes from a more elevated rank; yet in the virtues of a good life, may be infinitely our superior? I shall conclude all in the words of our Saviour:—"Whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted."

SLANDER.



EXODUS XX. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

ON viewing the inconsistency stamped on the various characters of mankind, one would be apt to imagine, that God had never appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai; but that the whole narrative of that astonishing display of divine glory and goodness, was merely the invention of the Legislator, to give a greater sanction to the laws he intended to introduce. But this cannot be! An individual could not—durst not delude a whole nation, and that nation the peculiar favourite of Heaven. Who that had beheld all Sinai tremble—the thunder and lightnings issuing from its summit, with

the sound of the trumpet, proclaiming the divine presence? Who that had beheld this tremendous scene, could a moment doubt that these Commandments were dictated by the voice of Omnipotence? All Israel heard and confessed them the words of God! Surely then we, enlightened as we are by revelation, will not presume to dispute their divine origin! Yet, alas, my brethren! cast but your eyes around, and view the melancholy prospect, and you will too readily perceive every Commandment broken—every divine precept trampled under foot, as if these laws, handed down to us by the sacred historians, existed only in the heated imagination of some enthusiastic devotee. What strange inconsistency! Their excellence is sufficient even to shew their divine origin, if no other proof existed, as they must be acknowledged to be replete with such beneficial instructions, and to comprehend such a system of religious and moral duties, as no poetic fiction, nor eastern allegory, under which, although the rules of virtue and wisdom are couched in pleasing semblances, can equal.

Of these excellent precepts, I have selected one

for the subject of our present meditations, as it forbids a practice very prevalent amongst the generality of mankind, which is *slander* or *detraction*; than which, one more destructive to the happiness of individuals, is not to be found in the catalogue of those vices, prohibited by the Laws of God or man.

Bearing false witness in the text, does not particularly mean that false evidence, too often I fear, given in a court of judicature; but the bearing, (as I conceive it) or being the messenger of a false intelligence, that is against, or prejudicial to our neighbour. This is *slander*, and a more dangerous vice lurks not in the bosom, as sometimes it lies concealed, even from a man's ownself; and breaks not forth but on certain occasions, when the degradation of a character is intended, from some private pique, malice, or revenge.

But the bearer of a false intelligence, it must be acknowledged, may mean no prejudice to the individual of whom the slander is forged: he is merely the vehicle to disperse it abroad: he is one of those, who, like the *Athenians* of old, pass their time in

hearing some new thing; and being as eager to tell it, as he was to hear it, he is the fitter instrument in the hands of the original detractor; whose blackness of heart I would in this discourse unfold to view, and expose him to your just aversion in his most horrid deformity.

But before we proceed, let us examine who may be called our neighbour. The lawyer in the Gospel, asked our Saviour this very question; to which he replied in this beautiful parable: “A
“ certain man went down from *Jerusalem* to *Jeri-*
“ *cho*, and fell among thieves, which stripped him
“ of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed,
“ leaving him half dead: and by chance there
“ came down a certain priest that way, and when
“ he saw him, he passed by on the other side:
“ and likewise a Levite when he was at the place,
“ came and looked on him, and passed by on the
“ other side. But a certain Samaritan as he jour-
“ neyed, came where he was, and when he saw
“ him, he had compassion on him, and went to
“ him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in wine
“ and oil, and set him on his own beast, and

“brought him to an inn, and took care of him: “and on the morrow when he departed, he took “out two pence, and gave them to the host, and “said unto him, take care of him, and whatsoever “thou spendest more, when I come again I will “repay thee.” Our Saviour having finished the parable, in his turn asks the lawyer—“Which now “of these three thinkest thou was neighbour to “him that fell among the thieves?” The lawyer answers, “He that shewed mercy;” then said Jesus—“Go and do thou likewise.”

From this parable, it appears that we are to consider all mankind as our neighbours, and that each individual, particularly if in distress, has a claim upon our services. How glorious a design, that would connect every human being on the surface of the globe in one endless chain! Our Saviour would have universal love and charity extended to all in need; an idea so diffusively benevolent, could only spring from an heavenly being! We, who profess ourselves to be disciples of this benevolent master, fondly conclude, that if we live in perfect peace, and keep up a good correspondence

with our respective neighbours, we are acting the part of a good Samaritan. And is this all? Is nothing more required of us? Is he wounded by the stroke of adversity, and do we pour into his wounds, ought that can mitigate his sufferings, or afford him the necessary consolation? Alas! would I could say we did! but a contrary disposition, to our shame be it spoken, too often manifests itself on such an occasion. I would not willingly be imagined too severe, but I think a picture may be drawn, which, though horrible at first view, yet, when become familiar, is stript of every frightful appearance, and regarded with the eye of indifference.

