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SERMONS

TO

YOUNG WOMEN.

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

BY JAMES FORDYCE, D. D.

THIRD AMERICAN
FROM THE TWELFTH LONDON EDITION.

PUBLISHED BY M. CAREY, PHILADELPHIA : AND
I. RILEY, NEW-YORK.

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PREFACE.

THE corruption of the age is a complaint with many men who contribute to increase it. In like manner, the inattention of the people is a complaint with many preachers who are themselves to blame. A dull discourse naturally produces a listless audience ; there being few hearers who will attend to that by which their hearts are not engaged, or their imaginations entertained. To entertain the imagination principally, were a poor, and indeed a vicious aim in a preacher. To engage the heart, with a view to mend it, should be his grand ambition. Any farther than as it may prove some way or other subservient to that, entertainment should never be admitted into a Sermon. There, to say the truth, we seldom meet with too much of the latter. Would to God we often met there with more of the former !

The author of the following Discourses was prompted to publish them, from an unfeigned regard for the Female Sex ; from a fervent zeal for the best interests of society, on which he believes their dispositions and deportment will ever have a mighty influence ; and, lastly, from a secret desire long felt of trying whether that style of preaching, which to him appears, upon the whole, adapted to an auditory above the vulgar rank, might succeed on a subject of this nature ; nothing in the kind, that he knows of, having been endeavoured before, in any language. The attempt was as difficult as it was

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new, and this very difficulty was probably the cause of its having been hitherto declined. He relied however on the candour of the public for every proper allowance, more especially respecting some singularities in the mode of composition, upon which he would not have ventured but for the uncommonness of the occasion. Nor has he been disappointed. But the public has not shown candour only : it has even exercised indulgence ; persons of both sexes, of various denominations, and of different tastes, having joined in expressing the most generous approbation.

Their very favourable opinion, so far beyond his expectation, affords him peculiar pleasure, as it raises his hopes, that what is here suggested (may, by the blessing of Heaven, which he humbly implores, contribute to the improvement of the most agreeable part of the creation, and by consequence, to their own felicity, and that of millions with whom they are now, or may be hereafter, connected. In this case, it will add to his happiness to reflect, that he has rendered the plain voice of truth acceptable amongst those who are daily tempted by the siren-song of flattery.

The preacher is willing to hope, that women of most conditions, and at all ages, may meet with some useful counsels, or some salutary hint, should curiosity incite them to look into these discourses. Should any of those young persons in genteel life, to whom they are chiefly addressed, deem the reprehensions they contain too severe, or too indiscriminate ; he can only say, that as all are dictated by friendship no less than by conviction, so he wishes it to be understood, that many were occasioned by a particular observation of those characters and manners which are esteemed fashionable amongst the young and the gay of this metropolis.

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In the country (a denomination which, as matters are commonly conducted, he can by no means allow to the neighbourhood of London) the contagion of vice and folly, it may be presumed, is not so epidemical. In short, he is persuaded, that women of worth and sense are to be found every where, but most frequently in the calm of retreat, and amidst the coolness of recollection.



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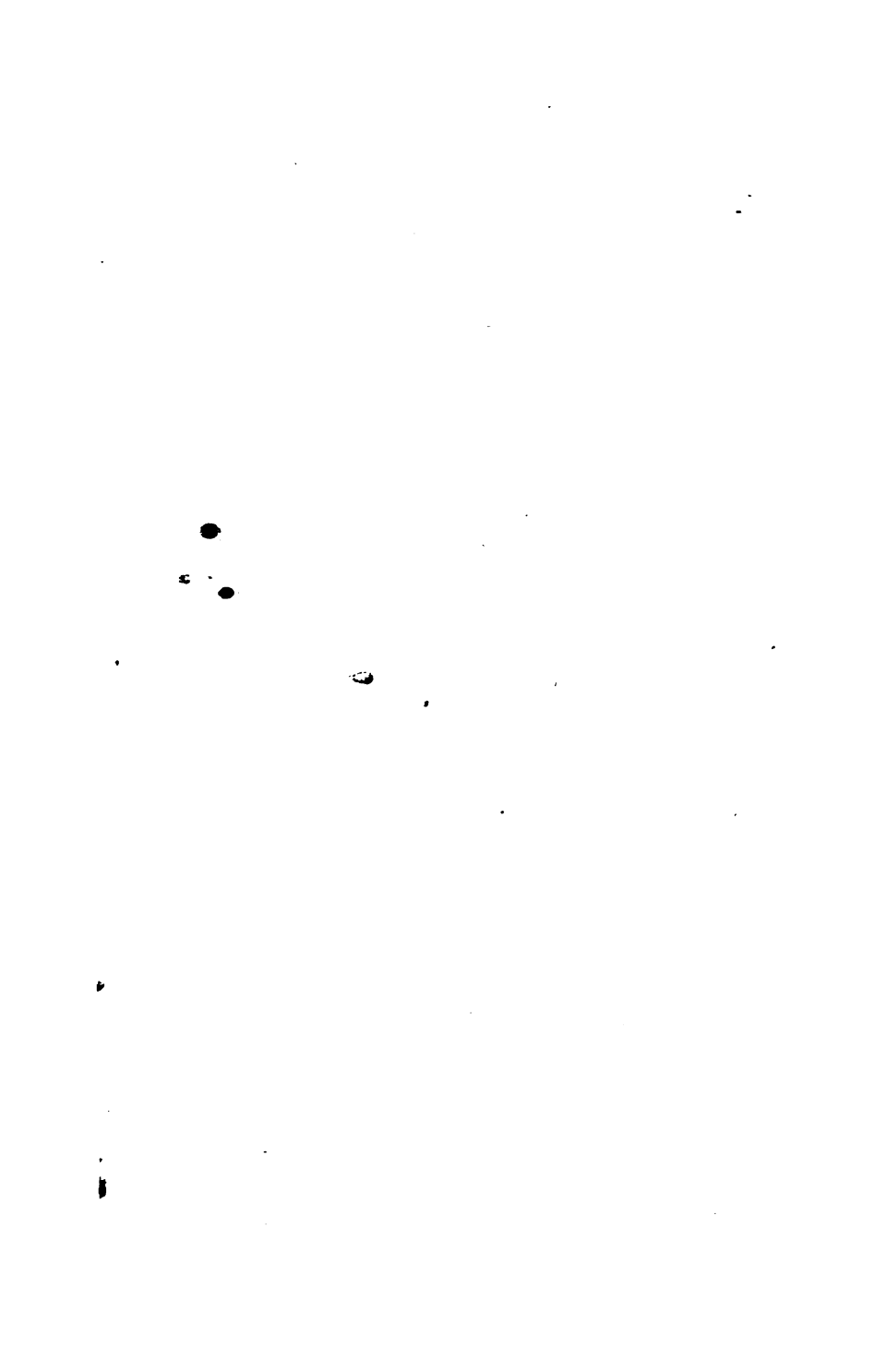
Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel : but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a Meek and Quiet Spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

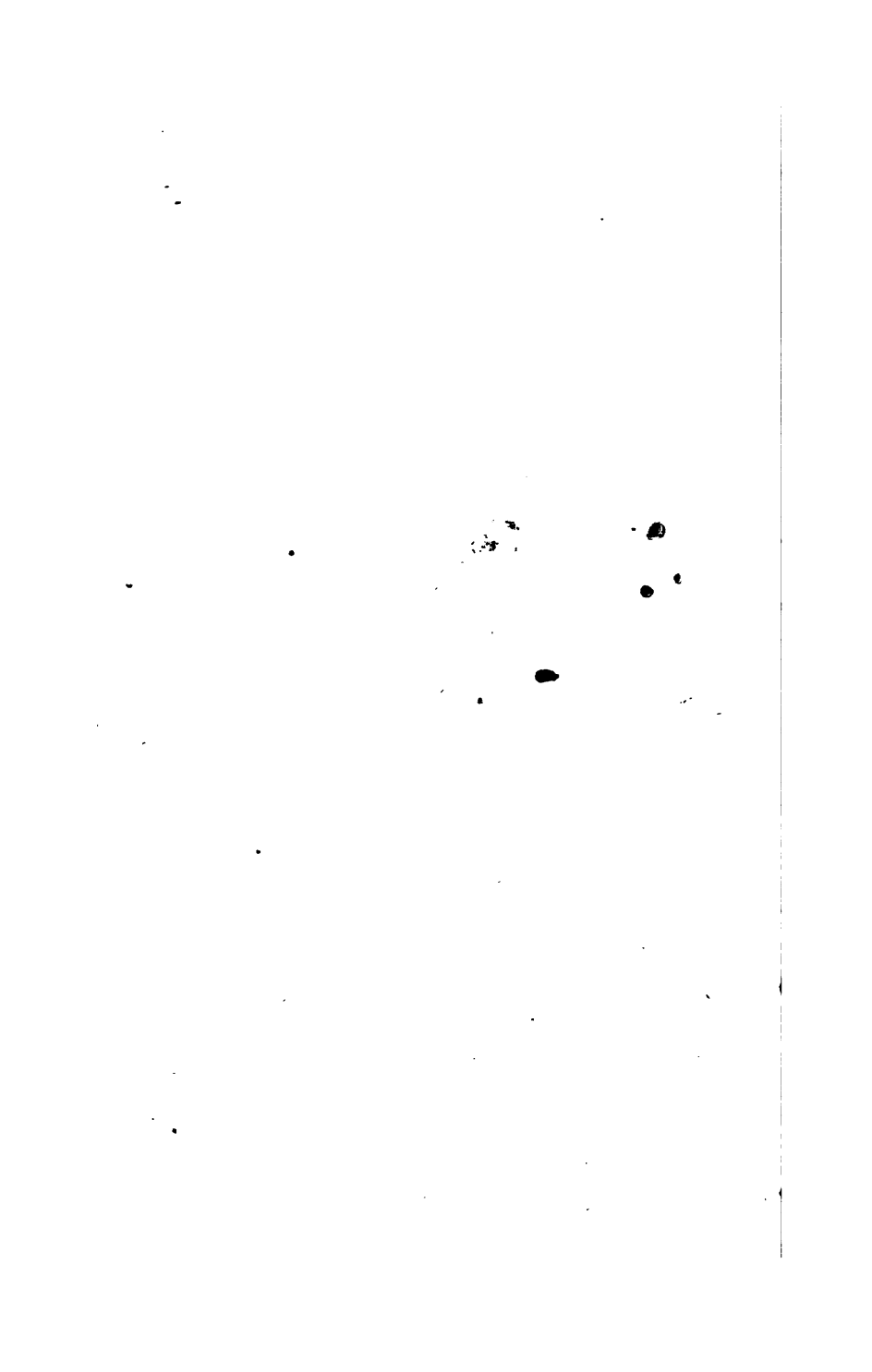
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ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FEMALE SEX,
ESPECIALLY THE YOUNGER PART.

1 TIM. ii. 8, 9, 10.

I wish—that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

"CAN a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" is the Almighty's question by the mouth of a prophet. Splendid attire and rich ornaments are in many places of scripture spoken of without censure, and in some with approbation. "The king's daughter," says the psalmist, "is all glorious within:" he adds, "her clothing is of wrought gold; she shall be brought into the king in raiment of needle-work." The Virtuous Woman is in the proverbs applauded for "clothing her household with scarlet, and herself with silk and purple." The creator has poured unbounded beauty over his works. Witness the flowers of the field, celebrated by Our Saviour himself; witness the gems of the mine, mentioned in the Revelation of St. John, as employed to give additional lustre even to the New Jerusalem; witness, in general, all that wonderful colouring, and those fair proportions, that please the eye, and amuse

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the imagination, with endless variety. Who can resist, who indeed ought to resist, the agreeable effect? Surely the Author of Nature does nothing in vain. He surely meant, that by beholding her with delight we might be led to copy her with care, and from contemplating the inferior orders of beauty rise to the admiration of that which is supreme.

As he has furnished infinite materials for the exercise and entertainment, no less than for the provision and accommodation of man; so has he inspired that genius, and supplied those powers, by which they are moulded into form, and heightened into splendour. In saying this we are warranted by revelation itself, where we are expressly told that, "the spirit of the Lord filled Bezaleel, Aholiab," and others, "with wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge, to devise and work all manner of curious and cunning works of the carver "of wood, the cutter of stones, the jeweller, the engraver, the weaver, the embroiderer in blue and "in purple, in scarlet and in fine linen." What multitudes are daily employed and comfortably supported by these and such like ornamental arts, hardly any one is ignorant.

That works of ingenuity and elegance are particularly becoming in your sex, and that the study of them ought to enter into female education as much as possible, all, I think, are agreed. In fine, none but the most contracted, or the most prejudiced, will deny that women may avail themselves of every decent attraction, that can lead to a state for which they are manifestly formed; and that, should they by any neglect of their persons render themselves less amiable than God has made them,

they would so far disappoint the design of their creation.

These considerations will, I apprehend, be thought more than sufficient to prove, that the passage of St. Paul which I have selected for my text is not to be understood strictly and absolutely, where it seems to condemn female ornament in general. It was common with the Hebrews to express comparative precepts in a positive manner, as might be shown from a number of texts. But, you are not disposed to doubt it. What then is our apostle's meaning? 'I would exhort and even enjoin christian women, always to dress with decency and moderation; never to go beyond their circumstances, nor aspire above their station, so as to preclude or hinder works of mercy; not to value themselves on their dress, or despise others more meanly habited; in short, never to spend too much time or thought on the embellishment of the body; but always to prefer the graces of the mind, modesty, meekness, prudence, piety, with all virtuous and charitable occupations, all beautiful and useful accomplishments suited to their rank and condition. These are the chief ornaments of their sex; these will render them truly lovely as Women; and as Christians, these will more peculiarly become them.' Such, I conceive, is the doctrine of this divine writer, and of his fellow apostle St. Peter on the same subject; and such, in substance, was the doctrine of some of the wisest heathens. Give me leave to quote one of them: "It is not gold, nor emeralds, nor purple, but modesty, gravity, and decent deportment, that can truly

"adorn a woman." Ah, my fair friends, how attractive and how happy might all of you be, were you effectually persuaded to form yourselves on such maxims; and what singular pleasure would it afford the preacher, if by the blessing of God he might so persuade you.

Princes, it has been said, and young women seldom hear truth. It is a melancholy consideration. Flattery you have often heard, and sometimes, I doubt not, listened to. May He hope for your attention, whose character forbids him to flatter, and whose principles are equally averse to it? Nothing, I am convinced, can be more pernicious to your best interest, than the adulation with which you are so early and so generally entertained. You will not look for it here. But be not afraid, on the other hand, of the bitterness of reproach, or the bluntness of incivility. If any thing should appear harsh, be assured it proceeds from real regard. We would not willingly offend, we are naturally solicitous to please you; but we dare not promote your pleasure at the expense of your improvement. To tenderness and respect you are entitled: but certainly faithful and candid admonition is not incompatible with the latter; and of the former, if I be not mistaken, it is the truest proof.

The Almighty has thrown you upon the protection of our sex. To yours we are indebted on many accounts. He that abuses you dishonours his mother. Virtuous women are the sweeteners, the charm of human life. "A Virtuous Woman—her price is far above rubies." This is not flattery; it is just praise: and that every one of you may deserve such commendation, is my earnest prayer. Much, I am sure, depends on you. And this

shall be my First Point; to which I will devote the present discourse, as a proper foundation for what is to follow. That I thus address you in particular, is principally owing to the idea I have formed of your consequence.

He that depreciates your sex is as unkind to society, as he is unjust to you. Yet to do so in your absence is, I am sorry to say, too common with many men; with those very men that soothe you to your faces, and are dupes to your smiles. Is this either manly or fair? Because there are foolish and vicious women, does it follow that there are hardly any other? Were such an opinion to prevail generally, what would become of human kind? Were so ungracious a system once established, is there not reason to fear, it would soon grow to be too well founded? The world, we know, is mightily influenced by reputation. Applause incites and animates; contempt has the contrary effect. A concern for character is, from their constitution, education and circumstances, particularly strong in women; in all but those who, having lost their native honours, have with them lost their sense of shame; an infamy to which they would have hardly descended, had they not first sunk in their own estimation.

— That admired maxim of heathen antiquity, “Reverence thyself,” seems to be peculiarly proper for a woman. — She that does not reverence herself must not hope to be respected by others. I would therefore remind you of your own value. By encouraging you to entertain a just esteem of yourselves, I would on one hand guard you against every thing degrading, and on the other awaken your ambition to act up to the best standard of

your sex : to aspire at every amiable, every noble quality that is adapted to your state, or that can insure the affection and preserve the importance to which you were born. Now this importance is very great, whether we consider you in your present single condition, or as afterwards connected in wedlock.

Considering you in your present single condition, I would begin where your duty in society begins, by putting you in mind how deeply your Parents are interested in your behaviour. For the sake of the argument, I suppose your Parents to be alive. Those that have had the misfortune to be early deprived of theirs, are commonly left to the care of some friend or guardian, who is understood to supply their place ; and to such my remarks on this head will not be altogether inapplicable. But I must likewise suppose that your parents deserve the name, that they are really concerned for your virtue and welfare.—Great God ! are there then any of thy creatures so unnatural, as to neglect the culture and happiness of the children thou hast given them ? Yes, and worse than to neglect it. “ Be astonished, “ O ye heavens, at this ! ” There are beings called Parents, and Christian parents, who are at pains to introduce their unexperienced offspring to folly, to vice, to every practice that can plunge them in misery !—What, Mothers too, and mothers “ professing godliness ! ” Is it possible that they can train up the fruit of their womb, their own daughters, to dishonour and destruction ? Alas ! it is done every day, and passes unregarded. There is not perhaps in the whole science of female vanity, female luxury, or female falsehood, a single article that is not taught, and also exemplified, by those

Christian Mothers, to the poor young creatures whom every dictate of nature, as well as every principle of the gospel, should engage their parents to bring up in modesty, sobriety, and simplicity of manners. What words can paint the guilt of such a conduct? //

Are you who now hear me blest with parents, that even in these times, and in this metropolis, where all the corruption and futility of these times are concentrated, discover a zeal for your improvement and salvation? How thankful should you be for the mighty blessing! Would you show that you are thankful? Do nothing to make them unhappy; do all in your power to give them delight. Ah, did you but know how much it is in your power to give them!—But who can describe the transports of a breast truly parental, on beholding a daughter shoot up like some fair but modest flower, and acquire, day after day, fresh beauty and growing sweetness, so as to fill every eye with pleasure, and every heart with admiration; while, like that same flower, she appears unconscious of her opening charms, and only rejoices in the sun that cheers, and the hand that shelters her? In this manner shall you, my lovely friends, repay most acceptably a part (you never can repay the whole) of that immense debt you owe for all the pains and fears formerly suffered, and for all the unutterable anxieties daily experienced on your account.

Perhaps you are the only daughter, perhaps the only child of your mother, and her a widow. All her cares, all her sensations point to you. Of the tenderness of a much loved and much-lamented

SERMON I.

husband you are the sole remaining pledge. On you she often fixes her earnest melting eye ; with watchful attention she marks the progress of your rising virtues ; in every softened feature she fondly traces your father's sense, your father's probity. Something within her whispers, you shall live to be the prop and comfort of her age, as you are now her companion and friend. Blessed Lord ! what big emotions swell her labouring soul ! But lest by venting them in your company, she should affect you too much, she silently withdraws to pour them forth in tears of rapture ; a rapture only augmented by the sweetly-sad remembrance that mingles with it, while at the same time it is exalted and consoled doubly by ardent vows to heaven for your preservation and prosperity. Is there a young woman that can think of this with indifference ? Is there a young woman that can reverse the description, suppose herself the impious creature that could break a widowed mother's heart, and support the thought ?

When a daughter, it may be a favourite daughter, turns out unruly, foolish, wanton ; when she disobeys her parents, disgraces her education, dishonours her sex, disappoints the hopes she had raised ; when she throws herself away on a man unworthy of her, or if disposed, yet by his or her situation unqualified to make her happy ; what her parents in any of these cases must necessarily suffer, we may conjecture, they alone can feel.

The world, I know not how, overlooks in our sex a thousand irregularities, which it never forgives in yours ; so that the honour and peace of a family are, in this view, much more dependent on

the conduct of daughters than of sons ; and one young lady going astray shall subject her relations to such discredit and distress, as the united good conduct of all her brothers and sisters, supposing them numerous, shall scarce ever be able to repair. But I press not any farther an argument so exceedingly plain. We can prognosticate nothing virtuous, nothing happy, concerning those wretched creatures of either sex, that do not feel for the satisfaction, ease, or honour of their parents.

Another and a principal source of your importance is the very great and extensive influence which you, in general, have with our sex. There is in female youth an attraction, which every man of the least sensibility must perceive. If assisted by beauty, it becomes in the first impression irresistible. Your power so far we do not affect to conceal. That He who made us meant it thus, is manifest from his having tempered our hearts to such emotions. — Would to God you knew how to improve this power to its noblest ends ! — We should then rejoice to see it increased : then indeed it would be increased of course. Youth and beauty, set off with sweetness and virtue, capacity and discretion—what have not they accomplished ?

Far be it from me, my fair hearers, to damp your spirits, or to wish in the least to abridge your triumphs : on the contrary, by assisting you to direct, we would contribute to exalt and extend them. We are always sorry when we see them misplaced or abused ; and—I was going to add, there is nothing more common. To give them their just direction, is truly a nice point. Power, from whatever source derived, is always in danger of turning the head. It has turned many an old one.

What then shall become of a young woman placed on such a precipice? What can balance or preserve her, but sobriety and caution, a good Providence, and good advice?

There are few young women who do not appear agreeable in the eyes of some men. And what might not be done by the greater part of your sex to procure solid esteem, and to promote general reformation among our sex? Are such objects unworthy your pursuit? or will ye say, that those which frequently engage it are of superior or equal importance?

If men discover that you study to captivate, not by an outside only, or by little frivolous arts, &c. &c. are, it must be confessed, many of them that will rejoice at the discovery; and while they themselves seem taken by the lure, they will endeavour in reality to make you their prey. Some more sentimental spirits, who might be dazzled in the beginning, will be soon disabused; and a few more honourable characters will scorn to take advantage of your folly. Folly most undoubtedly it is, by a wrong application of your force to lose the substance for the shadow.

Now and then a giddy youth may be caught. But what is the shallow admiration of a hundred such, or the smooth address of artful destroyers, to the heartfelt respect of men of worth and discernment, or the well-earned praise of reclaiming were it but one offender? I verily believe you might reclaim a multitude. I can hardly conceive that any man would be able to withstand the soft persuasion of your words, but chiefly of your looks and actions, habitually exerted on the side of goodness.

"Were Virtue," said an ancient philosopher, "to appear among men in visible shape, what vehement desires would she enkindle!" Virtue exhibited without affectation by a lovely young person, of improved understanding and gentle manners, may be said to appear with the most alluring aspect, surrounded by the Graces; and that breast must be cold indeed which does not take fire at the sight!

The influence of the sexes is, no doubt, reciprocal; but I must ever be of opinion, that yours is the greatest. How often have I seen a company of men who were disposed to be riotous, checked almost at once into decency by the accidental entrance of an amiable woman; while her good sense and obliging deportment charmed them into at least a temporary conviction, that there is nothing so beautiful as female excellence, nothing so delightful as female conversation in its best form! Were such conviction frequently repeated, (and it would be frequently repeated, if such excellence and such conversation were more general,) what might we not expect from it at last? In the mean time, it were easy to point out instances of the most evident reformation wrought on particular men, by their having happily conceived a passion for virtuous women: but amongst the least valuable of your sex, when have you known any that were amended by the society or example of the better part of ours?

To form the manners of men various causes contribute; but nothing, I apprehend, so much as the turn of the woman with whom they converse. Those who are most conversant with women of virtue and understanding will be always found the

most amiable characters, other circumstances being supposed alike. Such society, beyond every thing else, rubs off the corners that give many of our sex an ungracious roughness. It produces a polish more perfect and more pleasing, than that which is received from a general commerce with the world. This last is often specious, but commonly superficial. The other is the result of gentler feelings, and a more elegant humanity: the heart itself is moulded; habits of undissembled courtesy are formed; a certain flowing urbanity is acquired; violent passions, rash oaths, coarse jests, indelicate language of every kind, are precluded and disrelished. Understanding and virtue, by being often contemplated in the most engaging lights, have a sort of assimilating power. I do not mean, that the men I speak of will become feminine; but their sentiments and deportment will contract a grace. Their principles will have nothing ferocious or ^{one} bidding; their affections will be chaste ~~and soothing~~ at the same instant. In their case the Gentleman, the Man of worth, the Christian, will all melt insensibly and sweetly into one another. How agreeable the composition! In the same way too, honourable love is inspired and cherished.—Honourable love! that great preservative of purity, that powerful softener of the fiercest spirit, that mighty improver of the rudest carriage, that all-subduing, yet all-exalting principle of the human breast; which humbles the proud, and bends the stubborn, yet fills with lofty conceptions and animates with a fortitude that nothing can conquer—what shall I say more?—which converts the savage into a man, and lifts the man into a hero! What a happy change should we behold in the minds, the morals, and the demeanour

of our youth, were this charming passion to take place of that false and vitious gallantry which gains ground amongst us every day, to the disgrace of our country, to the discouragement of holy wedlock, to the destruction of health, fortune, decency, refinement, rectitude of mind, and dignity of manners ! For my part, I despair of seeing the effeminate, trifling, and dissolute character of the age reformed, so long as this kind of gallantry is the mode. But it will be the mode, so long as the present fashionable system of Female Education continues.

Parents now a days almost universally, down to the lowest tradesman, or mechanic, who to ape his superiors strains himself beyond his circumstances, send their daughters to Boarding-schools. And what do they mostly learn there ? I say mostly ; for there are exceptions, and such as do the Mistresses real honour. Need I mention that, making allowance for those exceptions, they learn chiefly to dress, to dance, to speak bad French, to prattle much nonsense, to practise I know not how many pert conceited airs, and in consequence of all to conclude themselves accomplished Women ? I say nothing here of the alarming suggestions I have heard as to the corruption of their morals. Thus prepared they come forth into the world. Their parents, naturally partial, fancy them to be every thing that is fine, and are impatient to show them, or, according to the fashionable phrase, to let them see Company ; by which is chiefly meant exhibiting them in public places. Thither at least many of them are conducted. They have youth, and perhaps beauty. The effect of both is heightened by all possible means, at an expense frequently felt

for a long time after. They are intoxicated by so many things concurring to deprive them of their little senses. Gazers and flatterers they meet with every where. All is romance and distraction, the extravagance of vanity, and the rage of conquest. They think of nothing that is domestic or rational. Alas ! they were never taught it. How to appear abroad with the greatest advantage, is the main concern. In subserviency to that, as well as from the general love of amusement, Parties of Pleasure, as they are called, become the prevailing demand. The same dispositions on the side of the men, sometimes stimulated by the worst designs, often seconded by good nature, and not seldom pushed on by the fear of appearing less generous or less gallant; prompt them to keep pace with all this folly. They are soon fired in the chace ; every thing is gay and glittering ; prudence appears too cold a monitor ; gravity is deemed severe ; the Ladies must be pleased ; mirth and diversion ~~are~~ all in all. The phantoms pass : the female adventurers must return home ; it is needless to say, with what impressions. The young gentlemen are not always under equal restraint ; their blood boils : the tavern, the streets, the stews, eke out the evening ; riot and madness conclude the scene : or if this should be prevented, it is not difficult to imagine the dissipation that must naturally grow out of those idle gallantries often repeated. Nor shall we be surprised to find the majority of our youth so insignificant, and so profligate ; when to these we join the influence of bad or giddy women grown up, the infection of the most pestilent books, and the pattern of veterans in sin, who are ever zealous to display the superiority of their talents by the number of their disciples, and secretly solicitous by the strength of their party to make amends for the weakness of their cause.

That men are sometimes dreadfully successful in corrupting the women, cannot be denied. But do women on the other side never corrupt the men? I speak not at present of those abandoned creatures that are the visible ruin of so many of our unhappy youth; but I must take the liberty to say that, amongst a number of your sex who are not sunk so low, there is a forwardness, a levity of look, conversation and demeanour; unspeakably hurtful to young men. Their reverence for female virtue it in a great measure destroys; it even tempts them to suspect that the whole is a pretence, that the sex are all of a piece. The consequences of this, with regard to their behaviour while they remain single, the prejudices it must necessarily produce against marriage, and the wild work it is likely to make if they ever enter into that state, I leave you to imagine.

Hitherto I have spoken only of the interest young women have with our sex. Let me now say something of that which they have with their own. It is not perhaps so extensive as the other: but for obvious reasons it cannot be inconsiderable. Do they always use it to good purposes? Do they never corrupt one another? Do none of them assist the common enemy; those wicked and designing men that are combined against the sex, especially against the innocent and unwary? Do the old never initiate the young in those low arts of dissimulation and cunning, which a wise woman cannot want, and which a worthy woman will not practise. Do the young—But I hasten from so painful a topic, to consider the importance of your sex in another light. As you have certainly great influence at present, so,

In the next place, it may be probably in your power to communicate much happiness, or to

occasion much misery hereafter. I think now of the chances you have to be connected in Wedlock. These it is impossible to calculate: but there are not, I suppose, many young women who, at one time or another, unless they themselves be in fault, may not form that connexion with the usual prospects; and I say, that the men you marry, the children you bring, and the community at large, will be all deeply interested in your conduct.

As to the first, I am not ignorant that there are some men so grossly insensible, as to be for the most part little or nothing affected by the temper or behaviour of their wives; provided only they do not ruin their affairs. And in truth, if those wives be ill-tempered or ill-behaved, such want of feeling is so far well for their husbands. If otherwise, how much are they themselves objects of compassion, thus condemned to drag a wretched life with beings, on whom all their endeavours to delight are lost? How sensibly must such a situation pain a delicate and ingenuous mind! What can reconcile her to it, but the strongest principles of religion?

Some sordid or saturnine spirits of either sex there may be, who can support a connexion of this kind with a stupid indifference; plodding along through a tasteless existence, without attachment or gratitude, desire or hope. Whether the case be very common, I leave others to decide. Of both sexes there are certainly many who are not made of such dull materials. With respect to them—But surely it cannot be necessary to display the felicity, or the woe, which must unavoidably arise to them from their partners. Here indeed, as in most instances where the modes of life happen to influence, it must be allowed the men have the ad-

vantage. If they find themselves unequally yoked, they are generally furnished with various means of beguiling their wretchedness at a distance from home ; whereas, if such be the fate of the poor women, they are commonly left to pine away in solitary misery. For them scarce any allowance is made ; to them little or no pity is shown : while the former make themselves judges in their own cause, and the partial world is ready to side with them. But yet, if the usages of that leave them often more room to elude the ideas of domestic distress, the feelings of nature will never suffer them fairly to escape it. A woman it is certain, if she be so minded, has still the power of plaguing her partner out of every real enjoyment ;—a power however, of which nothing can justify the exercise, and which when exercised is, like every other act of tyranny, sure to recoil upon the tyrant.

It is natural to me to wish well to my own sex ; and therefore you will not wonder, if I be solicitous for your possessing every quality that can render you agreeable companions in a relation which of all others is the most intimate, should be the most endearing, and must be the happiest or the worst. But to this solicitude my friendship for you is at least an equal motive. Were the lower springs of self-love to have no effect on your conduct, I must yet think, that the more refined principles of generosity and goodness, ought to prompt you. Ah ! my young friends, what pleasure can be compared to that of conferring felicity ? What honour can be enjoyed by your sex, equal to that of showing yourself every way worthy of a virtuous tenderness from ours ? What can be conceived so properly female as inspiring, improving, and con-

tinuing such a tenderness, in all its charming extent? Contrasted with this, how unamiable, and how miserable, must we pronounce the passion for ungentle command, for petulant dominion, so shamefully indulged by some women as soon as they find a man in their power!

But lastly, let us suppose you Mothers; a character which, in due time, many of you will sustain. How does your importance rise! A few years elapsed, and I please myself with the prospect of seeing you, my honoured auditress, surrounded with a family of your own, dividing with the partner of your heart the anxious, yet delightful labour, of training your common offspring to virtue and society, to religion and immortality; while, by thus dividing it, you leave him more at leisure to plan and provide for you all, a task, which he prosecutes with tenfold alacrity, when he reflects on the beloved objects of it, and finds all his toils both soothed and rewarded by the wisdom and sweetness of your deportment to him and to his children.

I think I behold you, while he is otherwise necessarily engaged, casting your fond maternal regards round and round through the pretty smiling circle; not barely to supply their bodily wants, but chiefly to watch the gradual openings of their minds, and to study the turns of their various tempers, that you may "teach the young idea how to shoot," and lead their passions by taking hold of their hearts. I admire the happy mixture of affection and skill which you display in assisting Nature, not forcing her; in directing the understanding, not hurrying it; in exercising without wearying the memory, and in moulding the behaviour without constraint. I observe you prudently overlooking a thousand childish follies. You forgive any thing

but falsehood or obstinacy : you commend as often as you can ; you reprove only when you must ; and then you do it to purpose, with moderation and temper, but with solemnity and firmness, till you have carried your point. You are at pains to excite honest emulation : you take care to avoid every appearance of partiality ; to convince your dear charge, that they are all dear to you, that superior merit alone can entitle to superior favour, that you will deny to none of them what is proper, but that the kindest and most submissive will be always preferred. At times, you even partake in their innocent amusements, as if one of them ; that they may love you as their friend, while they revere you as their parent. In graver hours you insinuate knowledge and piety by your conversation and example, rather than by formal lectures and awful admonitions. And finally, to secure as far as possible the success of all, you dedicate them daily to God, with the most fervent supplications for his blessing.—Thus you show yourself a conscientious and a judicious mother at the same moment ; and in that light I view you with veneration. I honour you as sustaining a truly glorious character on the great theatre of humanity. Of the part you have acted I look forward to the consequences, direct and collateral, future and remote. Those lovely plants which you have reared I see spreading, and still spreading, from house to house, from family to family, with rich increase of fruit. I see you diffusing virtue and happiness through the human race ; I see generations yet unborn rising up to call you Blessed ! I worship that providence which has destined you for such usefulness, for such felicity. I pity the man that is not charmed with the image of so much excellence ; an


image which, in one degree or another, has been realized by many women of worth and understanding in every age: I will add, an image which, when realized, cannot fail of being contemplated with peculiar delight by all the benevolent spirits of heaven, with the Father and Saviour of the world at their head! and are there, among the sons of men, any that will presume to depreciate such women, to speak of them with an air of superiority, or to suggest that your sex are not capable of filling the important spheres of life?

To quote the words of an old writer: "All mankind is the pupil and disciple of female institution: the daughters till they write women, and the sons till the first seven years be past; the time when the mind is most ductile, and prepared to receive impression, being wholly in the care and conduct of the mother." Alas! my fair country-women, why are not more of you struck with such considerations? Why, ye daughters of Britain, are so many of you insensible to those brightest glories of your sex? Where is your love for your native country, which, by thus, excelling, you might so nobly serve? where your emulation of those Heroic Women, that have in ancient days graced this happy land? How long will you be ambitious of flaunting in French attire, of fluttering about with the levity of that fantastic people! When will you be satisfied with the simplicity of elegance, and the gracefulness of modesty, so becoming in a nation like this, supported by trade, polished by taste, and enlightened by true religion? Say, when will you relinquish delusive pursuits, and dangerous pleasures, the gaze of fools, and the flattery of libertines, for the peace-

ful and solid study of whatever can adorn your nature, do honour to your country, reflect credit on your profession of christianity, give joy to all your connexions, and confer dignity on Woman-kind?

SERMON II.

ON MODESTY OF APPAREL.

1 TIM. ii. 8, 

I will—that women adorn themselves in Modest Apparel.

LET me recall the attention of my female friends to a subject that concerns them highly. I hope that hitherto I have said nothing unkind. I would not rob your sex of a single advantage they possess from nature, providence, or legitimate custom. I would not rob you of the smallest ornament that Judgment has put on, that Prudence allows, or that Decency warrants. On the contrary, I would willingly add to your allurements : I want to see you yet more engaging, to see you still more completely adorned. Superfluous, unbecoming, and unavailing decorations, it is true, I would persuade you to renounce ; but it should be only in order to make room for such as will improve beauty where found, or supply its place where wanting.

Your consequence in the creation I fear not to acknowledge : I feel it all. You have already heard me assert it. I will assert it ever, by pleading your cause against ignorance, prejudice, and malice. Only take care, my dear clients, not to hurt it yourselves. Remember how tender a thing a woman's reputation is, how hard to preserve, and when lost how impossible to recover ; how

frail many, and how dangerous most, of the gifts you have received ; what misery and what shame have been often occasioned by abusing them ! I tremble for your situation. Suffer me again to put you on your guard. My text, you have seen, has nothing in it really severe : St. Paul is, in fact, a better friend to women than has been commonly supposed : he seems to have understood perfectly what became them, and to have consulted their interests more truly than the most passionate of their admirers. While these, by corrupting or misleading you whether with or without design, would lessen your influence, and obstruct your felicity ; he would effectually contribute to both, by inculcating every thing that can make you at once more amiable and more happy.

What I am now to offer will turn on the ornament he first mentions. " I will—that women adorn themselves in Modest Apparel"—in Modest Apparel, as opposed to that which is Indecent, and to that which is Vain : distinctions, whereof the theory, I must confess, it is in many cases not easy, and in some perhaps not practicable, to settle with precision ; such a powerful influence in those matters have custom and the opinion of the world. But in this instance, as in others where the passions are concerned, the strictest casuist will, I presume, be generally the safest. The zeal of the ancient Fathers on such subjects carried some of them far ; farther, I doubt, than the relaxation of modern manners would well bear. Were a young woman now a days, from a peculiar sense of the sacredness and refinement of female virtue, to appear with any very singular severity in her dress, she would hardly, I fear, escape the charge of affectation ; a charge, which every pru-

dent woman will avoid as much as possible. But let the license of the age be what it will, I must needs think that, according to every rule of duty and decorum, there ought ever to be a manifest difference between the attire of a Virtuous Woman, and that of one who has renounced every title to the honourable name. It were indelicate, it is unnecessary, to explain this difference. In some respects, it is sufficiently discerned by the eye of the public; though I am sorry to say, not sufficiently attended to by the generality of women themselves. If, in other respects, it be not seen, or do not strike; the cause, I apprehend, must be that declension from the strictness of morals, which was hinted at a moment before; a declension that would have shocked pagans themselves, in the purest state of ancient manners, when prostitutes were compelled to wear a particular garb, by which they were distinguished from women of virtue.

But to enter more particularly into this first point of Modest Apparel, as opposed to that which a christian woman should hold Indecent.

Image to yourselves a circle composed only of a people who are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, nor in any circumstance afraid to act on that great maxim of our apostle, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." At the same time, let them have all the candour and charity, which the most charitable religion that was ever known can inspire. And now, suppose a young lady dressed up to the height of the present fashion, but a stranger to most of them, drops into their company. In what light, do ye conceive; the manner of her dress would probably appear? The laws of christian candour would naturally prevent them from seeing

her character in a bad light on that account, and would unquestionably incline them to hope the best. But can ye believe that they would approve, or justify, the extreme gaiety and looseness of her attire? Suppose however, that her conversation discovered a good understanding, and that her behaviour had not the least tincture of that levity with which she seemed decked out; that, on the contrary, every part of both was wholly unlike it; (a conjunction by no means impossible;) could they forbear, in that case, to lament the tyranny of the mode, or to regret that a daughter of Wisdom should, notwithstanding her superior descent and noble pretensions, be decorated like the daughters of Folly? But whose judgment, I beseech you, would a young woman, ambitious of regulating her appearance, as well as her dispositions and deportment, on the purest standard, prefer; that of such persons as I have just described; or that of those who either never regarded the precepts and spirit of christianity at all, or who, professing some faint respect for them, yet scruple not to sink them in the spirit and maxims of the world?

Let us put another case, and suppose a young lady educated by a mother, who to the best sense and truest breeding joined the utmost reverence for religion, and the tenderest concern for the soul of her child; qualities which, for the honour of your sex, I hope you will not pronounce incompatible. Let this accomplished parent bestow upon her daughter a culture worthy of herself; instructing her in every thing that can become the Female and the Christian character; among the rest, recommending a lovely Modesty, and graceful simplicity of Apparel, and enforcing all by an example

equally unexceptionable and pleasing. Suppose the daughter to improve these uncommon advantages (for uncommon, I fear, they are) with the strictest care and attention. In what light do ye conceive the very free mode of dress, so generally affected by the sex at present, would appear to her? I am far from thinking she would assume the airs of sanctimonious prudery, or indulge the style of supercilious censure; things totally different from the form of education we have figured her to receive. But would she admire that mode in others? Would she copy it herself? or would she wish her companions to copy it? Would she choose to be intimate with those young ladies that seize every opportunity of exhibiting their charms to the public, and vie with one another who shall most liberally display what her honoured mother taught her more decently to veil?

Is the mode then in question to be considered as inconsistent with the character of a Virtuous Woman? By no means. May not dispositions the most unchaste often hide under the mask of an attire the most modest? Who can doubt it? But what follows? That such attire is not the properest covering of virtue, or what, if left to pursue undisturbed the dictates of delicacy and prudence, she would not readily fly to in a state of civilized society? Will any one say, that they who decline it, best consult either their safety, or their reputation among the wise; that they, who run into all the latitudes allowed by the wantonness of fashion, are sufficiently watchful against temptation themselves, or sufficiently careful not to throw it in the way of others; that beauty may be as secure when most exposed, as when least so; or finally, that instead of "abstaining from all appearance of evil," accord-

ing to the doctrine of a religion which requires the severest vigilance, every appearance of evil may be admitted, in compliance with the practice of a world, where vice steals upon unwary mortals by persuading them to part with their out-guards?

Thus far have we argued for Modesty of Apparel, in opposition to its contrary, upon the general principles of propriety and reputation, of morality and religion. She to whom these principles are familiar, and in whom the feelings that arise out of them are not blunted by too frequent intercourse with the fashionable and the gay, will on this article carry about with her a kind of living standard, which she will be enabled to apply to particular occasions, with a degree of discretion that no rules of ours can teach; and such a one will perceive in our apostle's precept a justness and solidity, of which we do not expect that any speculation of ours should thoroughly convince you, without the concurrence of a virtuous sensibility on your part.