For instance; no sooner shall a man have drunk of the bitter cup of adversity, than those, who, when he reclined in the lap of plenty, shared in his pleasures and lived in his presence; nay, even those, who, in the unreserved gaiety of his heart, partook of his purse, shall, on the eve of misfortune, fly from his presence as from a pestilence; and, as if his calamity had not rendered him sufficiently wretched, blacken his character with

the foulest calumnies. Alas! one would imagine that the misfortunes of a fellow-creature, would rather provoke our pity than our malevolence! In vain shall man boast of his sensibility, if he can calumniate the wretched!

Suffer me to present to your imagination, a miserable, but not an uncommon object, who, enveloped with the dark clouds of misfortune, wanders desolate and forsaken. A deep melancholy has taken possession of his soul, and fell despair has marked him for her own. His bosom heaves with unutterable woe, his swollen heart is ready to burst. With hasty step he wanders in search of a friend, in whose sympathizing bosom he may pour forth all his sorrows. Alas! he finds none! all shun him—all fly before him: the big tear, in anguish at the disappointment, starts from his eye, and trickles in silence down his cheek. Be at ease fond wretch! there is none to comfort, none to sooth thy sorrows: thou art unfortunate, therefore must expect to be despised and abandoned of men.

Strange! Can misery like this be an object for detraction? To add poignancy to the woes of the

afflicted; can it be humanity? No! for that strictly enjoins—“If thy brother be fallen to decay, thou shalt relieve him, yea, though he be a stranger.” Then is it christianity? Far from it; for the great Author of our religion, he, who would not *break the bruised reed*, has commanded that we should “Love our neighbour as ourselves.” But alas! neither the precept of the Decalogue, nor the charitable mandate of the Gospel, hath any effect on the generality of men. The detractor too often asperses the *brother* he ought to relieve, and joins in calumniating the *neighbour* our religion has commanded us to esteem, protect, and defend.

He who in the Gospel is called a “Neighbour,” is in the Mosaical precept stiled a “Brother”—names that convey the most interesting ideas of mutual esteem and good offices. The name of *brother*, suited the Jewish people, separated as they were from the rest of the nations, by peculiar laws and ceremonies, and as the descendants of one man, “In whose family all the kingdoms of the earth should be blessed.” But when that

promise was fulfilled, he, who broke down the partition between Jew and Gentile—boundless, like the charity he displayed to all without distinction, he would unite all mankind in one universal cord of amity and love, however different in rank, in fortune, or in *colour*. This divine philanthropist, “Is no respecter of persons, for in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” How then is it, that we of the same charitable religion, disciples of the same compassionate Redeemer, should mutually endeavour to add to the burden of the oppressed; and give to the world, every little foible of the man, whom adverse accidents has reduced to a state, which, though beyond our wish or power to relieve, should never be beyond our pity to commiserate.

By no means shall I descend to notice the petty slanders, that sometimes mingle in our common topics of conversation: these are trifling faults, in comparison with the magnitude of that which I am now decrying, where the heart, poisoned with the most inveterate malice, persecutes with the vilest slanders, the man whom it has already deeply in-

jured. For if the detractor has been the means to push him from the elevation in which he stood; he has recourse to calumnies to asperse his character, in order that his glaring and manifest cruelty, may, in the eyes of the world, have some shew of justice. Envy indeed, not unfrequently excites to this diabolical practice; to depress the man, whom he thinks stands in his way, or whose virtues glaringly contrast the odiousness of his own character, and set it in its true light; renders the envious man ever ready to encourage the secret whispers of scandal; to which he will never fail to add his own glossary, to throw a deeper shade on the reputation already blackened by the malicious slander of secret enemies.

Distress, however strange it may appear, seems to be that state, which more particularly brings forth this passion for aspersion. Every cause for calamity is attributed to some careless or extravagant action of the sufferer. By these detractors mode of reasoning, there is no such a thing as an unexpected accident or misfortune befalling the meritorious. Industry and prudence can never fail,

but must always be successful: all calamities that happen to a man, are of his own bringing on. He may in general, say they, thank himself for these; if it had not been for his own carelessness and extravagance, this misfortune had never happened: had he been prudent, industrious, and circumspect, he would have prevented this calamity; he therefore falls deservedly. And in order to justify these uncharitable opinions, every little foible is exaggerated, every trifling fault is magnified into an atrocious act. But let us appeal to these detractors, and ask them, if brought themselves to distress (as whose station is secure even for a moment) how they would like to have their own characters thus aspersed, vilified, and misrepresented.

Not at all! But they seem to exclaim with the wicked man in the Psalm:—"Tush, I shall never be cast down, there shall no harm happen to me!" All their desire is to see the object of their aspersions universally condemned: and alas! their base wishes are but too soon gratified, for there is nothing carries so swift destruction along with it, as scandal: it destroys, it blasts like the lightning:

it gathers fresh invectives as it passes from tongue to tongue, till what was at first a trifling error, becomes at last an enormous crime.

Scandal spreads discord through families; it breaks the bonds of friendship, and bursts asunder the most sacred ties. It irreparably injures the innocent, and fixes an indelible stigma upon the most unsullied reputation. The most unshaken fidelity and invincible constancy; the most unblemished life and irreproachable morals, can never effectually wipe away the stain of a foul name. To attempt to undeceive the world—to vindicate your injured character, is vain and fruitless: you must never expect to do this, for men will sooner believe the detractor than all your attempts to clear yourself. He has now succeeded; he exults that his secret slanders have banished from you every one, who, before the propagation of the scandal, wished you well; and you are left desolate amidst a censorious world. There is none to pity, to console, or befriend you; to guide you with his counsel, to ward off the envenomed shafts of slander, or to vindicate your injured name and character.

But amidst this obloquy, my brethren! this defamation of enemies, and neglect of pretended friends—if your consciences join not in the accusation with your calumniators, you have still a *friend*, to whom you can at all times appeal, who is a refuge for the oppressed, a sure help in time of need—“*Even God in his holy habitation.*”

Our blessed Saviour underwent the utmost malevolence the slanderous tongues of his enemies could utter. His doctrines were traduced, his miracles ascribed to infernal agency, and his divine person was insulted, spit on, scourged, and crucified. All this he suffered from those amongst whom he went about doing good, and for whose sake he came down from heaven. Never was goodness so misrepresented, nor benevolence so slandered. While his enemies reviled him with acting in concert with the infernal powers, they themselves were under the controul of diabolical influence, and with all the inveterate malice of demons, persecuted him till they brought him to the ignominious death of the cross.

If then, my brethren, *he* who was goodness it-

self, whose doctrines were promulgated to lead men to eternal happiness in the next world; and whose miracles were wrought to relieve the afflicted of the sons and daughters of distempered nature in this, was thus aspersed; who are we that can expect to escape the slanderous aspersions of the envious and malicious? This is one of the persecutions we must expect to suffer in this world, where good and ill are so blended, that it is difficult, often, to distinguish one from the other; but for our consolation, we know that there is a God in heaven, who sees the motives of our actions: to *him* then let us leave the vindication of our injured name. The time will come, when, before an assembled world, convened to receive their final doom, it will be known to the confusion of our enemies, that—“*He who privily slandereth his neighbour,* HIM WILL GOD DESTROY.”

COVETOUSNESS.



MARK X. 25.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

WHEN our first parent transgressed the prohibitory command of his Maker; sin, with all its fatal consequences, entered the world, changed the face of nature, and all the direful passions that now inhabit the mind of man, assumed the controul of his bosom. He became the slave of every appetite that could debase his original nature, and pursued that predominate lust that held the chief place in his corrupted mind, and with a senseless depravity, rushed headlong into every crime. Reason, though so much boasted of in these our days of infidelity, could not alone oppose the torrent without

the divine assistance; it sunk before the violence of every lust, and became subservient to every unruly affection, till God, in his great goodness to this fallen state, announced his laws, promising rewards to the obedient, and denouncing punishment upon the transgressors. Thus, through the condescension of the Almighty, in appealing to the free-agency of man, reason was called to use her original powers, and the consequences of sin and obedience, were readily seen and allowed. To check—to counteract the dreadful effects of these passions overpowering the feeble efforts of unassisted reason; to reduce, but not to suppress them; God, in delivering his laws for man's observance, had a benevolent regard to his present state, as formed for society, and if duly observed, to render him capable of being restored to his primitive happiness, in the fulness of time; when, as a God of justice, as well as mercy, the former was to be satisfied by the seed of the woman, bruising the heel of the serpent.