To what has been said in favour of Modest Apparel under this head, I must not forget to add, that it is a powerful attractive to honourable love. The male heart is a study, in which your sex are supposed to be a good deal conversant. Yet in this study, you must give me leave to say, many of them seem to me, but indifferent proficient. To gain men's affections, women in general are naturally desirous. They need not deny, they cannot conceal it. The sexes were made for each other. We wish for a place in your hearts: why should you not wish for one in our's? But how much are you deceived, my fair friends, if you dream of taking that fort by storm! When you show a sweet solicitude to please by every decent, gentle, unaffected attraction, we are soothed, we are sub-

duced, we yield ourselves your willing captives. But if at any time by a forward appearance you betray a confidence in your charms, and by throwing them out upon us all at once, you seem resolved, as it were, to force our admiration ; that moment we are on our guard, and your assaults are vain, provided at least we have any spirit or sentiment. In reality, they who have very little of either, I might have said they who have none, even the silliest, even the loosest men, shall in a sober mood be taken with the bashful air, and reserved dress, of an amiable young woman, infinitely more than they ever were with all the open blaze of laboured beauty, and arrogant claims of undisguised allurements ; the human heart, in its better sensations, being still formed to the love of virtue.

Let me add, that the human imagination hates to be confined. We are never highly delighted, where something is not left us to fancy. This last observation holds true throughout all nature, and all art. But when I speak of these, I must subjoin, that Art being agreeable no further than as it is conformed to Nature, the one will not be wanted in the case before us, if the other be allowed its full influence. What I mean is this ; that supposing a young lady to be deeply possessed with a regard for " whatsoever things are pure, venerable, and " of good report," it will lead to decorum spontaneously, and flow with unstudied propriety through every part of her attire and demeanour. Let it be likewise added, that Simplicity, the inseparable companion both of genuine grace, and of real modesty, if it do not always strike at first, (of which it seldom fails,) is sure however, when it does strike, to produce the deepest and most perma-

ment impressions : which brings me by an easy transition to

The second part of the present consideration, that of Modest Apparel, as opposed to what may be styled Vain. I can never think of this, without recollecting in general (for who can remember the particulars of) the catalogue given by the prophet Isaiah of the various implements and instruments of dress used by the daughters of Zion in his time. Isaiah is by all acknowledged the Prince of the Prophets, in an evangelical view : yet he did not deem it beneath the dignity of his commission, to descend into the most minute detail on such a subject ; a circumstance which, it is hoped, may soften the severity of censure against the preacher of this hour, if the spirit of criticism, or the spirit of scrupulosity, should be disposed to condemn his well meant endeavour. The passage I now refer to is in the third chapter of Isaiah, towards the end, where the prophet having, in the name of God, complained of the pride and wantonness of those eastern females, and threatened them with disease and infamy on that account, goes on to mention “ the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon ; the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers ; the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs ; and the head-bands, and the tablets, and the ear-rings ; the rings and nose-jewels ; the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins ; the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.” On the first reading of this catalogue, it must be owned one can scarce forbear to smile. But to those unhappy women who gave

occasion for it, nothing, alas! could be more serious, of you attend to the denunciations which both precede and follow it. I leave you to peruse them at your leisure. They are in the style of the country and age in which they were uttered. I am sure they convey a loud lesson to this. Whether the daughters of our Zion, in the present very polite generation, and especially in this most polite city, do or do not outstrip those Jewish ladies of old, we cannot take upon us to determine. But were we inclined to indulge a vein of ridicule on female folly, here methinks we might have ample scope. We are not inclined to indulge it. We reflect on these things with real concern; and with the utmost seriousness conjure our countrywomen to reform whatever is indecent, and to retrench whatever is exorbitant in their attire.

That there are stations and circumstances, in which splendour of dress is perfectly allowable, may extremely proper, none, I think, but the narrowest minds, will deny. For my own part, I freely acknowledge that I love to see a woman genteelly habited, if her situation admit of it. In truth, splendour without gentility, as well in this as in every other article where ornament is concerned, will ever seem poor and insipid to all but untaught and vulgar spirits; whereas, on the other side, it is certain, that the latter may very well subsist without the former; nor is its effect ever felt more strongly, or more happily, than when it receives no assistance from the other, but results solely from our perceptions of elegant simplicity. I say Elegant Simplicity; an object, which appears to me deserving of more attention than is commonly paid it by your sex.

In affairs of this kind, it is but just to allow to women a degree of curiosity and care, which the laws of good sense, sound philosophy, and masculine virtue, refuse to men: a distinction so true, so universal, and so palpable, that those of the last, who betray a particular solicitude in adorning their persons beyond cleanliness and a certain graceful ease, seldom fail to make themselves little, in the eyes of every man who is not himself effeminate, and of any woman too who is not a slave to fashion. How contemptible many of our young men must necessarily appear to such, it is not easy to express. But of seeing them become truly Men in this instance, any more than in others that might be named, I despair; while so many of our young women give so visible a preference to embroidery, finery, and foppish manners, above a plain coat, a cultivated understanding, and a manly deportment. It will be always so, till they acquire a taste for plainness, sobriety, and wisdom, in what relates to themselves. But that must begin by restraining, in every possible way, the foolish and pernicious passion I am speaking of; for a foolish and pernicious passion I scruple not to pronounce it.

Is there any probability, that those who are entirely under its power will take delight in domestic, intellectual, or spiritual improvements? Is not a constant pursuit of trivial ornament an indubitable proof of a trivial mind? Will she that is always looking into her glass, be much disposed to look into her character? Is the spending of whole hours every morning at the toilet, a likely method of marking the rest of the day down for wisdom? Is vanity favourable to devotion, or self-conceit the parent of self-correction? Will that young woman who hopes to captivate by dress, or by appearance alone,

be very anxious about any better recommendation? If to sparkle here for a few years be the supreme ambition, hereafter will be hardly thought of. The flattery of every fool will be preferred to the approbation of angels; and a connexion with some wretched creature (wretched indeed must he be who is caught by mere show!) will be ardently sought, while the friendship of God is neglected. What shall I say more? For a mortal and immortal being, who has many an error to correct, many a passion to mortify, many a virtue to practise, and who, if she live, may probably have important service to render society—for such a being to lavish the principal portion of her time and study on the decoration of a body that will soon, that may suddenly, become the prey of creeping things—Gracious God, what folly, what madness!

Are there no allowances then to be made? Allowances for what? For the vanity of a young mind. Most certainly, if by this plea you mean to extenuate the guilt of such a conduct. But would you offer to excuse it? Would you pretend to justify a reasonable creature in acting, habitually, and wilfully, a most unreasonable part; in sacrificing her improvement, her salvation, her prospects of usefulness and dignity of life, the best interests of this world, as well as the everlasting concerns of the next, to the idol Dress? For so I state it. I suppose, and would to God it were not too common a case! that this miserable idol is suffered to swallow up the consideration of all that is solid, rational, and praiseworthy: to consume those precious hours that were allotted for the most valuable purposes; and, in place of securing the great ends of existence both present and future, to pervert the capacities of nature, the acquirements of educa-

tion, and the bounties of providence—to pervert them to the low design of being admired for embellishments that imply no merit in the wearer, and can confer no honour in the eye of any but the worthless and the vain. Can such a conduct, I say, be thought innocent, or in any respect consistent with the rules of christianity, or of conscience?

That the idol I speak of renders its votaries unhappy even in this world, is a fact daily experienced. But who can describe the profusion of expense, with the painful and pitiful shifts that are often necessary to support it; the encroachments on health, the hurry of spirits, the travail of fancy; the degradation of being frequently, for whole hours, under the confident hands of the meanest of mankind; together with all the anxieties of heart, the agonies of rivalry, the deep-felt disgrace on being disappointed of conquest, or of fame; the distraction and despair on being outshone by—a Finer Gown; in a word, all the ridiculous and all the deserved distress, to which they are perpetually exposed?

I have just mentioned encroachments on health. These indeed, as well as the rest, are little considered by a young lady keen in the pursuit of show and admiration. But if she be not apprehensive of their consequences, in relation to life, and comfort, and ease, I wonder she is not immediately alarmed at their effects, with regard to that very appearance which is her favourite object. I wonder she does not perceive at once, how much her bloom and sprightliness, the lustre of her eyes, and the freshness of her form, are impaired by such endless, such enormous fatigue, agitation, and irregularity. I am astonished she does not re-

flect, that she is taking the most effectual methods to shorten that period of youth, on which her triumphs depend. Mistaken creature ! thou art cruelly hastening on the time, when thou shalt be frightened to look at thyself ; when not only thy mind, but thy face, shall be “ sicklied o’er with the “ pale cast of thought ;” when languor, disease, and depression, shall undermine and destroy every remaining allurement, and leave thee to lament too late the jading course thou hast run. You forget also that dressing up beauty continually, wears it out ; that, like strength, or study, or business, it requires the frequent intermission of its toils ; but that, more than any of them, it is enfeebled by constant exertion ; and that the arts commonly made use of to heighten and repair it, only accelerate and increase its decay, while the complexion, the skin, and the hair, are all unnaturally disguised and tortured.

Did not this shameful passion destroy, or deaden in a great measure, the worthier sensibilities of good nature, I should also mention here the more serious and important distresses, in which they involve others.—But the stretches of credit to parents, the inconveniences to many families, the ruin to not a few, the losses to tradesmen, who are often not paid, the hardships to a vast variety of people whose sufferings are little thought of amidst the glare of ostentation and the triumph of fancy, it were impossible fully to paint. Who does not know, that the parade of one gaudy evening shall sometimes subject a score of honest citizens to difficulties for a whole month ? Is this christian ? Is this humane ? But where the fury of dress tyrannizes, how can the gentle pleadings of Charity hope to be heard ? And as to Charity’s eldest daughter, Be-

neficence, what chance has she, in general, to contend with that mighty sorceress, the Mode? Those streams which heaven has committed to the direction of the former, for the refreshment of industry, and the comfort of affliction; how often are they diverted with sacrilegious violence to the feeding of pride!

But the present age, it will be said, is distinguished by the most diffusive, the most illustrious works of humanity, both private and public. We own it, and rejoice in the effect. Far from denying the people of this country any of their just honours, we are almost tempted to speak of them with exultation. But—I wish the works in question may not be frequently performed by way of atonement for certain fashionable vices, which it is too easy to reconcile with them.—“Charity hotheth all things.”—I know it, and do verily believe that even now, addicted as the world is to ostentation, there are many, very many characters, who nobly deny themselves for the sake of others; or rather, who find the highest indulgence in consecrating to objects of benevolence and piety a large share of their fortunes, without seeking by such means to purchase a dispensation for criminal pursuits. But forgive me, if I say, with regard to numbers, that the flagrant affectation of shining in public, and the dreadful passions thence arising in private life, are not easily reconciled with real principles of religious munificence. These, I know, are unpopular ideas. I am sorry for it; but their being so is no reason why we should suppress them; it is the very reverse.

To the arguments already urged several may be added. It may deserve your consideration,

In the first place, that to cultivate cleanliness and finery at the same time, is rather perhaps a difficult attainment. Your sex is much belied, if it be a very common one. This I think, is certain, that to attend with exactness to one object at once, is ordinarily sufficient employment for the mind. But can any degree of finery compensate the want of cleanliness? A dirty woman—I turn from the shocking idea, to mention,

In the next place, that engaging thing hinted at before, Simplicity of Dress. In all the sciences, in every valuable profession, in the common intercourse of life, and let me add, even in the sublimest subjects, Simplicity is that which above every thing else touches and delights. Without it, indeed, all else is feeble and unaffecting. Where simplicity is wanting, men may be dazzled for a moment. Mere splendour will strike them at first; but on reflection they will soon discover, that splendour of itself, like every other idol is nothing. On the other hand, where Simplicity, the sister of Truth, appears, the attraction is eternal. Hence the never-failing entertainment and instruction derived from the works of antiquity in all the fine arts; of which, I suppose for that reason, chiefly, they remain to this day, and will ever remain, the sovereign standards. Those amongst the moderns, who have in this respect copied them most happily, have been always most admired. To instance in the art of painting, with a more immediate reference to our subject; what honour has been acquired by such of its professors as have approached nearest to the noble simplicity of ancient workmanship! Its business, we know, is most particularly with Beauty, in all her finest forms. That, I presume, was never studied more

successfully by any, than by the great Raphael. But who, that has an eye for such objects, can avoid being struck with the chaste, sober, and unaffected graces of his females? And as to his manner of clothing them, what remarkable plainness; what delightful modesty, even where the colours and stuffs are intended to be richest! How different from those painters of the Gothic style, who, not understanding the distinction between ornament, and finery, which is its excess; between beauty, and show, which is the affectation of it: load their women with jewels, trappings, and other embellishments, magnificent indeed, but tawdry!

Nor is the grand principle of Simplicity confined to the imitative arts; it runs through all. Hence, in a great measure, the peculiar satisfaction derived from the company of a man well bred and worthy at the same time. He looks, he speaks, he moves with a modest ease; there is nothing artificial or studied in his conversation and deportment. Hence too the superior pleasure from the prospect of a garden laid out with taste, in which the views are natural, ample, and unforced, above that of seeing one cut into a thousand little parterres, and encumbered with a croud of laboured conceits. Let me subjoin, hence the inexpressible power and majesty of Holy Writ itself, even abstracted from its divine original. And, to come to the case directly before us, hence the resistless charm which attends a Virtuous woman attired with plainness and judgment; two things, which, making allowance for the mutability and caprice of fashion in circumstances of less moment, will always give the most genuine and lasting content.

The neat appearance of many females belonging to a sect well known, has been frequently remarked, and generally admired. It would be much more agreeable, could it be disjoined from the stiffness that accompanies it: a defect utterly inconsistent with the rules of taste. But those people are taught to despise every thing of this kind, and to understand literally such passages of scripture as seem to prohibit sumptuous apparel. In short, they plead religious principle for the form of their attire. We should believe them, but for the richness of the materials, and the fineness of the texture. Many of that sect are very intelligent: can they persuade themselves, that through all their affectation of plainness, the world does not perceive the utmost pride of expense?

On this article your judgment will be seen in joining frugality and simplicity together; in being never fond of finery; in carefully distinguishing between what is glaring, and what is genteel; in preserving elegance with the plainest habit; in wearing costly array but seldom, and always with ease; a point, that may be attained by her who has learnt not to think more highly of herself for the richest raiment she can put on.

Were a system of this kind to prevail, I cannot help thinking, that the effects would be beneficial and happy. What sums would be saved, where they ought to be saved, for more valuable ends! What sums would be kept at home, that now go abroad to enrich our most dangerous rivals! French gewgaws would give place to British manufactures. The ladies of this island, inferior to none in beauty, would be the apes of none in dress. They would practise that species of patriotism, which is the most proper for their sex; they would serve their country

in their own way. How many evils to the community, to private families, and to individuals, would be prevented! If in some of the most expensive parts of female decoration fewer hands were employed, a much greater number on the other side would find exercise in cultivating an elegant propriety, and a beautiful diversity, through all the rest. The public taste would be improved in a thousand articles. And is there not reason to hope, that the appearance, the manners, and the minds of the Fair, would gain by the change?

They would be less showy indeed; but they would be more engaging. Our gay assemblies, for gay assemblies there will always be, would glitter less in the gaze of foolish wonder; but they would shine more in the eye of just discernment. And what honour would it reflect on your understandings, when in company, to see you superior to your dress, entirely forgetting that, and every other advantage you may possess, in an obliging attention to all present, and lending lustre to each ornament, instead of borrowing it merely from thence! Or will any of you say, that a woman on the contrary is likely to be more esteemed, for appearing attentive to herself alone, or trying to catch by so poor a bait, as a little gay clothing? She who does either, piques our pride, and offends our judgment, at the same instant. We are hurt by her bad breeding, in the one case; and in the other, we are provoked to think she should pay us such a sorry compliment, as to fancy we can be entangled in a cobweb.

When shall women, in general, understand thoroughly the effect of a comely habit, that, independent of pomp and despising extravagance, is worn as the sober, yet transparent veil of a more

comely mind?† Be assured, my young friends, it is thus that you will captivate most and please longest. By pursuing this plan, you will preserve an equality in that great indispensable article of neatness. You will be clean, and you will be easy; nor will you be in danger of appearing butterflies one day, and slatterns the next. You will be always ready to receive your friends, without seeming to be caught, or being at all disconcerted on account of your dress. How seldom is that the case amongst the flutterers of the age! I wish we could say, amongst them only. For young ladies of more sobriety to be found so often slovenly, I might have said downright squalid and nasty, when no visitors are expected, is most peculiarly shameful. I cannot express the contempt and the disgust I feel, when I think of it. I will not think of it.

I proceed to observe, that what you take from tinsel trappings you will gain in time, in saving, and in real loveliness. The less vanity you betray, the more merit we shall be always disposed to allow you. We shall be doubly charmed, first with finding young women that are not slaves to show, and next with your putting so much respect on our heads and hearts, as to suppose we are only to be gained by better qualities.

Add to this, that men of ordinary fortunes, and proper sentiments, will not be afraid of connecting themselves with persons too prudent to be profuse, and too wise, as well as too worthy, when married, to court the admiration of all—but their Husbands.

The unbounded and undistinguishing love of admiration, has been thought the most common, the rankest, and the most noxious weed, that grows in the heart of a female. It is nourished by nothing

more than by the love of finery. In effect, they depend on each other. But if you will begin by crushing the latter; the former, I am persuaded, will quickly decay, and at last fall to the ground. The love of finery naturally prompts the passion to be seen, that is, to be admired; for between these a conceited young creature makes no distinction. Alas! what woman is there at any age, who, if devoted to dress, burns not with impatience to display in public a new fashion, or a new any thing, which she has been told by those about her, or by her own imagination, looks exceeding fine? And of this impatience what is the source, but that very passion which I just now called the unbounded and undistinguishing love of admiration? The mischiefs flowing from thence have been touched upon in part. They will be farther traced hereafter. At present I shall only add, what ought to alarm women of decency, that an immoderate fondness for external embellishment is a strong temptation to a light and lascivious mind.

From the passage of Isaiah before quoted, compared with the verse immediately preceding, it appears that, in the case there pointed to, an indecent deportment was closely connected with an excessive vanity in apparel. And from the whole of that discourse it is manifest, the behaviour of the daughters of Zion at that time was highly displeasing to the Almighty; which could only proceed from the influence their behaviour had upon their dispositions, or reciprocally from the latter as giving birth to the former. How applicable the observation to the case of many females at this day!

But has it not been too much the manner amongst preachers of every age, to decry that in which they

lived, as having remarkably degenerated from those that went before, and to denounce peculiar judgments accordingly? It often has, no doubt. And so far certainly they have forgotten the caution of Solomon; "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." A mistake we would willingly avoid. Such complaints, when indulged indiscriminately, are either the dictates of a gloomy querulous temper, or the trite and unmeaning declamation of mere popular preaching. I trust, we shall be charged with neither in saying, that to this nation there can accrue no good from the spirit of luxury, of levity, and of vice, so prevalent, and so spreading, in a sex that leads the world.

SERMON III.

ON FEMALE RESERVE.

1 TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themselves with Shamefacedness.

MANY of you, my honoured hearers, have been addressed in the style of love and admiration. I have taken the liberty to address you in that of zeal and friendship; a style not less sincere, or the less worthy of your attention, for being sober and impartial. Will you permit me to proceed in the same manner? Suppose me speaking to you as a brother. It will be more than a supposition. Have we not all one father by creation, even the great God; and by religion, is not the New Jerusalem the mother of us all? With a brother's affection then I will go on to lay before you some better ornaments than wealth can purchase, in which I wish my beloved sisters to shine, that they may appear as becomes their high birth, and the noble expectations they are encouraged to entertain.

After modest apparel our apostle mentions Shamefacedness. "I will—that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with Shamefacedness." This lovely quality, in its largest extent, and in its most pleasing effect on female manners, shall be the subject of our present medita-

tion. It is an ornament equally necessary and wise.

I. It is a necessary ornament, considered, I mean, in a moral and religious light. I would only premise, that the amiable reserve, termed by St. Paul Shamefacedness, is something widely distant from those airs of disdain, those pretences of aversion to men, which we now and then meet with in your sex. I said pretences: For no degree of candour can persuade us to believe that such women, generally speaking, do not play a part, and under the mask of this seeming severity, this violent affectation of virtue, harbour passions of a very different kind. Who does not know, that the greatest prudes have often dropt their disguise at last; and betrayed such dispositions as many a young woman of good nature, and courteous behaviour, is incapable of indulging? Every thing overdone is liable to suspicion. Innocence in women wants not the aid of ostentation: like integrity in men, it rests in its own consciousness. Not so, however, as to neglect the rules of prudence and circumspection. To say the truth, prudery is not the prevailing evil of the times. Female modesty, even where it is most real, is in little danger, as the world goes, of being carried to an extreme. In the gayer part of the world, how seldom, alas! does it rise to the Shamefacedness enjoined in our text, and which on the very first hearing, suggests the idea of a virtuous bashfulness. This beautiful grace,

“Clear Chaastity

“With blushes redd’ning as she moves along,
“Disorder’d at the deep regard she draws;”

whither is she retired? Where is the charming original, from which the poet drew so sweet a picture?