Nothing less than the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, could thus defeat the purposes of Sa-

tan, and render them productive of a far more exalted happiness to man, than that of which his temptation, though successful, had deprived him. His design, in rendering him disobedient, was to make him forfeit the felicity for which he was created, and like himself, be for ever doomed to endure the displeasure of an offended Deity. He had seen and envied his happiness in the Paradise of Eden, enjoying every bliss with innocence, a kind Creator could bestow. With what astonishment and rage, must he then see the Divine Goodness interfere in man's restoration, by a wise and merciful decree, in which his only-begotten Son should satisfy offended justice, assume our nature, die for our justification; and thus by the sacrifice of himself, obtain for highly-favoured man, not a terrestrial Paradise, but the eternal enjoyment of the beatific presence of the Almighty, which *he*, with his followers was for ever debarred from enjoying! No wonder, that he now "Goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He is our *adversary*, and his whole bent is to render our passions deaf to the calls of reason, and to mould

them to his purpose, in order, *still* to defeat the gracious design of the sacrifice of God Incarnate, and to render every precept inefficient to promote the end for which it was given. There is not a passion lurks in the soul of man, that he does not endeavour to bend to his infernal purposes. He watches our weakest side, and where we are least able to stand up against his attacks, he takes the advantage, and by the help of that passion which has got the ascendancy, leads us captive at his will.

But of all the passions in the heart of man, that on which Satan works with the greatest success, is covetousness. Here he finds the heart ready disposed to act up to his infernal suggestions: and what scarcely any other passion can be found to do, it renders a man callous to every species of distress. Neither pride, ambition, or revenge, ever so effectually close up the avenues to the heart, as this uncharitable sin of avarice. The cries of the distressed—the melancholy pleadings of genuine woe, have made the proud, the ambitious, the revengeful relent, but never have they been known

to soften the stony bosom of the sordid miser. He is ever the bitter persecutor of his fellow-creatures, and what is still more unaccountable, while all other passions spring from a regard to self-interest, the miser pays as little attention to his own necessities, as to those of others.

As charity or love to our fellow-creatures, was the very virtue on which our Saviour founded his religion, he would have the same charity or love to be exercised among his disciples, as had induced him to leave the bosom of his Father, in order to die for their redemption:—"This is my commandment," says he, "that ye love one another as I have loved you: greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And as he well knew that no passion was so destructive of this love, as avarice, he took every opportunity to warn his disciples, against the least desire, even for more than the bare necessities of life, and even for them not to be over anxious, but to seek *first* the kingdom of heaven, and *then* all things necessary would be added unto them.

And that charity was to be the first requisite in

the character of his disciples is evident from the text. When a young man, with seeming earnestness, came and asked our Saviour what he must do to inherit eternal life—he told him he must keep the Commandments, as set forth in the Decalogue; the young man replied, he had observed them from his youth:—“ Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him; one thing thou lackest: go thy way; sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me; and he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions.”

Such is the case with worldly men in general; in whose bosoms, though absolute avarice has not found a place; yet the love of the good things of this life hath so far engaged their attention, that they cannot forsake them, even when their eternal salvation is at stake. This young man is not represented as an immoral character, for he had kept the Commandments from his youth; but he lacked *one thing* which, indeed, in what had brought him to the feet of Jesus was, the *one thing needful*.

Our Saviour admired his zeal, but saw he had not that self-denying spirit, necessary to become his disciple—to take up his cross and to follow him; and to convince him that his heart was not in a proper state to act up to the zeal for eternal life, with which his self-confidence in the moral duties of the law observed from his youth, had inspired him; puts him immediately to the test:—“Sell
“ whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and
“ thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come,
“ take up the cross and follow me.” Hard conditions these for *a rich young man* to perform; therefore as he could not obtain the inheritance of eternal life on his own terms—“ He went away sorrowful.”

Our blessed Lord seeing this, turned to his disciples, and observed: “ How hardly shall they that
“ have riches enter into the kingdom of God.
“ And the disciples were astonished at these words;
“ but Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them;
“—children, how hard it is for them that trust in
“ riches to enter into the kingdom of God: it is
“ easier for a camel to go through the eye of a

“needle, than for a rich man to enter into the
“kingdom of God.”

Riches, however men may value them, or boast of their acquisition, whether obtained by industry or inheritance, are only entrusted to their care as stewards, and for the use or abuse of which they are accountable. If a man be possessed of riches, and he use them according to the intent of the donor, who crowned his industry with success, or permitted the inheritance of his fathers to descend to him:—if he regard them only as the bounty of Heaven, and himself as an instrument to distribute them, as shall be most beneficial to others, as well as to himself: in this sense of the Gospel, he is no rich man; not being the absolute or real proprietor of the riches, with which he is entrusted, but is to be considered in the light of a steward, “Of whom it is required that a man be
“found faithful.”

But if instead of considering himself as a steward, a man arrogates to himself an absolute and uncontrollable property in his riches, and in all the pride of his heart, boasts within himself—

“ My power and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth;” and disclaims the calls of religion upon him, to dispense his superfluity to the necessitous: he is the man of whom our Saviour speaks, who, since he considers his wealth as his own, to dispose of as he thinks fit, it is but just that he should be dealt with, as with a rich man. Although nothing immoral may be imputed to him; yet he refuses to acknowledge God, as having any authority over the riches he has put into his hands: and though he would obtain eternal life, yet, when charity is proposed—to distribute to the poor as the first step thereto, he rejects heaven, rather than part with his beloved wealth. As no man is deemed a rich man but the covetous, in the eye of the Gospel; such will find it as hard, as they have riches, and will not part with them, for our Saviour’s sake and the Gospel’s, but put their *trust* in them, rather than in the promises of God; such will find it full as difficult “ To enter the kingdom “ of God,” as it is for “ A camel to pass through “ the eye of a needle.”

This expression means no more than to shew

the utter impossibility of a rich or a covetous man (for in the language of the Gospel they are synonymous terms) to enter the kingdom of God: and with every degree of justice. Love or charity, as I have before observed, is the foundation of our religion. Our Saviour's love to man was boundless: he left heaven—all the glories that he had with the Father, before the world was, for our sakes; and even though he has vouchsafed to say, that if we shew pity, even to the least of those (whom he is pleased to style) his brethren, we shew it unto him. Yet the miser will not part with a single mite to relieve the distressed: but “Who-
“soever hath this world's goods, and seeth his bro-
“ther have need, and shutteth his bowels of com-
“passion from him, how dwelleth the love of God
“in him?”

Notwithstanding what God has done for him, in sending his beloved Son upon earth, manifestly “To destroy the works of Satan,” by dying for his redemption; and that Son has declared, if we would be his disciples, we must love one another; and has made our eternal felicity to depend on our

charity to the distressed, as is obvious in his own account of the day of judgment; yet so closely has Satan blocked up the miser's bosom with the love of riches, that the most grievous calamity that can befall the children of men, cannot reach or melt his soul to pity.

But the folly of this man, though it calls for the severest reprehension, is nowhere so ably set forth as by our blessed Saviour himself:—"The ground
"of a certain man brought forth plentifully, and
"he thought within himself, saying; What shall I
"do, because I have no room where to bestow my
"fruits? And he said, this will I do; I will pull
"down my barns, and build greater, and there
"will I bestow all my fruits and my goods; and I
"will say to my soul; soul thou hast much goods
"laid up for many years, eat, drink, and be
"merry. But God said unto him, fool! this night
"thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose
"shall those things be, which thou hast provided?
"So is he, that layeth up treasure for himself, and
"is not rich towards God." But this vice, when carried to excess, is generally deemed more wor-

thy of ridicule than reproof, as, contrary to every other passion, it then preys upon itself, and becomes its own tormenter. We, therefore, shall confine our considerations to that degree of it, which more immediately belongs to the subject, and caused the observation of our Saviour.

The young man had nothing immoral, with which to be reproached; but it is evident, he had *pride* in his having observed the Commandments from his youth; and fully expected to be admitted the disciple of Jesus, as his vanity in his observance of the moral law told him he merited. When our Saviour recapitulated the precepts of the Decalogue, by no means was his ardour checked; but he exults with an air of confidence: “All these I have kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?” Charity! “The very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which, whosoever liveth is counted dead before the Lord.” That a man, who gains by his industry, more than a competency or sufficiency of riches, should feel a degree of self-complacency, we allow and excuse: it is natural for a man to indulge sentiments of

self-satisfaction, on such an occasion: but then—
“ Let him not think of himself more highly than
“ he ought to think,” but with that humility, as
shews he has a just sense of his obligations to the
Giver of all good things, and to whom he wishes to
shew his gratitude, in the way most pleasing to
him; and therefore, let him apply to the means,
which has been pointed out to him, and thereby
prove that he has a due sense of the obligation he
is under. Let him bestow on the poor and needy,
the superfluous and perishable riches of this world,
and by *thus* making friends of the mammon of un-
righteousnes, he will “ Lay up for himself trea-
“ sures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust
“ doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break
“ through, nor steal.”