—Has Virtue then forsaken the sex? God forbid. But I am bold to say, her favourite walks are not in those places of public entertainment, now so fondly frequented by so many women. She loves the shade. There she finds herself most secure from the blights of calumny, and the heats of temptation. Ah! ye mothers of this land, how can you expose so rashly those tender blossoms committed to your care? Have ye forgotten that every unkindly breath is ready to blast them? Are ye ignorant, how soon the whitest innocence may be sullied; that it is possible even for the strictest principles to be corrupted? Is there nothing in your own minds that whispers the frailty of your sex?

But you plead the necessity of allowing to youth a little amusement, of showing your daughters a little of the world, of preventing, or rubbing off the awkwardness, that is apt to adhere to young persons who are confined at home. You urge the propriety of convincing them by comparison, how much the calm and rational pleasures of that home are preferable to the noise and giddy diversions usually found abroad; that in the latter there is nothing so wonderfully fine, so irresistibly alluring, as their youthful fancies, or the information of others, might lead them to suppose.

We admit your arguments, so far as they go. Keep within these bounds, and be blameless. But do the parents of the present generation commonly keep within them? Are not many of those parents as fond of gaiety and show as the merest girl can possibly be? Is it surprising to see the daughters of such become very early the votaries of Folly, when every other day or night they are conducted in triumph to her temples, without any precaution, any previous pains taken to instruct them in the

emptiness and worthlessness of the object worshipped there; worshipped with every circumstance that can serve to propagate the idolatry, while the poor innocents are inflamed by the concurrence of company, dress, flattery, example; the example of those whom, by nature and education, they are disposed to respect most highly, and to imitate most implicitly? It were strange indeed, if in this situation their too susceptible hearts should escape the fashionable contagion. But what can be said for those, who thus directly, and with their eyes open, lead their children into a snare?—Cease, thou restless and raging spirit of hell, who art “going about seeking whom thou mayest devour,” cease thy cruel toil. The parents of Britain render it needless. The mothers of the church hasten to bring thee their little lambs, as if impatient for the pleasure of presenting them.—Excuse, ye better characters, this transport of indignation, kindled by an impiety which you are not capable of committing. I think with honour of all who truly merit the parental name. May the father of the world increase their number, and multiply their joys! But for those wicked—I turn from them to you, ye pretty helpless creatures, who have lost—it may be, happily—merciful heaven! must I say happily lost your parents? or whose parents yet alive, but lost to themselves and to their offspring, have in the blindness of indulgence, or the barbarity of neglect, abandoned you to your own untutored conduct. Let me warn you of your danger. If there be no other friend to show a solicitude for your welfare, allow me at least to have that satisfaction.

Reflect, my sisters, on all I have said concerning your importance in life; and look beyond life’s narrow boundary. Consider everlasting consequen-

ces. Contemplate approaching judgment. You have received from the Almighty your bodies, and your souls, unstained by dishonour. You will be soon required to restore them immaculate. You belong to a society, for which your saviour "gave himself, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Think of this. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

The love of promiscuous amusement, how innocent soever it may often seem, and sometimes be, ensnares multitudes of your sex. Their earliest days are marked by a mixture of sprightliness and simplicity. They run, they laugh, they prattle; and then they often blush, for fear of having offended. As they grow up, their sensibilities become more enlightened, and more awake. They blush oftener. It is the precious colouring of virtue, as one has happily phrased it. They contract a quicker perception of what is decent, and of what is wise. A sweet timidity was given them to guard their innocence, by inclining them to shrink from whatever might threaten to injure it. Their passions, as they rise, are restrained from exorbitance, by a secret sentiment of shame and honour. In this state of mind, they come to hear much concerning public diversions. The description is frequently repeated, and always exaggerated. Their curiosity takes fire; they are eager to participate. They are indulged once, a second, a third time, often, without control. By little and little their natural fearfulness begins to abate. For a while they are shocked with signs of rudeness. Their ears are wounded by the language of vice: Oaths, impre-

cations, double meanings, every thing obscene fills them with disgust and horror. But custom soon begets familiarity; and familiarity produces indifference. The emotions of delicacy are less frequent, less strong. And now they seldom blush, although perhaps they often affect it. At the image of sin they tremble no longer; their minds are already debauched. All the internal fences of modesty are broken down. Can you wonder, if it be then easily assailed from without? But what if it be not? What if appearances be still preserved, if open scandal be not incurred, or if secret enormity should be always avoided? Is it enough for a young woman to be free from infamy, from crimes? Between the state of virgin purity and actual prostitution are there no intermediate degrees? Is it nothing to have the soul deflowered, the fancy polluted, the passions flung into a ferment? Say, is it nothing to forfeit inward freedom and self-possession? The beauty, the dignity, the tranquillity of conscious virtue—are all these of no account? Such indeed one would think were the opinion of those, who imagine there can be no harm in a passion for places of entertainment; because, say they, all attacks on the honour of persons who resort thither are precluded. Be that as it may, I must ever maintain, that young women of principle will be cautious of frequenting scenes where Shamefacedness, at once the companion and the guardian of female innocence is in danger of being lost. But I add, that every prudent young woman also will be extremely wary in this particular; because,

II. The ornament we now recommend is as wise, as it is necessary. (There is nothing so engaging as bashful beauty.) The beauty that obtrudes itself, how considerable soever, will either disgust, or at

most excite but inferior desires. (Men are so made.) They refuse their admiration, where it is courted;) where it seems rather shunned, they love to bestow it. The retiring graces have been always the most attractive.

You remember the representation which Milton puts into Adam's mouth on his first meeting with our general mother. How beautiful and how delicate!

"She heard me thus, and tho' divinely brought,
 "Yet innocence and virgin modesty,
 "Her virtue and the conscience of her worth,
 "That would be woo'd, and not unsought be won,
 "Not obvious, not obtrusive, but retir'd
 "The more desirable; or, to say all,
 "Nature herself, tho' pure of sinful thought,
 "Wrought in her so, that seeing me she turn'd.
 "I followed her. She what was honour knew,
 "And with obsequious majesty approved
 "My pleaded reason. To the nuptial bower
 "I led her blushing like the morn."

But this was only the poet's fancy. True. Yet the poet knew the sexes well, and seems to have studied yours particularly. He painted from the completest standards he could find. His picture of Eve in her state of innocence, may be considered as the model of a woman most amiably feminine; in whom his imagination, alike exalted and correct, could figure nothing so alluring,

"As those graceful acts,
 "Those thousand decencies that daily flow
 "From all her words and actions."

What mind of any worth can forbear to be charmed with the description you have just heard?

To say the truth, there is not, I verily believe, a man living, who in his sober senses would not prefer a modest to an impudent woman. An impudent woman—Who can tell which is greater, the disgrace thrown upon humanity by such a character, or the honour reflected on our natures by that abhorrence, which is raised by the bare idea in every breast not totally degenerate?

Surely it deserves your notice, what pains the all-presiding power has graciously taken to show his care of female virtue, not only by impressing the minds of your sex with that deep and lively sense of reputation, which is one of its most powerful preservatives, but also by forming the minds of ours with so high an esteem for every indication of chastity in women, and with so strong a disapprobation of the contrary. That esteem, and this disapprobation, it is certain, are felt by the men, whensoever reason is permitted to take place of appetite; and these indications are perfectly and universally intelligible. I say not, that those of the last kind are always apparent, where women have given themselves up to vice; but, I apprehend, they are so for the greater part. This breach of her most sacred law, the justice of Nature has generally branded with a look and manner peculiarly characteristic and significant; as, on the other side, she has always (I think, always) marked the genuine feelings of modesty with a look and manner no less correspondent and impressive.

In the latter case, she seems to say to us men, pointing to her yet uncorrupted daughters, 'Behold these smiling innocents, whom I have graced with my fairest gifts, and committed to your protection? behold them with love and respect; treat them with tenderness and honour. They are timid, and want to be defended. They are frail;

• O do not take advantage of their weakness.
 • Let their fears and blushes endear them. Let
 • their confidence in you never be abused——But
 • is it possible, that any of you can be such barba-
 • rians, so supremely wicked, as to abuse it? Can
 • ye find in your hearts to despoil the gentle trust-
 • ing creatures of their treasure, or do any thing
 • to strip them of their native robe of virtue?
 • Curst be the impious hand that would dare to
 • violate the unblemished form of Chastity! Thou
 • wretch! thou ruffian! forbear; nor venture to
 • provoke heaven's fiercest vengeance.

In the other case, the same parental power,
 equally watchful for all her children, seems to
 cast an eye of awful reproach on such of her daugh-
 ters as are unhappily abandoned, and, raising her
 voice to address our sex to this purpose: 'Flee,
 • my sons, flee these destructive Syrens. They
 • smile, only to tempt; and they tempt, in order
 • to devour. Once indeed they shone in many
 • of my sweetest charms. These are no more.
 • They have forgotten to blush; their foreheads are
 • hardened into shamelessness. Their eyes for-
 • merly soft, virtuous, and downcast; those very
 • eyes that effused the soul of innocence, have
 • learnt to stare, and roll with unbounded wanton-
 • ness; to dart nothing but unholy fire. Their
 • hands are the hands of Harpies. Their feet go
 • down to death, and their steps take hold on hell.'

This account of those wretched beings will be
 always true in part. The profligate and the foolish,
 that are taken in their toils, shall some time or
 other be sure to repent it. Nevertheless it must
 be owned, there are of them who, with hearts of
 adamant to the best impressions, and without any
 remains of natural modesty, yet practise the art of

feigning its decent demeanour; one of the strongest arguments that can be conceived in its favour!

Yes, those more accomplished ensnarers are sufficiently aware, that there is no allurements equal to that of maiden virtue; and therefore, having lost the reality, they study to retain the appearance. In this instance, no doubt, as in numberless others, the operations of Nature may be counteracted by violence, and her most speaking features silenced by dissimulation. But ah, how much more easy, pleasant, noble and happy, to be virtuous, than only to seem so! that vicegerent of God within us, Conscience, will not bear the abuse calmly. All essential transgressions of order, how successful soever they may outwardly appear, shall certainly be punished by inward disquietude, and home-felt meanness. But the truth is, that the art of dissembling, in the case before us, seldom succeeds so far, as not to be seen through on many occasions; and when it is, the contempt and aversion produced by it are only heightened by those attempts to impose. Of this be assured, that to the sense of decency there is nothing more disgusting than the notion of a young woman who cannot be put out of countenance. In our sex, the character of being lost to shame is scandalous; but in yours—who can describe the detestation it excites?

Next to this is the dislike we feel to her who has contracted a certain briskness of air and levity of deportment, which, though by good nature, or the courtesy of custom, distinguished from the brazen front and bold attack of the prostitute, does yet, I cannot help saying, approach too near them, and can never, I am sure, be pleasing to men of sentiment. Such an air and deportment, I well

know, are by many esteemed marks of spirit. It may be so. I am willing at least to believe, that no real harm is meant by numbers who affect them. But surely they are the worst kind of affectation. I had rather a thousand times see a young lady carry her bashfulness too far, than pique herself on the freedom of her manners.

A masculine woman must be naturally an unamiable creature. I confess myself shocked, whenever I see the sexes confounded. An effeminate fellow, that, destitute of every manly sentiment, copies with inverted ambition from your sex, is, an object of contempt and aversion at once. On the other hand, any young woman of better rank that throws off all the lovely softness of her nature, and emulates the daring intrepid temper of a man—how terrible! The transformation on either side must ever be monstrous. Is not this shadowed out to us in that particular prohibition of the Jewish law, which says, “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man: neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment. For all that do so are abomination to the Lord.” Such confusion of apparel was to be considered as renouncing, in effect, the distinction of form, which the Almighty had established in the creation. To this unnatural mode do we not sometimes observe a visible tendency in our days? But what though the dress be kept ever so distinct, if the behaviour be not; in those points, I mean, where the character peculiar to each sex seems to require a difference? There a metamorphosis in either will always offend an eye that is not greatly vitiated. It will do so particularly in your sex. By dint of assiduity and flattery, fortune and show, a Female Man shall sometimes succeed strangely with the women.:

but to the men an Amazon never fails to be forbidding. Are none of you, my fair hearers, in danger of roughening into this ungracious figure? How readily it is assumed, in those scenes where the ignorance of youth co-operates with the magic of fashion, many of you perhaps will not suspect.

Men, I presume, are in general better judges than women, of the deportment of women. Whatever affects them from your quarter they feel more immediately. You slide insensibly into a certain cast of manners; you perceive not the gradations; you do not see yourselves at a proper distance. If the effect produced be on the whole disagreeable, self-love will not be the first to discover it. Men, it is true, are often dazzled by youth, vivacity, and beauty; but yet at times they will look at you with a cooler eye, and a closer inspection, than you apprehend; at least, when they have opportunities of seeing you in private company.

In splendid crowds all is dissipated, because all is garish. The multiplicity of objects scatters and distracts; nothing is felt or thought of, in the way of either serious reflection, or serious passion. How much misjudged is an excessive fondness for such scenes! Believe me, they are not the places, where the heart is most apt to be touched.

At any rate, the majesty of the sex is sure to suffer by being seen too frequently, and too familiarly. Discreet reserve in a woman, like the distance kept by royal personages, contributes to maintain the proper reverence. Most of our pleasures are prized in proportion to the difficulty with which they are obtained. The sight of beauty may be justly reckoned in that number. Nothing can be more impolitic in young ladies, than to make it cheap. "So long," says a lively author, "as they govern

"themselves by the exact rules of prudence and modesty, their lustre is like the meridian sun in its clearness, which, though less approachable, is counted more glorious ; but when they decline from those, they are like that sun in a cloud, which, though safer gazed on, is not half so bright."

Even the worst men are struck by the sovereignty of female worth unambitious of appearing. But if a young person (supposing her dispositions in other respects ever so good) will be always breaking loose through each domestic inclosure, and ranging at large the wide common of the world, those destroyers will see her in a very different point of light. They will consider her as lawful game, to be hunted down without hesitation. And if her virtue, or (which to a woman is in effect nearly the same) her reputation, should be lost, what will it avail the poor wanderer, to plead that she meant only a little harmless amusement, and never thought of straying into the abhorred paths of vice?

With regard to the opinion of the better sort of men, I will tell you a secret. If in the flutter of too public a life you should at any time so far forget yourselves, as to drop that nice decorum of appearance and manner, which is expected from your sex, particularly from the younger part of it, they will be tempted to harbour suspicions which I dare not name ; that is, many of them will. The rest, who know you better, or have more charity, will be hurt to think you should expose yourselves to a degree of censure, which in reality you do not deserve. Yet none of them hardly will be kind enough to offer you a friendly hint of what so much concerns you ; not even where it

might be done with the most perfect propriety. Their general inclination to good nature, their love of amusement in their turn, and their finding it most readily in the society of your sex, will dispose them to laugh with you very freely. Intimacy will lead on to a kind of attachment. They will often entertain you with no little gallantry; sometimes perhaps at an expense which they can ill afford. In a word, they will be mightily pleased with you as the companion for an hour. Companions for life, if they ever think of such, they will look out for elsewhere. They will then make the necessary discrimination; I mean, if they be wise and honest enough to marry from choice. They will then try if they can find women well-bred and soberminded at the same time, of a cheerful temper with sedate manners; women, of whom they may hope that they will love home, be attached to their husbands, attentive to their families, reasonable in their wishes, moderate in their expenses, and not addicted to external show. Having found them, whether with or without fortune, (that will never be their prime consideration,) they will endeavour to gain them by another sort of style and behaviour, than they used towards you. Far other sentiments far other emotions, will then possess them. In short, their hearts will be then engaged; and if they should be happy enough to obtain the much wished for objects, then, with a joy unfelt before, they will form the tenderest of all connections; leaving you where they found you, as widely removed as ever from the truest pleasures, and the fairest prospects, that humanity knows; the pleasures which are enjoyed at home, and the prospects which include a family.

But many of you, I fear, will smile at all this, trusting to the flatterer Beauty, that, whenever you shall please, you cannot fail to fix your men; and so, in the gaiety of your spirits, you continue to exhibit that beauty as usual, and to dance along through the giddy maze. Not to insist, at present, how precarious and transient an attendant this arch-flatterer has always proved, I must remind you, that a face hackneyed in the public eye, how striking soever when first seen, or how handsome soever it may yet remain, loses much of its power to please. Every new appearance takes something from its charms; and for one instance wherein this kind of exhibition succeeds, how many might be named in which young women once extolled, and run after every where, have lived to tread the beaten round, unpraised, neglected, forlorn!

No, those large promiscuous circles are not the scenes where the heart is commonly interested. Virtuous love, like true devotion, flies from noise, seeks retreat, and delights to indulge itself, unobserved by all but the object of its veneration.

That respectful modesty, which attends it on the part of the man, is maintained and exalted by nothing so much as an unaffected bashfulness on the woman's side. But this last, which properly speaking is the flower of female chastity, is of a nature so delicate and tender, as always to thrive best in places the least frequented. What pity, when, instead of being sheltered and cherished with care, it is heedlessly exposed to the wanton gaze of every wandering eye, to the cruel hand of every rude, or of every sly invader! Can any entertainment, or any admiration, the public has power to offer, compensate the loss of this enchanting quality?

Say not that it is incompatible with politeness, or with affability. We have seen it accompanied with the sweetest affability, and with the most perfect politeness. Depend upon it, that the best breeding is not learnt by rambling from one assembly, and one diversion, to another; but by living among the best bred people, by cultivating a fund of goodness in the heart, and possessing the advantage of a well educated mind.

After what you have heard, I hope you will not imagine, that the Bashfulness I plead for tends to obstruct any one view, which it becomes a wise and worthy woman to entertain. Some men, I confess, may be flattered by forward advances from those of your sex, whom the ingenious Mr. Richardson used to term Seekers. But is there not reason to apprehend, that when they come to reflect coolly, their esteem will not be lasting, where the foundation of it is not natural? There are other men, it is but fair to tell you, who will appear delighted with this kind of courtship, pretend the highest regard, pay you a world of compliments by which they mean nothing, and swear to the first worthless companion they meet, that you have a design upon them. Can you bear the thought of exposing yourselves to such an imputation? How mortifying, on those occasions, to hear a girl seriously boast of her imaginary conquest! How weak in her, to fancy that every man who flatters her, not to say every man who treats her with the attention to which your sex are entitled, is a lover!

I speak not of those more deserving females, whose peace of mind has been cruelly sported with, by a species of poltrons, the disgrace of their sex, the reverse of all that is brave and humane; whose business and boast it is, to inveigle the affections of virtuous women by endless obsequiousness,

and solemn professions, that seem to imply every thing just and kind, till they have undone the credulous fair ones, whom they then barbarously consign to infamy and woe ; or else, finding that they have gone too far in the pursuit of those who will not yield but on honourable terms, to which they have not the spirit or probity to agree, they poorly and basely relinquish them, after having stolen their hearts. Happy creatures, to be so relinquished, though not happy to be so inveigled ! What an escape have ye made from wretches that never deserved you ! If your honest pride be hurt at first, as it cannot fail of being, that very pride will soon inspire you with a generous contempt, the only sensation fit to be retained on such a subject.

To return to those of your sex, whom a rage for amusement and admiration has robbed of one of the finest ornaments that can adorn them, the Shamefacedness I have been endeavouring to inculcate. After having said so much to show how highly they are to blame ; what shall I say to those, whose duty it is to advise them better, but who have always neglected it ? Surely it might be thought that such of their female acquaintance, and such especially of their female relations as are advanced in life, would, from their superior store of judgment and observation, be friendly enough to communicate to those ignorant or unexperienced young creatures, some salutary counsel on this and other important articles. I know they will excuse themselves, by pleading the difficulty of the task. I own it difficult. To advise well was always so ; and who can be sure of advising successfully ? Is it therefore never to be attempted ? In the present case, I cannot doubt but good counsel, offered with prudence and affection, would often succeed.

St. Paul, who held it not unworthy of an Apostle to enter with the greatest particularity into the concerns of common life, directs Titus to remind the aged women of their duty on this very head. His words are remarkable: "Speak thou the things that become sound doctrine;"—among the rest—"that the aged women may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children"—What follows?—"to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home." The precept indeed points to young women in the state of wedlock. But will any suppose the apostle meant to exclude women yet unmarried from that part of it, which, on his principles, must necessarily be applicable to them? That women who, having families of their own, go much abroad, and affect to shine any where but in their proper sphere, are peculiarly to blame, must, I think, be acknowledged. But will you thence infer, that they who have none are at liberty to stroll about perpetually, to prefer every place to home, and neglect the most respectable virtues, the most valuable accomplishments, for the parade of dress, the display of beauty, and the tricks of affectation?

It is truly sad to see so many young ladies, showing themselves every day in the markets of Vanity, who by a proper deportment elsewhere might render themselves agreeable and happy; to see them trifling away the opportunities of doing both, and sacrificing to a false ambition the real importance of their sex. But it is no less surprising than sad, to find among women of age and experience so few, comparatively speaking, who have the conscience or the humanity to contribute to their reformation and welfare.