But what is here condemned in the text is, when
riches are preferred to religion; to whose dictates
not the least attention is paid, where its charitable
Author has bid us consider the poor as our brethren,
and consequently entitled to share with us in the
bounty of Heaven. The text gives the covetous no
hopes of mercy, when they trust in their riches,

and prefer them to their everlasting interest. Can a man deem it hard to be excluded from the kingdom of heaven; from the enjoyment of eternal happiness, when he himself has refused to give a momentary relief to the necessities of his fellow-creatures? The crumbs (comparatively speaking) which fall from his table, would make many a perishing object happy; and yet he neglects to give them; even boasting at the same time, that he keeps the whole moral law.

But we are not to confine charity to eleemosynary deeds; that would indeed be to confine it to very narrow limits. It is that boundless love to mankind, attested by every deed, that the religion of the amiable and merciful Jesus alone teaches: it is that universal good-will, that considers every individual child of Adam with equal regard, and extends its good offices to all, as far as its power reaches. Were we to confine ourselves to the mere duty of alms-giving, and not practice universal benevolence, we might "Give all our goods to the poor," nay, "Our bodies to be burnt," and yet "Have not charity." There is no man, in what-

ever state he is, but may practice this duty, as prescribed him at large in the Gospel:—"Charity suffereth long and is kind: charity envieth not; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked." In short, this excellent representation of charity, comprehends the most amiable virtues; kindness, patience, humility, and is nothing else but that love unfeigned, which is "The fulfilling of the law." It expands to all alike without distinction; it mingles with the softer passions of the soul, and "Rejoices with those that do rejoice, and weeps with those that weep." Where it cannot relieve, it flows out in acts of kindness, and exerts itself to soften every species of distress, and feels a mental transport, in seeing content and joy reign in every bosom. Oh, could the miser, but for a moment, taste the delight the benevolent man feels, at seeing the object of his bounty happy and cheerful by his means, surely he would hug his sordid dross no more, nor place a value upon an useless heap, which can have no value but in its currency; and which he must one

day quit for ever, “ For he can carry nothing away
“ with him when he dies, neither can his pomp
“ follow him.”

My brethren! without extending your love of superfluous riches to the avaricious extent of the sordid miser, you may, if you are not careful, suffer it so far to get the better of your disposition, as to close your bosom against those acts of kindness, which are no less acts of charity, than the distribution of your money. I have shewn you the utmost extent of this vice, with the design of warning you against the least inclination towards a superfluity; which once obtained, too often so effectually closes up the avenues to the heart, that nothing can penetrate or melt it into acts of kindness. It is then our adversary begins his attempts; and by working on the laudable wish to provide for your offspring, soon teaches you not to distinguish what is a sufficiency, but leads you on gradually, till the love of wealth shuts up the heart against the claims of individual distress, as well as the greater calls of society, for your practice of the moral duties of your christian profession.

OLD AGE.



PSALM VXXI. 18.

Now that I am old and grey-headed, O God forsake me not.

OLD age has something in it, that with the serious part of mankind, never fails to obtain respect. To see a man who has lived beyond the usual term, to an advanced period of life; respected and beloved for his integrity and uprightness; punctual in his duties to God and man; making a conscience in every thing he does; surrounded by a family, whom he has brought up in “The nurture and admonition of the Lord;” is at once to behold a man, whom good men must reverence, and God delight to sustain.

The example he has given; the steps he himself

has marked out, by which he has attained to an honourable old age, followed by his children and children's children, give lustre to his years, and add "A crown of glory" to his "Hoary head," as "Founded in righteousness." We see in him the happy effects of a youth led in temperance and sobriety, from the glow of health, that still animates his venerable countenance; and the mild benignity of his looks bespeaks the calm dignity of his mind, acquired by a long life of conscious rectitude to God and man.

A life led in this manner, we may reasonably conclude, will be terminated by a death suitable thereto. With the blessing of God, he may expect to sink gradually into the vale of years; and when the lamp of life is about to be extinguished, with perfect resignation and steady composure, he will lie down in peace, and happy in the prospect of a virtuous and well-established offspring surrounding his death-bed, he will resign his soul into the hands of that God who gave it, with a calm tranquillity. Contemplating this scene, who would not adopt the wish of the venal and temporizing

Balaam; "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?"

It is true that old age does not always obtain respect. In the thoughtlessness of youth, we disregard what we think is a check upon the headstrong passions of that giddy age, and consider the hoary head as a sage monitor, always reprov- ing the follies of inexperienced youth. What is this but the checks of conscience, not yet stifled by the dissipating gaities of the giddy circle of youthful intemperance, that render us apprehensive of the rebuke of elder years, and continually to imagine, that in the serene temperature of old age, we see a perpetual reproach of our wild pursuit of pleasure? Pleasure! how falsely so called! Short-lived its joys, and transient all its attractive wiles! It lures to destruction, and lays the foundation of those manifold infirmities that attack our sinking years. Instead of a calm, placid, and temperate old age, we feel their effects in a weak and emaciated frame, tottering with disease; and we are ushered into the dark chambers of the grave, through some painful and acute

disease; the fatal effects of the intemperate abuse of our early years.