Imagine a set of chaste matrons, anciently mothers in this metropolis, who lived and died in sacred obscurity, were seldom found from their own houses, but placed their humble glory in shining there, particularly in breeding their children to every thing prudent, and praiseworthy ; imagine them for a little to return to life, and to observe unknown the manners of the present age. When, amongst other things, they saw the daughters of many a citizen, glittering in gorgeous apparel not paid for, rolling their eyes on every side through a large assembly, studying by every childish art to draw the notice of the men, contending with one another who should be most the objects of attention, catching with a kind of triumph each transient glance, nor showing the smallest uneasiness even to be stared at by the most licentious eye, or to be blown upon by the most corrupted breath of every vile betrayer—I pursue the description no farther—what would our venerable spectators think of their posterity ! What grief would fill their hearts on the occasion ! But how great would be their astonishment and horror, when informed, that numbers of those young persons, whose behaviour was so unbecoming, had not been taught by their mothers, their grandmothers, or any other friend in the world, one solid lesson of wisdom or frugality, of female decorum, or Amiable Reserve !

SERMON IV.

ON FEMALE VIRTUE.

1° TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themselves with Sobriety.

A PLAIN dress you have often found extremely pleasing. What such a dress is to the person ; that, and much more, is Sobriety to the mind. Sobriety is a sort of spiritual vesture entirely void of show ; substantial, home-spun, and hardy ; calculated to defend against the injuries of the world, as well as to cover the nakedness of the soul ; proper to be worn every day and not unfit for any place where a reasonable being ought to appear ; perfectly decent, and to a judicious eye extremely beautiful ; in a word, so indispensable and becoming, that she who is without it has been ever deemed, by the virtuous and wise, an object of deformity, loathing and wretchedness. Like every thing else of greatest value, its worth is best known by its loss. That this quality, which like your daily clothing answers so many useful and necessary ends, should like that too not strike the generality of beholders, reflects in my opinion honour on your sex. It would be more esteemed, were it less common. And here I must complain of those men who will allow little or no merit to a woman for being sober ; when, if she were not, they would condemn her loudly. If

the vice be scandalous, can the virtue fail of being honourable?

To argue from an instance somewhat similar. Because disobedience to parents is unnatural and vile, does it follow that filial piety deserves little or no praise? But the temptations to this crime are usually inconsiderable, frequently none at all; whereas to indecorum, intemperance, and incontinence, it is certain many women are under strong temptations: it is also certain, that many have given way to them; it is probable there are but few, whose virtue in those particulars has not been exposed to very dangerous snares: yet the far greater part preserve it entire; and shall we deny them our tribute of approbation? Forbid it Generosity and Justice?

The speaking with contempt of what is commonly called Negative Virtue, is often the mere rant of an affected philosophy. To make some allowance for the condition of humanity, were surely more modest and candid. Where does he live, and what is his name, who dares be confident, that in any given circumstance of critical trial his own resolutions would remain unshaken? For vice and immorality, though there may be alleviations, there can be no excuse. But yet, on the other hand, situated as mortals are, a moral or inoffensive conduct is fairly entitled to commendation from mortals. Your situation, my young friends, demands much candour from us and mighty caution in you.

The ornament of Sobriety, which comes next to be considered, is by no means a cheap one. But though it be purchased with difficulty, it is lost with ease. To preserve it, will require the unremitting exercise of prudence, vigilance, and severe cir-

cumspection : or to speak more properly, these are parts of this quality, which in effect is of a mixed and comprehensive nature. To describe it at large, is not my design. The attempt would lead into a discussion much too dry and uninteresting. If possible, I would engage your attention to truth, and your hearts to goodness, in a different way ; by sentiment, persuasion, and the native influence of fraternal counsel. Come then, my sisters, and hearken to a brother, while he endeavours to show you on one side those things which you ought principally to shun, in order to the maintaining of your Sobriety ; and to point out on the other that positive discipline, which must co-operate for this purpose. At present we can only undertake the former of these points. But before we proceed to that, let me desire you to take notice with what propriety the apostle's ideas seem to rise one above another. He begins with that which is most directly obvious, and the very first precaution to be observed, Modesty of Apparel. Then he mentions Shamefacedness ; which, though sometimes less apparent, yet when observed cannot fail of recommending itself to every eye, and without which decency of garb is mere affectation. Shamefacedness, as he has ranked it, appears like a kind of finer covering, the virgin veil of Chastity, to be thrown over all the rest. But that it may be a veil in the best sense, a holy veil and no mask, he subjoins Sobriety as the more inward habit (so to speak) which must support and give value to the whole ; or, to drop the metaphor, as that internal and prevailing character, by which every part of a woman's dress and demeanour must ever be regulated. Now to cultivate this character it is of infinite consequence,

In the first place, to avoid Dangerous Connexions. If that be not done, what is there on earth, or in heaven, that can save you? Of miraculous interposition I think not at present. She can have no right to expect it, who throws herself into the broad way of temptation. What those dangerous connexions are, ~~it may not be always easy to explain, when it becomes a question in real life. Unhappily for young women, it is a question sometimes of very nice decision.~~ Cases there are, in which nothing can be clearer. The man that behaves with open rudeness, the man that avowedly laughs at virtue, the man that impudently pleads for vice; such a man is to be shunned like a rattlesnake. In this case, "The woman that deliberates "is lost." What! would you parley with the destroyer, when he gives you warning? Then you are not ensnared, you knowingly and wilfully expose yourselves. If you be poisoned, if you be lost: your folly is without excuse, and your destruction without alleviation.

But in this manner none will proceed, except wretches alike licentious and imprudent. Of artful men the approaches will be silent and slow; all will be soft insinuation: or else they will put on a blunt face of seeming good humour, the appearance of honest frankness, drawing you to every scene of dissipation with a kind of obliging violence, ~~should violence of any kind be necessary.~~ If they are also agreeable in their persons, or lively in their conversation; above all, if they wear the air of gentlemen, which, unfortunately for your sex, is too often the case; then indeed your danger is extreme. Thus far the trap is concealed. You apprehend nothing; your unsuspecting hearts begin to slide; they are gone before you are aware. The men I

am speaking of perceive their advantage the moment it appears. I have supposed them destitute of worth. If they be also unchecked by fear what can preserve you? A sense of reputation? the dread of ruin? Perhaps they may; but perhaps not. They have often, no doubt, come in to prevent the last excess. And, but for such restraints, what would become of many a woman who is not under that best one, religious principle? The experiment, however, you will own is hazardous. Multitudes have trusted to it, and been undone.

But do those, who in the world's ~~some~~ are not undone, escape, think ye, unhurt; unhurt in their health and spirits, in their serenity and self-enjoyment, in their sobriety of mind and habits of self-control? You can not think it. Very seldom at least can you suppose, that, where there is much sensibility of temper, an ill placed passion shall not leave behind it, in a youthful breast, great disorder and deep disquietude.

But how, you will ask, is the snare to be eluded hidden as it frequently is? Not so hidden throughout, as to be invisible, unless you will shut your eyes. Is it not your business to inquire into the character of the man that professes an attachment? Or is character nothing? Is there no essential difference between a man of decency and honour, or who has all along passed for such, and a man who is known to lead an irregular life, or who is suspected however to be the smiling foe of female virtue? May you not learn, if you please, with whom the person in question associates? Or is a man's choice of company nothing? If not resolved to be blind, you may surely discover whether such a person proceeds by little and little to take off the visor, and appear what he is, by loose sentiments, indecent advances, an ambiguous style, an alarming assu-

nance, "foolish talking and jesting which is not convenient."—I blush for numbers of your sex, who not only express no displeasure at these things, but by a loud laugh, or childish titter, or foolish simper, or some other indication of a light mind, show real satisfaction, perhaps high complacency.

Another thing, no less abominable, I cannot forbear to mention. How common is it to see young ladies, who pass for women of reputation, admitting into their company in public places, and with visible tokens of civility and pleasure, men, whom the moment before they saw herding with creatures of infamous name! Gracious God, what a defiance to the laws of piety, prudence, character, decorum! What an insult, in effect, to every man and woman of virtue in the world! What a palpable encouragement to vice and dishonour! What a desperate attempt to pull down, in appearance, and with their own hands, the only partition that divides them from the most profligate of their sex! Between the bold and the abandoned woman there may still remain, notwithstanding such behaviour, a distinction in the world's eye; but we scruple not to declare, religion, purity, delicacy, make none.

~~To return from this digression, if it be one, we will allow it possible to put cases wherein no particular rules of discovery, no determinate modes of judgment, will enable a young woman, by her own unassisted skill, to discern the dangers that lie in her way. But can a young woman be justly excused, or can she fairly excuse herself, if, where all is at stake, she call not in the joint aid of wise suspicion, friendly counsel, and grave experience, together with prayers for God's protection more than ordinarily fervent?~~

But, methinks, I hear some of you ask, with an air of earnest curiosity, Do not reformed libertines then make the best husbands? I am sorry for the question. I am doubly sorry, whenever it is started by a Virtuous Woman. I will not wound the ear of modesty by drawing minutely the character of a libertine: but give me leave to answer your inquiry, by asking a question or two in my turn. In the first place, we will suppose such a one really reformed, so far as to treat the woman he marries with esteem and fidelity; and that he gives up for ever his old companions, at least as to any chosen intimacy, or preference of their company to hers. We grant it possible; we rejoice when it happens. It is certainly the best atonement that can be made for his former conduct. But now let me ask you, or rather let me desire you to ask your hearts, without any regard to the opinions of the world, which is most desirable on the score of sentiment, on the score of that respect which you owe to yourselves, to your friends, to your sex, to order, rectitude, and honour; the pure unexhausted affection of a man who has not by intemperance and debauchery corrupted his principles, impaired his constitution, enslaved himself to appetite, submitted to share with the vilest and lowest of mankind the mercenary embraces of harlots, contributed to embolden guilt, to harden vice, to render the retreat from a life of scandal and misery more hopeless; who never laid snares for beauty, never betrayed the innocence that trusted him, never abandoned any fond creature to want and despair, never hurt the reputation of a woman, never disturbed the peace of families, or defied the laws of his country, or set at nought the prohibition of his God;—which, I say, is most desirable, the affection of such a man, or

that of him who has probably done all this, who has certainly done a great part of it, and who has nothing now to offer you, but the shattered remains of his health, and of his heart? How any of you may feel on this subject, I cannot say. But if, judging as a man, I believed, what I have often heard, that the generality of women would prefer the latter, I know not any thing that could sink them so low in my esteem.

That he who has been formerly a rake may after all prove a very tolerable husband, as the world goes, I have said already that I do not dispute. But I would ask, in the next place, is this commonly to be expected? Is there no danger that such a man will be tempted by the power of long habit to return to his old ways; or that the insatiable love of variety, which he has indulged so freely, will some time or other lead him astray from the finest woman in the world? Will not the very idea of restraint, which he could never brook while single, make him only the more impatient of it when married? Will he have the better opinion of his wife's virtue, that he has conversed chiefly with women who had none, and with men amongst whom it was a favourite system, that the sex are all alike? But it is a painful topic. Let the women who are so connected make the best of their condition: and let us go on to something else. If you, my honoured hearers, would preserve your sobriety, I would warn you,

In the second place, against a dissipated Life; into which many, who I verily believe have no ill intentions, are unhappily drawn by one engagement or another. Youth, sprightliness, the love of society, the love of shining, (the last particularly strong in minds where imagination predominates,)

joined with a taste for amusement, which the circumscribed situation of the sex serves perhaps only to increase—all these put together lead them very readily into such a track ; most especially if their education has lain in that line, or if their connexions, whether natural, or accidental, have concurred to strengthen the bias. But how innocent soever it may be in the first instance, who does not know, that in its after-consequences it is often to the last degree hurtful.

Does it not manifestly breed an impatience of home, and such a propensity to show, as, rather than not be gratified, shall balk the most important duties, and court the most improper company ? Does it not tend directly to expense and profusion ? Does it not unavoidably cherish the passion for idleness and sauntering, so consistent with every thing solid, useful, and improving ? Not to speak now of the prejudice done by it to the health and constitution ; is such a temper, and such a conduct, agreeable to the great rules of moderation ? Will that mind be acquainted with wisdom, which is averse to thought ? Will self-government be her study, who flies from self-inspection ? Can Religion or Virtue hope to make any lasting impression on a spirit, that by perpetual agitation is wrought up into mere froth ? What imaginable folly is there that may not find its way into a heart, like the garden of the sluggard, thrown open to every incursion ? If your mornings be spent in rambling and dressing, your evenings in visits and cards, or public entertainments ; if this be the general tenor of your transactions, on which side, I beseech you, can the balance be expected to lie at the bottom of the account ?

But that perhaps is not your care. 'What have the young and the gay to do, but to divert themselves? Indeed? Were you sent then into this world for no other purpose? Do you design to apply to nothing serious?' 'Yes, certainly, when we are settled, and have families.' But pray, tell me: To act your parts properly then, is there no preparation necessary now? Is roving about continually, the way to grow either fond of domestic employments, or fit for them? Will neglecting the lesser affairs committed to you at present, dispose or qualify you for a larger sphere of activity hereafter.

But have we not often seen young women, that were thoughtless and profuse, turn out very prudent and economical wives? We have; and what then? Would you build a system of action on events so precarious and unlikely? Because by the force of genius, or a felicity of circumstances, boys who were good for little or nothing at school, have not unfrequently, in process of time, shot up into men of ability or spirit, would you thence infer that youth may safely trifle away their early years?

But is it certain, after all, that you are to change your state, as well as your character? Will the train of life we are considering recommend you much to young men. I have conversed with many of them on this subject. Shall I tell you their opinions? Some, I find, would like a sprightly companion in marriage, but none a dissipated one; and all of them, to a man, dread a woman of expense. I say not, that it is right in this case to count the cost too nicely; but men that are not very violent lovers, or very great fools, will not overlook it. Our sex of late years have been by many thought more backward than formerly to enter into the holy bands

of wedlock ; and what I hint at has been assigned as a principal cause.

It is too common, I confess, to hear those who have been addicted to vagrant pleasures, and vain profusion, plead the smallness of their fortunes as an excuse for not marrying ; when, if they connected themselves with women of sobriety and discretion, it is perhaps demonstrable that they would live cheaper. But what, say they, if, hoping to find a help meet, we should wed our ruin ? I answer them, Choose the better. Shall I give you their reply ? ‘ The ladies of the present age are ‘ so immoderately expensive ’—You may guess the rest.

But it is not only such men that speak this language. There are of a different character not a few, who, strongly attached to the worthier part of the sex, wish for nothing so much as an honourable connexion with them, but are restrained by the very consideration in question. We would willingly convince them, that they carry it too far. They appeal to facts, and persist in the argument. We are weary of the dispute. It is inconceivable what frivolous articles of parade are insisted on by some women, of whom better things might be expected. But rivalry in show is the ruling passion of the times ; and how much is it nourished by dissipation !

I cannot leave this point without observing, that one of the worst consequences attending such a course is its throwing many young ladies into the company of women, who with the general reputation of virtue, or under the particular shelter of matrimony, are often the very quintessence of vice ; a set of smooth pernicious tempers, like Satan to Eve, winding themselves by flattery into the hearts

of those her heedless daughters, descanting on their beauty, perfections, prospects, and I know not what; first exciting, and then gratifying their youthful curiosity, with such suggestions, and such tales, as set their fancies all on fire; by which any little structure of modesty, that Nature and Education may have raised, is consumed in a moment. Which contributes most to their fall from innocence, those she serpents, or the male ones mentioned before, I will not determine; but remember, I have warned you against both.

Permit me farther, on this occasion, just to remind you of poor Dinah. Secure as you may think yourselves, none of you, I suppose, have been trained more virtuously than it is probable she was under the eye of a pious father. But alas! the spirit of wandering seized her. "She went forth to see the daughters of the land." She met a betrayer and lost her honour. But I proceed,

In the third place, to caution you against that fatal poison to virtue, which is conveyed by profligate and by improper Books.

When entertainment is made the vehicle of instruction, nothing surely can be more harmless, agreeable, or useful. To prohibit young minds the perusal of any writings, where wisdom addresses the affections in the language of the imagination, may be sometimes well meant, but must be always injudicious. Some such writings undoubtedly there are; the offspring of real genius enlightened by knowledge of the world, and prompted, it is to be hoped, by zeal for the improvement of youth.

Happy indeed, beyond the vulgar story-telling tribe, and highly to be praised, is he who, to fine

sensibilities and a lively fancy superadding clear and comprehensive views of men and manners, writes to the heart with simplicity and chasteness, through a series of adventures well conducted, and relating chiefly to scenes in ordinary life ; where the solid joys of Virtue, and her sacred sorrows, are strongly contrasted with the hollowness and the horrors of vice ; where, by little and unexpected yet natural incidents of the tender and domestic kind, so peculiarly fitted to touch the soul, the most important lessons are impressed, and the most generous sentiments awakened ; where, to say no more, distress occasioned often by indiscretions, consistent with many degrees of worth, yet clouding it for the time, is worked up into a storm, such as to call forth the principles of fortitude and wisdom, confirming and brightening them by that exertion ; till at length the bursting tempest is totally, or in a great measure dispelled, so that the hitherto suspended and agitated reader is either relieved entirely, and delighted even to transport, or has left upon his mind at the conclusion a mixture of virtuous sadness, which serves to fasten the moral deeper, and to produce an unusual sobriety in all his passions.

Amongst the few works of this kind which I have seen, I cannot but look on those of Mr. Richardson as well entitled to the first rank ; an author, of whom an indisputable judge has with equal truth and energy pronounced, " that he taught " the passions to move at the command of reason : " I will venture to add, an author, to whom your sex are under singular obligations for his uncommon attention to their best interests ; but particularly for presenting, in a character sustained through-

out with inexpressible pathos and delicacy, the most exalted standard of female excellence that was ever held up to their imitation. I would be understood to except that part of *Clarissa's* conduct, which the author meant to exhibit as exceptionable. Setting this aside, we find in her character a beauty, a sweetness, an artlessness—what shall I say more? a sanctity of sentiment and manner, which, I own for my part, I have never seen equalled in any book of that sort; yet such, at the same time, as appears no way impracticable for any woman who is ambitious of excelling.

Beside the beautiful productions of that incomparable pen, there seem to me to be very few, in the style of *Novel*, that you can read with safety, and yet fewer that you can read with advantage.—What shall we say of certain books, which we are assured (for we have not read them) are in their nature so shameful, in their tendency so pestiferous, and contain such rank treason against the royalty of *Virtue*, such horrible violation of all decorum, that she who can bear to peruse them must in her soul be a prostitute, let her reputation in life be what it will. But can it be true—say, ye chaste stars, that with innumerable eyes inspect the midnight behaviour of mortals—can it be true, that any young woman, pretending to decency, should endure for a moment to look on this infernal brood of futility and lewdness?

Nor do we condemn those writings only, that, with an effrontery which defies the laws of God and man, carry on their very forehead the mark of the beast. We consider the general run of *Novels* as utterly unfit for you. Instruction they convey none. They paint scenes of pleasure and passion altogether

improper for you to behold, even with the mind's eye. Their descriptions are often loose and luscious in a high degree ; their representations of love between the sexes are almost universally overstrained. All is dotage, or despair ; or else ranting swelled into burlesque. In short, the majority of their lovers are either mere lunatics, or mock-heroes. A sweet sensibility, a charming tenderness, a delightful anguish, exalted generosity, heroic worth, and refinement of thought ; how seldom are these best ingredients of virtuous love mixed with any judgment or care in the composition of their principal characters !

In the Old Romance the passion appeared with all its enthusiasm. But then it was the enthusiasm of honour ; for love and honour were there the same. The men were sincere, magnanimous, and noble ; the women were patterns of chastity, dignity, and affection. They were only to be won by real heroes ; and this title was founded in protecting, not in betraying, the sex. The proper merit with them consisted in the display of disinterested goodness, undaunted fortitude, and unalterable fidelity. The turn of those books was influenced by the genius of the times in which they were composed ; as that, on the other hand, was nourished by them. The characters they drew were, no doubt, often heightened beyond nature ; and the incidents they related, it is certain, were commonly blended with the most ridiculous extravagance. At present, however, I believe they may be read with perfect safety, if indeed there be any who choose to look into them.

The times in which we live are in no danger of adopting a system of romantic virtue. The parents of the present generation, what with selling

their sons and daughters in marriage, and what with teaching them by every possible means the glorious principles of avarice, have contrived pretty effectually to bring down from its former flights that idle, youthful, unprofitable passion, which has for its object personal attractions, in preference to all the wealth in the world. With the successful endeavours of those profoundly politic parents, the levity of dissipation, the vanity of parade, and the fury of gaming, now so prevalent, have concurred to cure completely in the fashionable of both sexes any tendency to mutual fondness.

What has a modish young fellow to do with those antiquated notions of gallantry, that were connected with veneration for female excellence, invincible honour, and unspotted fame? Is it not enough for him, if he intend to strike the matrimonial bargain, that by himself, or an old cunning father, he can derive a good one, to get possession of some woman, whose fortune joined to his own, if any he have, shall enable him to glitter in public, and in private to gratify other favourite inclinations, more freely? Provided these grand points are gained in the person he thus traffics for to be the partner of his life, what signifies her appearance, her understanding, or her character? And those Fine Ladies who seek conquest only for show, too well instructed in the superior consequences of that to put any value on so simple a thing as a Heart, merely for its own sake; what else have they to mind but securing, by whatever arts, such settlements as shall place them, when married, on a level with their companions, or if possible above them, in the all-important articles of gaiety and splendour? As to men's hazarding any thing in the defence

of girls who may take it into their heads to think of reputation, delicacy, sentiment, and other such exploded ideas ; what can be so foolish?—although to hazard their lives in a drunken quarrel for a prostitute might perhaps be brave?