To enumerate the catalogue of diseases that attack the imbecility which accompanies our sinking years, is a painful task: but considered as the consequences of an early habitude to intemperate indulgencies, may warn the incautious youth to avoid the path of seducing pleasure; strewed, as it may appear, with never-fading flowers: yet, in the excruciating diseases of infirm and decrepid old age, they may discover that it terminates in misery—the *roses* are withered, but the *thorns* remain.

It is likewise a melancholy truth, that not only the intemperance of youth may produce the burdensome and painful diseases incident to old age, but the variety of sad accidents that may befall us in our pilgrimage through life. Our cares and anxieties in a world, in which we are destined to eat our bread with the sweat of our brows, produce an incapacity to sustain the rigorous assaults of a racking distemper in the winter of life, or to bear up with fortitude against the necessities of pro-

tracted old age. We are also bound by ties of so tender a nature to others, that we cannot but participate in their distresses, and feel their afflictions “Bring down our grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.” But the most distressing calamity of old age is, when it is attended with poverty and want; I mean not that poverty, in which those who have been born and bred, whose wants being few, feel not its most poignant sting: but that poverty which has come upon a man, from those accidents, to which the best of men are liable: for, will any man, though his affairs may be ever so prosperous, and his certainty for the supplies of old age ever so secure; will he say that he has provided for the necessities of an age, in which he shall have an ample sufficiency for all his wants? The wealthiest individual has been on a sudden reduced to the lowest ebb of poverty; and the man who seemed to have built a sure foundation for all the events that can happen, has been unexpectedly thrown down from his fancied security, and humbled with the lowest order of society. The bitterness of poverty is here felt in its sharpest degree;

old age with its infirmities, adds to his load of afflictions; distress and keen-gripping want, with an impossibility to procure for himself, either food for his sustenance, or remedies for his distemper, redouble his torments, thus wringing under the burden of poverty, and the torments of disease. Alas! my brethren! contemplating so miserable a scene, the bare idea that such an event may befall us, the eye and the hands are spontaneously lifted up towards heaven, and we exclaim with the Psalmist, “When I am old and grey-headed, O God forsake me not.”

Distressing as this scene is, yet it may be, and too often is, rendered still more afflictive by a man's own self. Strange that a man should lay up in store, what will add poignancy to those calamities, usually attendant on old age, and make them the more intolerable! The diseases of old age are, as I have observed, for the most part, the consequences of youthful intemperance; and seldom the follies of that inconsiderate age, are left off in manhood, but are then often pursued with more avidity; and having obtained a more systematic

form, they insensibly gain such a hold, that as the strength declines, the passions assume a greater ascendancy, till the whole man becomes vitiated. Then, when poverty and disease attack the wretch, enfeebled by age, vice, and debauchery, conscience arrays death in his most dreadful terrors, and the hoary-headed sinner, trembles at his approaching doom, and the pallet on which his shrivelled limbs are stretched, becomes a bed of torment; till he sinks into the grave, unpitied—unlamented; a sad and fearful example of a life led in vicious pursuits, and without that due sense of the dignity of his nature, in possessing a soul destined for the glories of immortality.

But not to dwell on a subject so painful, yet so true a picture of sinful old age, there are other distresses, not produced by a man's own self. He has ties that unite him to others, by the most endearing of all connexions. Though his own course of life may not occasion any grief to himself: yet if he see those to whom he is bound, by the tender relation of a parent, so far from following his advice or example; that in spite of his admonition,

they run headlong to vice and wickedness; how must his sinking years be deprived of that comfort he fondly hoped to enjoy, when he nurtured them up in good principles! All is lost! all is thrown away! and nothing is wanting, to render him the most wretched of beings. Conceive a parent of a family, bestowing on the children God has given him, the best education in his power;—see him incessant in his labour for their future comfort and support; imploring Heaven for their safety; guiding them with his counsel, and watching their unguarded moments, lest they fall into the snares of the wicked; instilling into them the principles of prudence, duty, and piety, and promising to himself they will prove a comfort and support to his declining years, and an honour to his grey hairs: view this pleasing prospect utterly disappointed by the untowardness of his children: some taking vicious courses, others disobedient, and following only the bent of inclination. How wretched! how miserable is this man's situation! Say ye, who are parents, if there can be a lot more grievous, than to have your children thus frustrate your hopes; and dis-

appoint all your fond expectations! In vain have you toiled! In vain have you sat up early and late! Nothing remains but to appeal to God, who can justify you, in having fulfilled every parental duty; and can at length, in recompense thereof, reclaim your untoward offspring, to see the error of their ways.