That in so polite an age the elevations of love, the sanctity of truth, and the majesty of virtue, should pass for knight-errantry, cannot be surprising; nor is it any wonder, that the very best things, in the productions last-mentioned, should be no way interesting to a modern reader, whose taste and manners are formed on standards far different. Some however may not be displeased to hear the opinion of no less a judge than Milton concerning them. It seems they were one of his early studies, and that on a moral account. As his words to this purpose are remarkable, and not much known, I shall take the liberty to quote part of them. “ I betook me amongst those lofty
“ fables and romances, which recount in solemn
“ cantos the deeds of knighthood founded by our
“ victorious kings, and from hence had in renown
“ over all Christendom. There I read it in the
“ oath of every knight, that he should defend to the
“ expense of his blood, or of his life, if it so be-
“ fell him, the honour and chastity of virgin or
“ matron. From whence even then I learnt, what
“ a noble virtue chastity sure must be, to the de-
“ fence of which so many worthies by such a dear
“ adventure of themselves had sworn. And if I
“ found in the story afterwards any of them by
“ word or deed breaking that oath, I judged it the
“ same fault of the poet as that which is attributed

“ to Homer, to have written undecent things of the Gods. Only this my mind gave me, that every free and gentle spirit, without that oath, ought to be born a knight, nor needed to expect the gilt spur, or the laying of a sword upon his shoulder, to stir him up both by his counsel and his arm to secure and protect the weakness of any attempted chastity.”

To come back to the species of writing which so many young women are apt to doat upon, the offspring of our present Novelists, I mean the greater part; with whom we may join the present herd of ~~Play-writers~~. Besides the remarks already made on the former, is it not manifest with respect to both, that such books lead to a false taste of life and happiness; that they represent vices as frailties, and frailties as virtues; that they engender notions of love unspeakably perverting and inflammatory; that they overlook in a great measure the finest part of the passion, which one would suspect the authors had never experienced; that they turn it most commonly into an affair of wicked or of frivolous gallantry; that on many occasions they take off from the worst crimes committed in the prosecution of it, the horror which ought ever to follow them; on some occasions actually reward those very crimes, and almost on all leave the female readers with this persuasion at best, that it is their business to get husbands at any rate, and by whatever means? Add to the account, that repentance for the foulest injuries which can be done the sex, is generally represented as the pang, or rather the start, of a moment; and holy wedlock converted into a sponge, to wipe out at a single stroke every stain of guilt and dishonour, which it was possible for the hero of the piece to contract.—Is this a kind of reading

calculated to improve the principles, or preserve the Sobriety, of female minds? How much are those young women to be pitied, that have no wise parents or faithful tutors to direct them in relation to the books which are, or which are not, fit for them to read! How much are those parents and tutors to be commended, who with particular solicitude watch over them in so important a concern!

I conclude with saying, that the subject of this discourse has unavoidably suggested some ideas, which, had we not undertaken to address young women at large, we should have certainly suppressed for the sake of more modest natures, whom we would not willingly pain, no not for a moment. But such we hope will be candid enough to excuse us, if, by throwing out to others what to them would have been unnecessary, we may be happily instrumental in rescuing were it but one of their sex from the slavery of vice, or defending a single innocent from its snares.

SERMON V.

ON FEMALE VIRTUE, FRIENDSHIP, AND
CONVERSATION.

1 TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themselves with Sobriety.

COL. iv. 6.

Let your Speech be always with Grace, seasoned with Salt.

TO preserve the Sobriety enjoined by our apostle, there is required a positive discipline, as well as the negative part already explained. Be not alarmed at the name of Discipline. In what we are going to propose you will find nothing forbidden or harsh. We do not, you may believe, wish to see you cut off from the friendly intercourse and innocent delights of society, confined to convents, as millions of your sex most unnaturally are in popish countries, and there condemned to the idle yet fatiguing task of a devotion unreasonable in many respects, uninteresting in most, feeble for want of temptation, visionary and dry at the same time. The genuine intention of piety was certainly to make its disciples amiable, useful, and happy; to give solidity to every virtue, and grace to every relation of human life. Is it possible to reflect on the prodigious multitudes of women shut up in

those dens of superstition, without feeling horror at a system which, under the guise of superior sanctity, sacrifices to hopeless solitude, frequently in all the flower of youth and beauty, such swarms of helpless beings ; who, had they remained in the world, might have been the ornament of their own sex, the delight of ours, the mothers of a numerous race, and blessings to every country where they dwell.

Of the colours with which this cruel practice is disguised by the church of Rome we are not ignorant : and we can even conceive, that the prepossessions of art, and the softening of habit ; their commerce with one another, their employments in their prison, and often, I doubt not, the ardour of a well-meaning though much mistaken zeal ; that all these may have the power to reconcile many of them to a state, otherwise gloomy beyond expression. But what shall be said for the situation of the rest ; and what can justify the flagrant opposition of such a system to the sacred laws of social duty, and the truly benevolent, joyful, and active spirit of the religion of Jesus, as taught and exemplified by himself and his apostles ?

But to proceed in our plan. From dangerous connexions, from a dissipated life, and from books of a corrupting tendency, we attempted to put you upon your guard in our last discourse. In the present we will endeavour to point out that Society or Conversation, and in some following ones those Talents or Accomplishments, which will contribute at once to fortify you against such snares, if they should fall in your way ; to subdue any propensities that might expose you too rashly to their influence ; to strengthen all your virtuous resolves ; and to

supply inexhausted sources of solid, rational, and refined entertainment.

As to the conversation which you ought with these views to cultivate, it may be proper,

First of all, to say somewhat concerning those early Friendships with one another, that usually lead you to the most intimate communications. I take it for granted, there is no young woman who has not, or wishes not to have, a companion of her own sex, to whom she may unbosom herself on every occasion. That there are women capable of friendship with women, I cannot, for my part, question in the least. I have seen indubitable proofs of it, and those carried as far as seemed compatible with the imperfections of our common nature. I know it is questioned by many men, while others believe, that it happens exceedingly seldom. Between married and unmarried women, I hope it happens very often. Whether it does so between those that are single, I confess myself a little doubtful. The preacher will be probably charged with partiality to his own sex, when he adds, that, so far as he has been able to observe, young men have appeared more frequently susceptible of a generous and steady friendship for each other, than females as yet unconnected; especially if the latter have had, or been supposed to have, pretensions to beauty not yet adjusted by the public.

Having professed himself however, what (as often as truth will permit him) he really is, an advocate for the sex, and this being the feature in their character, which seems to him the most unfavourable, he is willing to find out whether in their frame and condition, compared with those of the men, there be any circumstances which may help

towards an apology ; and he argues in the following manner.

The state of matrimony is necessary to the support, order, and comfort of society. But it is a state, that subjects the women to a great variety of solicitude and pain. Nothing could carry them through it with any tolerable satisfaction or spirit, but very strong almost unconquerable attachments. To produce these, is it not fit they should be peculiarly sensible to the attention and regards of men ? Upon the same ground, does it not seem agreeable to the purposes of Providence that the securing of this attention, and these regards, should be a principal aim ? But can such an aim be pursued without frequent competition ? And will not that too readily occasion jealousy, envy, and all the unamiable effects of mutual rivalry ? I mean, without the restraints of superior worth and sentiment. But can these be ordinarily expected from the prevailing turn of female education, or from the little pains that women, as well as other human beings, commonly take to control themselves, and to act nobly ? In this last respect, the sexes appear pretty much on the same footing : in others, it is manifest, that the nature and situation of the men are very different. Their constitution of mind, no less than the body, is for the most part hardy and rough. By means of both, by the demands of life, and by the impulse of passion, they are engaged in a vast diversity of pursuits, from which your sex are precluded by decorum, by softness, and by fear. This diversity of daily pursuits, joined with the multiplicity of female objects that freer modes of living present to their imagination, and the power they have of unlimited choice whenever they are disposed to make it ; (a power

which Nature probably, and Custom certainly, have denied to the others ;) all this put together must in the case of our sex be productive of very different effects.

Do I mean by this reasoning to justify in yours the indulgence of those little, and, I must needs say, in many instances, base passions towards one another, with which they have been so generally charged. God forbid. I only mean to represent such passions in the first approach, and while not entertained, as less criminal than the men are apt to state them ; and to prove, that, in their attachments to each other, the latter have not always that merit above the poor women, which they are apt to claim. In the mean time it will be your business, by emulating them where they appear good-natured and disinterested, to disprove their imputation, and to show a temper open to friendship, as well as to Love.

To talk much of the latter is natural for both ; to talk much of the former, is considered as one way of doing themselves honour. Friendship, they well know, is that dignified form, which in speculation at least every heart must reverence. But in friendship, as in religion, which in many respects it resembles, speculation is often substituted in the place of practice. People fancy themselves possessed of the thing, and hope that others will fancy so too, because they are fond of the name, and have learnt to talk about it with plausibility. Such talk indeed imposes, till experience gives it the lie.

To say the truth, there seems in either sex but little of what a fond imagination, unacquainted with the falsehood of the world, and warmed by affections which its selfishness has not yet chilled, would reckon

Friendship. In theory the standard is raised too high; yet, methinks, I would not have it set much lower. I would not, on any account, have the honest sensibilities of ingenuous nature checked by the over-cautious documents of political prudence. No advantage, obtained by such frigidity, can compensate the want of those warm effusions of the heart into the bosom of a friend, which are doubtless among the most exquisite pleasures; at the same time that it must be owned they often, by the inevitable lot of humanity, make way for the bitterest pains which the breast can experience. Happy beyond the common condition of her sex is she, who has found a Friend indeed; open-hearted yet discreet, generously fervent yet steady, thoroughly virtuous but not severe, wise and cheerful at the same time! Can such a friend be loved too much, or cherished too tenderly? If to excellence, as well as happiness, there be any one way more compendious than another, next to friendship with the great Almighty, it is this.

But when a mixture of minds so beautiful and so blessed takes place, it is generally, if not always, the result of early prepossession, casual intercourse, secret sympathy, inexplicable attraction, or else a combination of such causes as are not to be brought together by management or design. This noble plant may be cultivated; but it must grow spontaneously. I can only therefore wish to each of you, beloved, the felicity of finding such a friend and, having found her, the wisdom to use her well.

For the more general commerce of social life, a few advices may not be improper. That, like the ordinary duties of religion, may be directed with tolerable advantage by human precepts. The harmonies of holy friendship, like the sublimer contempla-

tions of the Divinity, must depend more immediately on that hand, which can alone attune the finer movements, and exalt the best conceptions of the soul. Let us go on then,

In the second place, to what we may term the common tenor of your Company; which, for the sake of our subject, we must suppose left in some measure to your own choice. That it ought to be such as shall not corrupt your good manners, is a principle already established. It will be likewise understood, that, in the society you choose to frequent, you will seek for that style of virtue which is most adapted to the turn of your own minds. But this last propensity should not, I apprehend, be indulged too far. I will explain myself.

The more intimate reciprocations of a close friendship are now, as you know, out of the question. That at your time of life you should be particularly fond of sprightly conversation, where all is enlivened and joyful, and where Wisdom when allowed to enter puts on her gayest garb, is perfectly natural. To advise you against it were as weak, as it would be unfriendly. Such sprightliness and freedom, when supported by sense, and chastened by decency, have, always, I frankly acknowledge, appeared to me delightful. Dulness and insipidity, moroseness and rigour, are dead weights on every kind of social intercourse; nor will I conceal it from you that I wish, as much as any of you can do, to make my escape from them on all occasions. But tell me, my lively friends; when the heart overflows with gaiety, is there no danger of its bursting the proper bounds? Is not extreme vivacity a near borderer on folly? To prevent its breaking loose, and throwing itself into very se-

rious inconveniences, into a very hurtful conduct, will surely require the check of self-command. But how is that to be attained? By associating only with the fanciful, the vivacious, or the witty? Is hazard to be shunned by rushing into the field of battle? Or, to represent things at the best, is familiarity with Wisdom to be contracted most readily, where Wisdom appears most seldom? Would ye form habits of sobriety, a spirit of sedateness, no way inconsistent with innocent mirth, you must frequently resort to the company of the sober and the sedate. But will not these be chiefly found among such as are farther advanced in years than yourselves? Should not you be ambitious of profiting by their experience and knowledge? And will not a respect for superior age, when possessed of superior discretion, often prove a seasonable restraint on the wildness of more youthful sallies? "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise," said the wisest of mortals. Is not the maxim equally applicable to women?

Will you give me leave on this occasion to mention, what is much to the honour of our sex, that all the most sensible and worthy of yours have ever professed a particular relish for the conversation of men of sense and worth? Such men, I presume, are attached to the society of such women beyond every thing else in the world. And when circumstances favour, this mutual tendency cannot fail to be a rich source of mutual improvement. Was not such reciprocal aid a great part of Nature's intention in that mental and moral difference of sex, which she has marked by characters no less distinguishable than those that diversify their outward forms?

To adopt the language of an amiable writer, who has studied the human heart with success :
 “ We believe that it is proper for persons of the same
 “ age, of the same sex, of similar dispositions and
 “ pursuits, to associate together. But here we
 “ seem to be deceived by words. If we consult
 “ nature and common sense, we shall find, that the
 “ true propriety and harmony of social life depends
 “ upon the connexion of people of different dispositions and characters judiciously blended together.
 “ Nature hath made no individual, nor no class
 “ of people, independent of the rest of their species, or sufficient for their own happiness. Each
 “ sex, each character, each period of life, have
 “ their several advantages ; and that union is the
 “ happiest and most proper, where wants are mutually supplied. . The fair sex should naturally
 “ expect to gain from our conversation, knowledge, wisdom, and sedateness ; and they should give
 “ us in exchange humanity, politeness, cheerfulness, taste, and sentiment.” He adds, “ The
 “ levity, the rashness, and folly of early life, are
 “ tempered with the gravity, the caution, and the wisdom of age ; while the timidity, coldness of heart,
 “ and languor incident to declining years, are supported and assisted by the courage, the warmth,
 “ and the vivacity of youth.”

The conversation of people older than yourselves will be often accompanied with less joy at the moment ; but afterwards it will make abundant compensation. It will produce more recollection : and be assured, my sisters, those are the truest pleasures which are tasted by a mind composed and serious. In that situation, every thing is felt more strongly. A dissipated spirit is too superficial to be

capable of deep or permanent delight. Besides, as has been already hinted, the experience and maturity of more years will enlarge your understandings, at the same time that they will repress your vanity and presumption ; while the sportiveness peculiar to youth will, on your part, enliven the seriousness of age. And if those, whom you thus respectfully cultivate, have any good nature, they will certainly treat you with condescension and forbearance. I said Good nature ; for whatever excludes that, is sure to lose all the influence, as well as praise of wisdom.

On this principle, I would particularly recommend to you the company of those, whose piety is of the most cheerful and the most charitable strain. They are strangers to human nature, who would affright the young by the frown of austerity. True religion ever was, and ever will be, of the friendly kind. It is not zeal, but bigotry, that refuses to make allowance for juvenile spirits and gayer tempers. Could the old be convinced by us, there is nothing we should be at greater pains to impress upon them than this, That as cheerfulness is the most natural effect of real goodness, it is also its most powerful recommendation. Wisdom is never so attractive as when she smiles.

But do not, my dear hearers, conceive an unfavourable opinion of that venerable form, if in the virtue of your mothers and aunts you should happen to find a defect of good humour. Consider the consequences of declining health, disagreeable accidents, the death of their best friends, frequent inactivity and depression after a life of action and enjoyment. If you can look forward so far as a few years at most, it will be right for you to think what you may probably feel at their age. And

pray remember, that if you require and expect allowances to be made for starts of ill humour in yourselves, at a season when all should be naturally soft and gentle, it is but fair at least that you should excuse the same in those who, not to insist now on their other claims, are objects of tender sympathy, as being invaded by languor, infirmity, and affliction.

I cannot however omit to caution them against giving away too easily to that peevishness, which is apt to grow upon them from these circumstances; and to remind them, that in such as have survived the lively taste of delight themselves, there is nothing so noble or pleasing, as not to discourage others who still retain it, but on the contrary to shew a generous satisfaction in seeing and making young people happy. Ah! my respected friends, why would you ever forfeit this highest honour of an excellent temper? Why would you ever render your company forbidding, or assist in the ravage which nature is unavoidably making on your attractions? Why rob Religion of that engaging appearance, which is not only her native appearance, but so peculiarly necessary to promote her interest with unexperienced minds, in opposition to the wiles of her laughing rival? You will hardly believe how much harm is done by this conduct to the best of causes.

The world will judge of piety by its professors. The proceeding is often unfair; because they are often unlike that which they profess. But there is no possibility of preventing it. The young have heard religion represented as an enemy to joy and affability. Nothing can be more unjust. Instead therefore of confirming those prejudices, it becomes you to confute them by the only argument that will thoroughly convince, the cheerfulness of your discourse, and the mildness of your demeanour. In

this way you may hope to do great good. When "Wisdom is thus justified of her children," they who are yet strangers to her will be induced to venerate an authority that appears so condescending, and to study precepts that are productive of such happiness. But to return to my young hearers, allow me,

In the third place, to offer you a few hints on the spirit and manner, in which I conceive your Conversation should be conducted. And now perhaps you imagine we want to preclude every degree of that which passes under the name of Trifling. You are mistaken. We do not expect that women should always utter grave sentences, nor men neither. It were inconsistent with the state of mankind. It cannot be expected from philosophers of the first rank; nor if it could, do I know that it would be desirable. I am even inclined to believe, that they who understand the art of what has been termed Trifling agreeably, have gained a very considerable point. The frailty of human nature and the infelicity of life, require to be relieved and soothed. There are many occasions, on which this is not to be done by sage admonitions, or solemn reflections. These, to well disposed minds, are often highly solacing; but to dwell on them always were to strain the machine beyond its powers. Besides, in fact, a seasonable diversion to anxiety, a temporary forgetfulness of grief, is frequently a far better method to remove it, than any direct application or laboured remedy. To change the metaphor; when the road proves rugged, or is in danger of growing tedious, one successful method of beguiling it is for the travellers to cheer and amuse one another by the play of fancy, and the facetiousness of mirth. But then the end of the journey must not be forgotten. Because we are weak,

there is no reason why we should be silly. The brow of care may surely be smoothed without converting it into the laugh of folly. While we indulge the recreation necessary for mortal, let us maintain the temper requisite in immortal beings. To reconcile these two things, and to blend them happily, seems the proper science of creatures on their progress through time to eternity. From you, my gentle friends, we look for every thing that, next to the diviner influence of religion, can soften the inequality, and animate the dulness of the way.

We wish to see you often smile ; but we would not have you smile always, if it were possible. There are many scenes that demand a grave deportment ; there are not few that call for a mournful one. She that cannot distinguish between laughter and happiness, never knew what the latter means. She that cannot " weep with them that weep," as well as " rejoice with them that rejoice," is a stranger to one of the sweetest sources of enjoyment, no less than to one of the noblest lessons of Christianity. Those are the happiest dispositions, which are the best. Benevolence is the supreme perfection of the ever-blessed Deity. He is infinitely removed from every painful impression. Yet scripture, in the style of accommodation, ascribes to him all the guiltless emotions of humanity : and we know that our Saviour was formerly on earth, and is now in heaven, " touched with the feeling of " our infirmities."

With the character of a Christian Woman, nothing, methinks, can better correspond than a propensity to melt into affectionate sorrow. It becomes alike her religion and her sex. Never, my fair auditory, never do your eyes shine with a more delightful effulgence, than when suffused with all

the trembling softness of grief for virtue in distress, or of solicitude for friendship in danger. Believe me, if the gaiety of conversation gave place somewhat oftener to the tender tale of woe, you would not, to such at least of your male acquaintance as have hearts, appear at all the less lovely. The sigh of compassion stealing from a female breast, on the mention of calamity, would be rather more musical in their ears, than the loud bursts of unmeaning laughter, with which they are often entertained. Let me add here, that the innocence and sympathy appearing in your discourse will, to every discerning man, spread around you a lustre which all the jewels in the world cannot bestow.

The diamond's and the ruby's blaze
 Disputes the palm with beauty's queen :
 Not beauty's queen commands such praise,
 Devoid of virtue if she's seen.
 But the soft tear in Pity's eye
 Outshines the diamond's brightest beams ;
 But the sweet blush of Modesty
 More beauteous than the ruby seems.

If we speak of improvement ; merciful Redeemer, how edifying to this soul is this generous sensibility ! “ It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting : for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter : for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning ; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool. This also is vanity.” You know who said so—the man who had spent many a day, and many a night, in the bower of voluptuousness,

far from the cries of misery, and the moans of complaint ; who gat him “ men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men ;” who had, times without number said in his heart, “ Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure ;” who sought by a prudent use of wine to exalt his own spirits, and to promote the hilarity of those about him ; in a word, who kept not from his eyes whatsoever they desired, nor withheld his heart from any joy. This, I say, was the man whom experience, as well as inspiration prompted to give the preference you have just now heard. There is—yes, there is attendant on virtuous sadness a sensation which, in point of indulgence and elevation at once, is superior to all that was ever felt by a light mind, in the flush of festivity, or amidst the triumph of wit.

Having mentioned Wit, let me proceed to warn you against the affectation and the abuse of it. Here our text from the Colossians comes in with propriety, “ Let your Speech be always with Grace, “ seasoned with Salt.” These remarkable words were addressed to christians in general. They are considered by the best commentators, as an exhortation to that kind of converse, which, both for matter and manner, shall appear most graceful, and prove most acceptable ; being tempered by courteousness and modesty, seasoned with wisdom and discretion, that like salt will serve at the same instant, to prevent its corruption and heighten its flavour. How beautiful this precept in itself ! How useful and pleasing in the practice ! How peculiarly fit to be practised by you, my female friends, on the turn of whose conversation and deportment so much depends to yourselves, and all about you !

From what I have now to offer, it will be found likewise to come, with advantage, in aid of our leading doctrine ; since there are not perhaps many worse foes to that Sobriety of spirit, which we would still inculcate, than the abuse and affectation already mentioned.

It is not my design to gather up, if I could, the profusion of flowers that have been scattered by innumerable hands on this tempting theme ; and by which those very hands have, in their own case, shown how difficult it is to resist the temptation. I would only observe, that the dangerous talent in question has been well compared to the dancing of a meteor, that blazes, allures, and misleads. Most certainly it alone can never be a steady light ; and too probably it is often a fatal one. Of those who have resigned themselves to its guidance, how few has it not betrayed into great indiscretions, at least, by inflaming their thirst of applause ; by rendering them little nice in their choice of company ; by seducing them into strokes of satire, too offensive to the persons against whom they were levelled, not to be repelled upon the authors with full vengeance ; and finally, by making them, in consequence of that heat which produces, and that vanity which fosters it, forgetful of those cool and moderate rules that ought to regulate their conduct !

A very few there may have been endowed with judgment and temper sufficient to restrain them from indulging " the rash dexterity of wit," and to direct it to purposes equally agreeable and beneficial. But one thing is certain, that witty men for the most part have had few friends, though many admirers. Their conversation has been courted, while their abilities have been feared, or their

characters hated, or both. In truth the last have seldom merited affection, even when the first have excited esteem. Sometimes their hearts have been so bad, as at length to bring their heads into disgrace. At any rate, the faculty termed Wit is commonly looked upon with a suspicious eye, as a two-edged sword, from which not even the sacredness of friendship can secure. It is especially, I think, dreaded in women. In a Mrs. Rowe, I dare say, it was not. To great brilliancy of imagination that female angel joined yet greater goodness of disposition; and never wrote, nor, as I have been told, was ever supposed to have said, in her whole life, an ill-natured, or even an indelicate thing. Of such a woman, with all her talents, none could be afraid. In her company, it must have been impossible not to feel respect; but then it would be like that, which the pious man entertains for a ministering spirit from heaven, a respect full of confidence and joy. If aught on earth can present the image of celestial excellence in its softest array, it is surely an accomplished Woman, in whom purity and meekness, intelligence and modesty, mingle their charms. But when I speak on this subject, need I tell you, that men of the best sense have been usually averse to the thought of marrying a witty female?

You will probably tell me, they were afraid of being outshone; and some of them perhaps might be so. But I am apt to believe, that many of them acted on different motives. Men who understand the science of domestic happiness, know that its very first principle is ease. Of that indeed we grow fonder, in whatever condition, as we advance in life, and as the heat of youth abates.

But we cannot be easy, where we are not safe. We are never safe in the company of a critic ; and almost every wit is a critic by profession. In such company we are not at liberty to unbend ourselves. All must be the straining of study, or the anxiety of apprehension : how painful ! Where the heart may not expand and open itself with freedom, farewell to real friendship, farewell to convivial delight ! But to suffer this restraint at home, what misery ! From the brandishings of wit in the hand of ill-nature, of imperious passion, or of unbounded vanity, who would not flee ? But when that weapon is pointed at a husband, is it to be wondered if from his own house he takes shelter in the tavern ? He sought a soft friend ; he expected to be happy in a reasonable companion. He has found a perpetual satirist, or a self-sufficient prattler. How have I pitied such a man, when I have seen him in continual fear on his own account, and that of his friends, and for the poor lady herself ; lest, in the run of her discourse, she should be guilty of some petulance, or some indiscretion that would expose her and hurt them all ! But take the matter at the best ; there is still all the difference in the world between the entertainer of an evening, and a partner for life. Of the latter a sober mind, steady attachment, and gentle manners, joined to a good understanding, will ever be the chief recommendations ; whereas the qualities that sparkle will be often sufficient for the former.

As to the affectation of wit, one can hardly say, whether it be most ridiculous or hurtful. The abuse of it, which we have been just considering, we are sometimes, perhaps too often, inclined to forgive, for the sake of that amusement which in spite of all the improprieties mentioned, it yet affords. The

Other is universally contemptible and odious. Who is not shocked by the flippant impertinence of a self-conceited woman, that wants to dazzle by the supposed superiority of her powers? If you, my fair ones, have knowledge and capacity; let it be seen, by your not affecting to show them, that you have something much more valuable, humility and wisdom.

“Naked in nothing shall a woman be,

“But veil her very wit with modesty.

“Let man discover, let not her display,

“But yield her charms of mind with sweet delay.”

Must women then keep silence in the house, as well as in the church? By no means. There may indeed be many cases, in which it will particularly become a young lady to observe the apostolic rule, “Be swift to hear, and slow to speak:” but there are many too, wherein it will be no less fit, that with an unassuming air she should endeavour to support and enliven the conversation. It is the opinion of some, that girls should never speak before company, when their parents are present; and parents there are, so deficient in understanding, as to make this a rule. How then shall those girls learn to acquit themselves properly in their absence? It is hard if you cannot distinguish, and teach your daughters to distinguish, between good breeding and pertness, between an obliging study to please and an indecent desire to put themselves forward, between a laudable inquisitiveness and an improper curiosity. But this, I confess, is not the most common mistake in the education of young women; and they must permit me to say, that it were well if the generality of mothers were careful, by prudent instruction in private, to repress that

talkative humour which runs away with so many of them, and never quits them all their life after, for want of being curbed in their early years. But what words can express the impertinence of a female tongue let loose into boundless loquacity? Nothing can be more stunning, except where a number of Fine Ladies open at once—Protect us, ye powers of gentleness and decorum, protect us from the disgust of such a scene—Ah! my dear hearers, if ye knew how terrible it appears to a male ear of the least delicacy, I think you would take care never to practise it.

For endless prattling, and loud discourse, no degree of capacity can atone. I join them together, because in effect they are seldom separate. But the noisy, empty, trivial chatter of everlasting folly—it is too much for human patience to sustain. How different from that playful spirit in conversation, spoken of before; which, blended with good sense and kept within reasonable bounds, contributes, like the lighter and more careless touches in a picture, to give an air of ease and freedom to the whole! This freedom and ease, when accompanied with decency and variety, a certain native prettiness and unstudied correctness, are among the most pleasing characteristics of female society in its best shape.

Your talking so much about dress, and fashions, and fashionable amusements, as the far greater part of you are ever doing, in preference to better subjects, is, to say the softest thing of it, a weakness which cannot be justified, but which perhaps must, in some measure, be forgiven to your sex. As to the love of scandal and dispute, which may be called the Acid of speech, in contradistinction to the Salt recommended by our apostle, it must be reserved for a future consideration. The men indeed, are

ready to triumph at the very mention of it. Whether they have reason to triumph on the whole, may be a difficult question. The agreeable qualities named a moment ago, they must fairly give up to the women. How few of them in comparison possess, or at least exercise, the power of keeping discourse alive, without assistance from wine, from politics, from business, from the news of the day, and from another theme, for which their unrestrained and inextinguishable passions in male company, argues a descent of soul, a degradation of thought, whereof men endowed with the least understanding ought to be ashamed!

I just mentioned Unstudied Correctness as appropriated to the conversation of cultivated women. I mean that easy elegance of speech, which results from clear and lively ideas, expressed with the simplicity of nature, somewhat aided by the knowledge of books. To this the best scholars amongst the men must seldom or never lay claim. It is necessarily precluded by their profounder studies, and that scrupulous attention to the minutest rules of grammar, which is induced by the turn of their education; and which, though by practice it may become in a great degree habitual and mechanical, will yet always appear deficient in the happy facility, wherewith so many females clothe their sentiments. That they who are naturally fond of ornament in every thing else, should show a certain honest neglect of it, where it is least requisite, where it is generally hurtful by embarrassing and fettering that which ought to be free and unaffected, surely entitles them to some praise.

How often have we seen very ingenious men perplexed, when they have wished to explain them-

selves on some topic by no means abstruse, and which they perfectly understood! With how little grace have we heard them tell a story! In these, and such like points, women of any capacity excel. To what can the difference be owing! I fancy to this, that the former, in their words and ideas, attend too sedulously to precision and embellishment; while the latter are content to speak just what they mean, and to relate simply what they have read or heard, as it rises to their minds, without the labour of accuracy, which often hampers the faculties in their operation, and disturbs the train of nature.

On this principle, I presume, is founded that maxim, which makes the perfection of art to lie in concealing it; an attainment extremely uncommon, and which, where it has taken place, has always been considered as the most difficult, and the most beautiful, of any that can distinguish the productions of taste. From this it is, that the celebrated works of ancient genius have been judged to derive a large share of the superiority usually ascribed to them. From the same source chiefly, to compare small things with great, has probably arisen that peculiar happiness in letter-writing, which the men, I think, are willing to allow to your sex. Here, indeed, they comfort themselves with their superior strength, and depth, and learned elegance in that, and other matters where intellect is concerned. Pretensions to these, with a few exceptions, I believe, to say the truth, you had better resign.

For my part, I could heartily wish to see the female world more accomplished than it is; but I do not wish to see it abound with metaphysicians, historians, speculative philosophers, or Learned Ladies of any kind. I should be afraid, lest the sex should lose in softness what they gained in force;

and lest the pursuit of such elevation should interfere a little with the plain duties and humble virtues of life. Amiable instances of the contrary I know there are. I think at this moment of one lady, in particular, who to an extensive knowledge in philosophy and languages ancient and modern, with some portion of poetical genius, and a considerable degree of literary fame, has the sense and worth to join every domestic quality that can adorn a woman in her situation.

To inculcate such qualities, together with those elegant and intellectual improvements which young ladies would do well to acquire, with a view to sobriety, usefulness, self-enjoyment, and the powers of pleasing, will be the business of some subsequent addresses. What place religion ought to have in female discourse, must be likewise a subject of inquiry under another head. In the mean while, let me intreat you to recollect, that on cultivating a proper spirit of conversation will depend a great part of your proficiency and ours; of your present acceptance amongst the wise and deserving; of your future consequence and merit in society; of your entertainment, satisfaction, and, I may add, safety, through the successive stages of life. Much of that life is spent in scenes of social intercourse. Important occasions arise but seldom. A large proportion must be consigned to trifles. Little things belong to little mortals. The virtue and happiness of the sexes are principally affected by the daily indiscriminate tenor of their commerce. What felicity, and what glory may not you, my friends, derive from those talents by which that is regulated and sweetened, refined and raised!

SERMON VI.

ON FEMALE VIRTUE, WITH DOMESTIC AND
ELEGANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

1 TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themselves with Sobriety.

PROV. xxxi. 10. 31.

Who can find a Virtuous Woman? For her price is far above rubies.—Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her Works praise her in the gates.

TO divert fancy, to gratify desire, and in general to be a sort of better servants, are all the purposes for which some suppose your sex designed. A most illiberal supposition! The least degree of refinement or candour will dispose us to regard them in a far higher point of light. They were manifestly intended to be the mothers and formers of a rational and immortal offspring; to be a kind of softer companions, who, by nameless delightful sympathies and endearments, might improve our pleasures and soothe our pains; to lighten the load of domestic cares, and thereby leave us more at leisure for rougher labours, or severer studies; and finally, to spread a certain grace and embellishment over human life. To wish to degrade them

from so honourable a station, indicates a mixture of ignorance, grossness, and barbarity. But the men who think in this manner, do themselves irreparable wrong, by putting it out of their power ever to enjoy the tenderest sentiments and most delicious feelings of the heart. He that has a true taste of happiness will choose, for his own sake, to cherish the kindest opinion of the female destination.

Yet what shall we say? Are there not many women who seem to have entirely forgotten it themselves; to have relinquished at least the most valuable part of their claim, and to have conspired with those male tyrants in sinking their own importance? How often do we see them disfigured by affectation and caprice! How often disgraced and ruined by imprudence? What shameful inattention to the culture of their minds, in numberless instances! What perversion, in not a few, of excellent understandings, through a levity that passes for innocent, because not polluted by vice, nay for agreeable, because accompanied with youth! Who that is a well-wisher to the sex, can forbear to be mortified on finding such multitudes so ungainly in their manners, so unentertaining in their discourse, so destitute of every solid and useful improvement, in a word, so totally devoid of all that can confer significance, or beget esteem; not to speak of downright worthlessness, proceeding from bad principles or wicked company?

With respect to these indeed, as well as the rest, I am willing to believe, that they are frequently occasioned by vacancy of thought, and want of occupation which expose the mind to every snare; and that, in many cases, all this evil might, through God's blessing, be happily prevent-

ed by an early and diligent application to Female Accomplishments. Such therefore I will proceed to recommend, as a farther means of maintaining the Sobriety enjoined by our apostle. Not that I propose to confine myself to this single view. Every other laudable and beneficial purpose, which those accomplishments are calculated to serve, will concur to enforce them. They may be divided into three classes, Domestic, Elegant, and Intellectual.

As to the first, I must remind you, that how much soever they may be now neglected by many women as below their notice, no height of rank or affluence can justify such neglect. The care of a household all ages and nations have agreed to consider as an indispensable part of female employment, in every situation that admits it. The passage from which I have taken one of my texts deserves on this occasion your particular attention. As it exhibits perhaps the most beautiful picture that was ever drawn of the Virtuous Woman, in a sphere of activity which you all hope to fill, and for which you ought to qualify yourselves as much as possible in your present condition; I will read the whole, together with a short paraphrase which I have borrowed chiefly from the pious and learned bishop Patrick, but without adhering to his diction.

Verse 10. "Who can find a virtuous Woman? her price is far above rubies." Such a person, says the mother of Lemuel; (a young prince for whose welfare she was most tenderly solicitous;) such a person as I would recommend for a wife is too hard to be found; one endowed with true worth and piety, who deems nothing beneath her that can any way become her station; one, in short,

possessed of those various and excellent qualities that fit her for adorning it, and render her infinitely more valuable than all the pearls or precious stones, with which so many women are fond of being decked.

11. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust
"in her; so that he shall have no need of spoil." In her personal honour and fidelity, and also in her œconomy and prudence with regard to all affairs at home, her husband reposes such perfect confidence, that he can go abroad, and attend to public business, without the smallest anxiety about his domestic concerns, or the least temptation to enrich himself at the expense of other men.

12. "She will do him good, and not evil, all the
"days of her life." She will not only return his love with equal affection, but endeavour to ensure and heighten his esteem by every engaging and respectable virtue. She will not only avoid whatever might provoke or displease, but study to deserve well of him by promoting his interest, and raising his reputation; and that not merely by starts, or in transient fits of good humour, but uniformly and constantly every day of her life.

13. "She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh
"willingly with her hands." To Her idleness is so hateful, that her husband has no occasion to excite her to industry. Of her own accord she sets up a linen and woollen manufacture, to which she applies her hands so readily, as well as so dextrously, that it is apparent she delights in the work.

14. "She is like the merchants' ships: she bring-
"eth her food from afar." Her application and ingenuity enable her to maintain her family without expense, by exchanging the product for foreign

commodities, when necessary, on terms no less advantageous than if her husband fitted out a fleet of merchant ships to fetch them directly from distant countries.

15. "She riseth also while it is yet night; and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens." With such spirit and vigour does she proceed, that, instead of indulging herself in overmuch sleep, she rises before break of day, to make provision for those who are to go abroad to work in the fields, and to set her maidens their several tasks at home.

16. "She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard." So far is she from wasting her husband's estate, that by her frugality and capacity she is continually improving it; first purchasing a field fit for corn, when she meets with one that on due inspection she finds worth the price, and then from the fruit of her own labours adding to it a vineyard, which she takes care to have well planted.

17. "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms." As she is quick in her orders to those about her, so she bestirs herself with the utmost activity, declining no pains or exertion proportioned to her strength, which is increased by constant exercise, and which, with the cheerfulness, expedition, and utility that attend it, she prefers to all the decorations and delicacy of indolent beauty.

18. "She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night." Her labour indeed she finds so wholesome, and her traffick so profitable, that she does not always conclude her work with the day; but often continues it

through as much of the night, as can be spared from necessary repose.

19. "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and "her hands hold the distaff." Such manual operations as are suited to her sex, she reckons not any disparagement to her quality. Her fingers show a dexterity that is alike pleasing in the performance, and beneficial in the effects.

20. "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor : "yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." Those hands, which she employs with so much diligence for the advantage of her family, she fails not to stretch out with equal alacrity for the relief of the indigent. She is not so engrossed by the cares of her own household, as to forget the claims of those who have no habitation. In Her frugality never degenerates into parsimony, but always ministers to munificence. The poor, whether nearer or more remote, share liberally in her bounty.

21. "She is not afraid of the snow for her "household : for all her household are clothed with "scarlet." Her bounty in the mean while is accompanied with such discretion, that her own family and servants are in no danger of suffering by it. They are provided against the hardest winter ; they have changes of raiment for the several seasons ; and when they are to wait upon her, or to appear on any particular occasion that requires it, she is careful to have them clothed with a degree of splendour.

22. "She maketh herself coverings of tapestry : "her clothing is silk and purple." The furniture of her house is noble. Her own apparel corresponds with it. She is not ignorant of what belongs

to her rank ; and she supports it with a magnificence so much the more conspicuous for being principally her own handiwork.

23. " Her husband is known in the gates, when " he sitteth among the elders of the land." Her attention to the appearance of her husband is not less than to her own. When he comes into the courts of judicature, and takes his place amongst the senators of the country, he is distinguished by the richness and elegance of the robes which she has prepared for him. The beholders pronounce him a happy man in having such a wife as does him honour in public as well as private, and who, by easing him of all lesser cares, leaves him at full liberty to devote himself to the most important transactions.

24. " She maketh fine linen and selleth it, and " delivereth girdles unto the merchant." Her industry to provide for her family is such, that she follows more arts than one or two ; making, for example, beside other articles already named, fine linen, embroidered belts, and girdles of different kinds curiously wrought, which she sells at a considerable price to the Phenician merchant.

25. " Strength and honour are her clothing ; and " she shall rejoice in time to come." Although in every thing she makes, whether for sale or for use, she displays a just taste of what is both beautiful and splendid, still it must be remembered, that her chief ornaments are a firm and constant mind, a modest and becoming deportment, a manner of dealing with all, that is honourable, uniform, and generous ; which, joined to her other qualities before mentioned, free her from all fear about future events, and prepare her to meet af-

fiction, decay, and even death itself, with serenity and hope.

26. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and "in her tongue is the law of kindness." Add to the rest this particular praise, that as she preserves the due mean between taciturnity and loquaciousness, so she loves not to talk on foolish and frivolous subjects, but on such as are serious and useful; on which, when she can introduce them with propriety, she is sure to deliver herself pertinently and gracefully. Her language on all occasions is soft and pleasing, expressive of a gentle mind, and a tender heart. From the same fund, she is led to embrace every opportunity of inculcating on all around her, kind affections and mutual concord.

27. "She looketh well to the ways of her "household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." In her own house most especially she is studious of conveying edification. She observes the motions, and inspects the manners of every one there, whom she neither suffers to go abroad at their pleasure, nor to labour at home without proper instruction: a concern, which might alone be thought sufficient to employ her; insomuch that if she did nothing else she would yet deserve the bread she eats.

28. "Her children arise up, and call her blessed: "her husband also, and he praiseth her." Happy the children of such a mother, whose maternal care for their provision, but much more for their education, cannot fail of exciting their love and gratitude very early, and of disposing them, when grown up, to honour her person and venerate her virtues! Happy beyond expression the husband of such a wife! He can never commend her suf-

ficiently. While he attempts the favourite subject, he is so struck with her surpassing worth, that he cannot restrain himself from crying out,

29. "Many daughters have done virtuously; but "thou excellest them all." The number of those women who have acted worthily, who have mightily advanced their families, and nobly served the generations in which they lived, is not small. They are well entitled to applause, and I give it them with pleasure; but there never was any comparable to Thee. Thy merits, thou best of women, and most beloved, thy merits far, far transcend them all!

30. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; "but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be "praised." A good complexion and fine shape are, no doubt, engaging. A graceful mien and lovely features are yet more so. But as the greatest beauty soon fades, and at last vanishes, so, alas! many ill qualities may lie concealed under all these fair appearances; such, indeed, as utterly to disappoint every hope of happiness from that quarter. A truly pious woman, one who is governed throughout by a sense of duty, and who, to all her other excellent qualities adds that reverence for God, which gives them at once elevation and stability—she, and she alone, is the completely amiable object, who will always impart delight, and always deserve approbation.