As our best endeavours may thus end in disappointment, we have only to be careful to fulfil the duties of our stations to the best of our abilities. If our conduct have been such, that although our dearest-formed connexions, in spite of our endeavours to the contrary, wring our hearts with the most pungent sorrow; yet we may take comfort to ourselves, should God permit us to descend into the vale of years, and to silver our locks with declining age; that our recompense will be proportionate to the duties we have performed, and those good actions that have filled up the measure of our days. The Patriarch Jacob, whose "Days were few and evil," yet was recompensed in this life, with the filial love of a son, whom he had long mourned as dead, who proved to be the comfort of

his declining years, and the glory of his grey hairs. *Few*, indeed, with respect to the ages of his forefathers, had the days of his life been, and *evil* or unfortunate with respect to the vicissitudes of life. Banished from home at an early period, to avoid the resentment of his brother; and for twenty years an hired servant to Laban his uncle, whom he served for his wives Leah and Rachel. The torturing afflictions he suffered from the untowardness of his sons; their cruel revenge upon Hamor the Hivite; the loss of his favourite son Joseph, whom he lamented as dead, for a number of years, which had well nigh brought his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; proved, lamentably proved, that *evil* or unfortunate had been the days of the years of his life.

Yet after all these afflictions, how was this worthy Patriarch compensated for all he had suffered? His dying moments are attended with circumstances, that marked the distinguished favourite of Heaven. While leaning from the top of his staff, with all the fervour of an inspired Prophet, dispensing the blessings of Heaven, or predicting the

rise and fall of some of the branches of his surrounding family; we behold the dignity of age, long tried in the furnace of affliction, and found holy, just, and good; while Heaven, attending, waits to distribute the blessings, or to fulfil the denunciations of the dying Patriarch. How does this idea, my brethren! strike us with admiration, of the wonderful love of God to these chosen men? From which we may rationally conclude, that the prayers of good men, at their dying hours, will be thus ever attended to by God, who appears in these instances, to give a sacred sanction to the last wishes of devout and holy men.

How ought this consideration, my brethren! to excite us to a diligence in our respective callings, and in our religious duties; and stir up all that is within us, to bless and praise the holy name of God, who, so far from forsaking us in old age, will convey to our virtuous offspring, the blessings we enjoy. It was this idea that caused David to exclaim—"I have been young, but now am old, "yet never saw I the righteous forsaken, nor his "seed begging their bread."

Let not youth deride the hoary head of age, which, if founded in righteousness, is a crown of glory; but let him gather from his lips the lessons of experience, and reverence in him that venerable deportment, which ever attends the man, whom virtue encircles with the sanctity of length of days: and inspired by a laudable emulation to pursue his steps, by persevering therein, he shall himself, when sinking in the decline of life, become to his posterity, that respectable character, which attracts the applause of the worthy, and the approbation of the good; till at last, at peace with God, and with the world around, his children blest with the protection of an approving Deity, he shall, amidst their blessings, sink gradually into the arms of death, as a man falls into a peaceful slumber.

To the aged, after what has been said, there is little occasion to use any further exhortation: they must know the value of a peaceable death, too well, to endanger its loss, by living in direct opposition to those duties of their religion, that alone can obtain it. Speaking of religion, under the name of wisdom—"Length of days," says Solomon, "are.

“in her right hand, and in her left, riches and honour.” And in another place—“The hoary head “is a crown of glory, if it be founded in the way “of righteousness.” Therefore since “Length of “days,” is pronounced by this wise monarch, to be the recompense of a religious life, and when so obtained, “The hoary head is a crown of glory;” what encouragement is this to live in such a manner, as to procure for ourselves, “That peace “which the world cannot give!”—that *peace*, which neither the storms nor tempests of a world, which itself will soon pass away, can disturb, nor the vain derisions of deluded youth shall abate!—that *peace*, which at your dying hour, shall infuse an inexpressible tranquillity into your bosom, that while it gives you a foretaste of the joys to which you are about to enter, will sooth the anguish of the parting moment, when death shall gently close your eyes from every friend you love, and usher your soul to where, under the shadow of the Almighty’s wings, you will for ever enjoy, an immortal and eternal calm! Which may God, &c.