31. "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and "let her own works praise her in the gates." Let all conspire to extol her character; for I cannot do it enough. Let her never want her just tribute of commendation. While some are magnified for their high birth, some prized for their great fortune, others admired for their singular beauty, and

others cried up for attainments of no intrinsic, or of no considerable value ; let her personal conduct, and her superior qualities, be celebrated with peculiar honours in the largest assemblies ; where, indeed, if all men should be silent, that conduct and those qualities would resound her praise.

What a description is here ! Can you attend to it without emotion ? Or have modern manners so warped your minds, that the simplicity of ancient virtue, instead of appearing to you an object of veneration, looks romantic and ridiculous ? Tell me then in good earnest, were the women of those days the less estimable, or the less attractive, that they did not waste their lives in a round of dissipation and impertinence, but employed them in works of ingenuity and usefulness, of piety and mercy ; that even women of the first rank amongst them as we are informed by the oldest and best authors, held it no diminution to apply their hands to different kinds of manufacture ; that they took great delight in such occupations ; and finally, that good housewifery, in all its extent, was reckoned an essential qualification of every matron ?

I am sufficiently sensible of the influence that the customs of different ages and nations have on the modes of thinking that successively obtain ; nor do I expect, that in this land called Christian, which ought to be unequalled on account of its attainments, as much as it is on that of its advantages, our mothers or our daughters, in general, will be persuaded by any thing preachers can say, to emulate the humble grandeur of many a noble lady, of many a fair princess, in former generations. Yet I am not without hope, that some of them may be induced to copy, though at a distance, those modest but exalted originals.

I mentioned our daughters, as well as mothers; because I would not have them think that they have nothing to learn from the picture we have just surveyed. Would the Virtuous Woman, so sweetly portrayed by Lemuel's mother, and so particularly marked by the characters of married and maternal excellence, have been what she was, if in her single state she had not studied the necessary principles?

After looking at so sublime a standard, I am well aware that any thing I can now offer on this part of my subject will appear to sink. I am sorry for it. But since it must be so, let the mortifying sentiment be felt by all, as a just satire on the declension of this age. To say the truth, the zeal of the preacher is too much depressed by that consideration, to bear him out in urging our young women to a close imitation of what however he must always admire. In short, when we speak of good housewifery now a days, we must submit to speak in a lower key. Would to heaven, that of this science many mothers would teach their daughters but the common rudiments; that they were unfashionable enough to educate them to be fit for any thing beyond show!

What do not great families suffer daily from the incapacity, or inattention, of those mistresses that leave all to housekeepers and other servants! How many large estates might be saved from ruin by a wiser conduct! I must say it once more, that no woman in the world ought to think it beneath her to be an œconomist. An œconomist is a character truly respectable, in whatever station. To see that time which should be laid out in examining the accounts, regulating the operations, and watching over the interests of perhaps a numerous family—to see it lost, worse than lost, in writing and gam-

ing, "in chambering and wantonness," is shocking. It is so, let the incomes be as certain, as considerable, or as immense as you will; though by the way they are hardly ever so immense in reality, as they often appear. But where, on the contrary, they are both moderate and precarious, a conduct of this kind we have no words to stigmatize as it deserves.

Merchants and tradesmen that marry such women are surely objects of singular compassion, if indeed they were deceived into an opinion, that the women they have chosen for their partners were taught this necessary piece of knowledge. But very seldom, as matters are managed at present, have they such deception to plead for their choice. Is it possible they can be ignorant in what manner young ladies are bred at most of our Boarding-schools? And do they not see in what manner they generally behave on coming home? Some of them, I acknowledged before, when placed in houses of their own, appear to much more advantage than could be reasonably expected. But I repeat the question I then asked, Is so great a chance, in an affair of such consequence, to be relied upon?

It must be owned also, that in this age, the order or figure of a table is pretty well understood, as far as relates to splendour and parade. But would it not be worth your while to improve upon the art, by learning to connect frugality with elegance; to produce a genteel, or however a good appearance, from things of less expense; I know it is difficult, especially in great cities; but I am sure it is laudable, and deserves to be attempted. This you may depend upon that most men are highly pleased to observe such economical talents in a young woman; and those talents in one that is married will scarce ever fail to animate the applica-

tion, excite the generosity, and heighten the confidence of a husband. The contrary discourages and disgusts beyond expression; I mean, where the husband has any sobriety, or any prudence. The follies inseparable from profusion, and the miseries daily produced by it, I do not pretend to enumerate. A moment's consideration will convince you, that it is always unwise, and must be generally destructive.

Next to direct profusion is that indisposition to family affairs, which too commonly follows on habits of dissipation contracted early. A young woman who has turned her thoughts to those matters in her father's house, or in many other where Providence may have disposed her lot, and who has been accustomed to acquit herself well in any lesser department entrusted to her care, will afterwards, when her province is enlarged slide into the duties of it with readiness and pleasure. The particulars have already passed through her mind. The different scenes, as they rise, will not disconcert her. Being acquainted with the leading rules, and having had some opportunities of applying them, or seeing them applied, her own good sense will dictate the rest, and render easy and agreeable to her that which, to a modish lady, is all strange, perplexing, and irksome. How strong the contrast! Who does not perceive, where the preference is due?

Hear what a masterly writer, who seems to have been well acquainted with the world, and particularly with the commercial part of it, has advanced on this head in his advice to a son, where he is directing him as to the choice of a wife. "This bear always in mind, that if she is not frugal, if she is not what is called a good manager, if she does

“not pique herself on her knowledge of family affairs, and laying out her money to the best advantage; let her be ever so sweetly tempered, gracefully made, or elegantly accomplished, she is no wife for a tradesman: and,” he even adds, “all those otherwise amiable talents will but open just so many ways to ruin.” After relating a little story, full of instruction, he thus goes on: “In short, remember your mother, who was so exquisitely versed in this art, that her dress, her table, and every other particular, appeared rather splendid than otherwise; and yet good housewifery was the foundation of all; and her bills, to my certain knowledge, were a fourth less than most of her neighbours, who had hardly cleanliness to boast, in return for their awkward prodigality.”

But perhaps you will tell me, that you may never have occasion to exert such qualities in any sphere of consequence. The answer is obvious. As the future is uncertain, you ought to acquire them in case of need; besides, in fact, there is no situation, where the general principles of frugality are not necessary, on the score both of discretion and charity. In the mean while, the acquisition will be honourable; and the study useful. It not only becomes your sex, but will employ your minds innocently, and virtuously, at hours which you might be tempted to spend in a very different manner. The subject is not intricate; yet it admits of a considerable detail, and will take up some time. The learning to write a fair hand, and to cast accounts with facility; the looking into the dispositions and practices of servants; the informing yourselves about the prices of every thing needful for a family, together with the best methods, and properest

seasons, for providing it; the observing whatever relates to cleanliness and neatness in the furniture and apartments of a house; the understanding how to deal with domestics, tradesmen, and others; above all, the obtaining every possible light with relation to the nursing, management and education of children—these and such like articles will, if I mistake not, furnish ample scope for the exercise of your faculties, in the pursuit of what I have deemed Domestic Accomplishments. Nor would I have you despise any one of them as trivial or dull. If they should seem either, you must give me leave to say the fault is in you. If on any pretence whatever you should affect to call them so, I should deem it a mark of——But I forbear; and, for your encouragement to such application, would take notice, that from what is thus necessary and beneficial, you may, time after time, pass, with a transition often imperceptible, to what is also pretty and entertaining. Which leads me to speak,

In the second place, of the Elegant Accomplishments I proposed to recommend. Of these all will be found consistent with Christian Sobriety, and several conducive to it. Where morals are not in some measure concerned, the peculiar modes of an age can occasion no material difference. Some particulars, I am now to touch upon, might not suit that unsettled and persecuted state which the first possessors of christianity were in, nor that distinguished severity of manners which would naturally arise out of such a condition, as well as out of their late separation from paganism; and yet those things may be no way improper in a christian woman of these times, when religion is established, when property is secured, and when the prevalence of a system supremely benevolent has nothing

to fear from a jealous policy, or a bigoted priesthood.

To begin with that exercise which women appear almost universally fond of, but which scrupulous minds have usually thought exceptionable. For my own part, I must acknowledge, I can see no reason for a declamation against the moderate and discreet use of Dancing. "To every thing," says Solomon, "there is a season; and a time to every purpose under the heaven:"—among the rest—"a time to dance." Even these pursuits which all approve, and approve most highly, may be abused. Nothing is exempt from shares: but one of the worst is a disposition to be peevish, illiberal, and unsociable. In the Jewish institution, it is well known, the exercise in question was adopted into religious worship itself. It is yet more remarkable, that in the parable of the prodigal son our Saviour mentions dancing, as making a part of the friendly and honest festivity indulged on his return. The single instance recorded in the New Testament, wherein it was perverted to a pernicious purpose, has been weakly urged against a practice that, used with temperance and prudence is certainly adapted to promote health and good humour, a social spirit, and kind affections between the sexes, with that easy graceful carriage, to which Nature has annexed very pleasing perceptions in the beholders.

With respect to this last, it seems to me, that there can be no impropriety in it, any more than in modulating the voice into the most agreeable tones in singing; to which none, I think, will object. What is dancing, in the best sense, but the harmony of motion rendered more palpable? Awkwardness, rusticity, ungraceful gestures, can never surely be meritorious. It is the observation

of a celebrated philosopher, who was deeply skilled in most subjects, that "the principal part of beauty is in decent and gracious motion." And here one cannot help regretting that this, which may be considered in some measure as the virtue of the body, is not oftener seen in our country, as if the sole design of dancing were to supply the amusement of the hour. A modest but animated mien, an air at once unaffected and noble, are doubtless circumstances of great attraction and delight.

I said a Modest mien; for that must never be given up: And on this account, I own, I cannot much approve of a young lady's dancing often in public assemblies, which, without a singular guard, must gradually wear off that lovely bashfulness so largely inculcated in a former discourse. Private circles consisting chiefly of friends and relations, and where persons of more years than the younger performers are present, I should esteem in every respect the most eligible. Where such precautions are observed, and this diversion is not suffered to interfere with health, regularity, modest apparel, and prudent expense; I freely confess, that I am one of those who can look on with a very sensible satisfaction, well pleased to see a company of young people joyful with innocence, and happy in each other. If an exercise so sociable, and so enlivening, were to occupy some part of that time which is lavished on cards, would the youth of either sex be losers by it? I think not.

Having mentioned Cards, I will use the freedom, unpleasing as it may prove, or ill bred as it may seem, to offer a few plain remarks on the passion for them, which is now become so strangely predominant, as to take the lead of every thing else in almost every company of every rank. With many

indeed it seems to be a calling, and, as a witty author has observed, "a laborious one too, such as they toil night and day at, nay do not allow themselves that remission which the laws both of God and man have provided for the meanest mechanic. The sabbath is to them no day of rest; but this trade goes on when all shops are shut. I know not," continues he, "how they satisfy themselves in such a habitual waste of their time; but I much doubt that plea, whatsoever it is, which passeth with them, will scarce hold weight at his tribunal, who hath commanded us to redeem, not fling away our time."

To the same occupation what numbers sacrifice their health and spirits, with every natural pleasure that depends on these, not excepting even the comforts of fresh air; pursuing it in the country with the same unabating ardour as in town, and to all the beauty and sweetness of rural scenes, in the finest season, preferring the suffocating atmosphere of perhaps a small apartment, where they regularly, every day if possible, crowd round the card-table for hours together! What neglect of business and study, what ruin of credit, of fortune, of families, of connexions, of all that is valuable in this world, often follows the frenzy I speak of, who can express?

I will suppose, my fair hearers, nay I do hope, that the demon of avarice has not yet taken possession of your hearts. But do ye know any thing so likely to introduce him, as the spirit of Gaming? Is not this last a kindred fiend; and does not he, like most other tempters, advance by slow steps, and with a smiling aspect? Tell me in sober sadness, what security can you have that

the love of play will not lead you to the love of gaming?

Between these I know there is a distinction. But is it not a distinction, at best, resembling that between twilight and darkness; and does not one succeed the other almost as naturally? The former at first is cheerful and serene, retaining some rays of pleasantry and good humour; but by little and little these disappear. A deepening shade takes place; till at last, every emanation of mirth and good nature dying away, all is involved in the gloom of anxiety, suspicion, envy, disgust, and every dreadful passion that lowers in the train of Covetousness. I say not, that this always happens; but I ask again, what security is there that it will not happen to you? Did not every gamester in the world, whether male or female, begin just where you do? And is it not probable, that many of that infamous tribe had once as little apprehension as you can have, of proceeding those lengths to which they have since run, through the natural progress of vice, no where more infatuating or more rapid than in this execrable one?

But let us suppose the desire of winning should in you never rise to that rage, which agitates the breast of many a fine lady, discomposes those features, and inflames those eyes, where nothing should be seen but soft illumination. Are there not lower degrees in the thirst of gain, which a liberal mind would ever carefully avoid? And pray consider; when either by superior skill, or what is called better luck, you happen to strip of her money, of that money which it is very possible she can ill spare, an acquaintance, a companion, a friend, one whom you profess at least to love and honour, perhaps at the very moment to entertain

with all the sacred rites of hospitality—is there nothing unkind, nothing sordid, in giving way to that which draws after it such consequences! Is this the spirit of friendship or humanity?—Blessed God! how does the passion I condemn deprave the worthiest affections of nature; and how does that bewitching power, the Fashion of the times, pervert even the best understandings, when resigned to its impostures?

Nor is it the laws of humanity and friendship only, that are transgressed by the lust of gaming. The sweet emotions of love and tenderness between the sexes are often swallowed up by this all-devouring appetite; an appetite, which perhaps beyond any thing else tends to harden and contract the heart, at the same time that the immoderate indulgence of it excludes a thousand little reciprocations of sentiment and joy, which would serve to kindle and feed the flame of virtuous affection.—How much conversation suffers from it, who does not perceive?

Here indeed you will tell me with an air of triumph, that it prevents a great deal of scandal. When, then, are your minds so unfurnished, so vacant, that without cards you must necessarily fly to that wretched resource? Creation, providence, religion, books, observation, fancy; do these present so narrow a field of entertainment, as to force you on the alternative of preying either on the reputation or on the property of others?—But now I recollect, while you possess an art of such utility as this last, for filling up the blanks of discourse, as well as for repairing the wastes of extravagance, why should you give yourselves any trouble to read or think, to enlarge your ideas or improve your faculties, beyond the usual standard? Surely the knowledge of the most fashionable games, of the

most remarkable characters, of the reigning modes and amusements of the season, with a few commonplace compliments, remarks, and matters of fact, but especially some passages of private history, told by way of secret to all the world, is quite sufficient, by the help of a little vivacity which Nature will supply, to accomplish you for every purpose of modern society.—Alas, how poor is all this! How unworthy the principal attention of beings made “but a little lower than the angels,” and professing to believe in the communion of saints!

But are there not many general companies, in which it were impossible to spend a long evening with any tolerable ease, or propriety, but by borrowing assistance from the card-table? I grant it, as things are now; and, when you are so situated, your complying with the occasion may be both allowable and proper, provided the stakes are but trifling, your tempers not ruffled, and what you win or lose is agreed to be given away in charity. By this means perhaps you may “make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.”

But tell me, I beseech you, where is the necessity of being very often in general companies? Are these the scenes of true enjoyment? What, where the heart cannot be unfolded; where the understanding has little or no play; where all is reserve, ceremony, show; where the smile of complaisance is frequently put on to deceive, and even the warmest professions of regard are sometimes made the “cloak of maliciousness!”

There is not, methinks, any thing more contemptible, or more to be pitied, than that turn of mind, which finding no entertainment in itself, none at home, none in books, none in rational con-

versation, nor in the intercourses of real friendship, nor in ingenious works of any kind, is continually seeking to stifle reflexion in a tumult of pleasures, and to divert weariness in a crowd.

‘But can it be supposed, that even in more private meetings people should be always able to pass the time without cards?’ You ought to speak more plainly, and say, to Kill the time; for that is commonly the case. By the most favourable reckoning, the greatest part of those hours that are devoted to play is lost. That which was begun for amusement is lengthened out to fatigue. No one improving or generous idea is circulated: no one happy or solacing recollection is secured. The whole is to be set down as a large portion of the span of life cut off without advantage, and without satisfaction, as far as virtue or reason is concerned.

‘What then shall we do when together?’ Do! Why, converse, or hold your tongues, as good sense and unaffected nature prompt to either. Do! Why, work, read, sing, dance, laugh, and look grave by turns, as occasion serves; any thing in the world that is innocent, rather than eternal play. For persons in all the gaiety of health, and sprightliness of youth; persons not relaxed by infirmity, or exhausted by business; persons with numberless sources of delight laid open to them, and every natural relish lively and strong—for them to be at a loss how to spend a single evening without cards, what a degradation of the human mind!

Willing to corroborate an argument which to me appears of such importance, I will avail myself of the words of a writer now living, who is not less respectable for the force than for the mo-

ality of his pen. Complaining of the fatal passion for play, he mentions, amongst other mischiefs to which, it leads, its tendency "to destroy all distinctions both of rank and sex; to crush all emulation, but that of fraud; to confound the world in a chaos of folly; to withhold youth from its natural pleasures, deprive wit of its influence, and beauty of its charms; to extinguish the flame of the lover, as well as of the patriot; to sink life into a tedious uniformity, and to allow it no other hopes or fears but those of robbing and being robbed." He adds, in the same animated style, "That if those of your sex who have minds capable of nobler sentiments, will unite in vindication of their pleasures and their prerogatives, they may fix a time at which cards shall cease to be in fashion, or be left only to those who have neither beauty to be loved, nor spirit to be feared; neither knowledge to teach, nor modesty to learn; and who, having passed their youth in vice, are justly condemned to spend their age in folly."

But I proceed to a more agreeable task, that of recommending, in the next place, those ingenious works mentioned a little while ago.

As to needle-work in particular, we find it spoken of in scripture with commendation. Its beauty and advantages are universally apparent. It was practised by ladies formerly, and ladies of the first rank, much more than it is at present. They indeed had much more leisure than most of their posterity. They were simple enough I suppose, to be in love with home, and to seek their happiness in their duty. Of that duty they considered diligence as a part; nor does it appear to have in the least cramped their imaginations. Of

their skill in this way we have seen very laudable monuments. They only wanted instruction in the principles of the Fine Arts, to give their performances a juster taste. At any rate, their time would by such means pass away more pleasantly. They would be under little temptation of wandering abroad: consequently they would escape infinite snares and inconveniences. Then, too, private conversation would be cultivated on a much more rational footing: and many a pleasing discussion would arise on the subject of their various productions. Their fancies, called forth by a thousand prettinesses, and kept up by the spirit of elegant emulation, would of course be polished and exalted. This, I believe, will be found true, that those females of the present age, who have resolution enough to copy so antiquated an example, seldom fail to prove the most entertaining companions.

I once knew a lady, noble by her birth, but more noble by her virtues, who never sat idle in company, unless when compelled to it by the punctilio of ceremony, which she took care should happen as rarely as possible. Being a perfect mistress of her needle, and having an excellent taste in that, as in many other things, her manner, whether at home or abroad with her friends, (for friends she had, though a woman of fashion, and bred at court,) was to be constantly engaged in working something useful, or something beautiful; at the same time that she assisted in supporting the conversation, with an attention and capacity which I have never seen exceeded. For the sake of variety and improvement, when in her own house, some one of the company would often read aloud, while she and her female visitants were thus employed. I must add,

that during an intimate acquaintance of several years, I do not remember to have seen her once driven to the polite necessity of either winning or losing money at play, and making her guests defray the expense of the entertainment.

Permit me, before I dismiss this article, to offer a hint or two, that may not be unworthy your observation. Instead of that minute and laborious kind of work, which is often practised by young ladies, I should think that slighter and freer patterns would for the most part be greatly preferable. The sight would be in no danger of being strained, much less time would be required to finish them; and, when finished, they would produce a much better effect. They would give, beyond comparison, more scope to the imagination; they would exhibit an ease, a gracefulness, and a flow that ought to enter, as much as possible, into all works of taste; and as they would admit a far greater multiplicity of ornament, so likewise the purpose of utility would be promoted in a far higher degree.

The business of shading with a needle is now, comparatively, seldom thought of but at school, where it is frequently taught in a paltry, and always in a defective manner, though certainly deserving of particular attention. The disposition, harmony, and melting of colours in this way, afford one of the finest exercises to female genius, and one of the most amusing that can be imagined; besides that such productions are the most permanent.

But the truth is, nothing complete or distinguished in those attempts can be expected while the proper foundation is so generally omitted to be laid; I mean Drawing, which is

The third accomplishment I would take the liberty to inculcate. That many more young ladies would be found qualified for such a study than is usually apprehended, I cannot doubt. Several, I am certain, have applied to it with the greatest success and pleasure, who, before they began, did not promise themselves the least. It is truly surprising, that so few of our more intelligent females should show a desire of being instructed in so pleasing an art, at a time too when it is to be learnt with such advantage and encouragement.

None can be ignorant, that the principles and practice of drawing were never understood amongst us to the height they are at present; owing chiefly to the patronage of society, that reflects the greatest credit on this country, and on this age. But here justice to your sex demands an acknowledgment which we joyfully make, that several honorary rewards have been most deservedly gained by young ladies of rank and character, for specimens of ingenuity, which it is to be hoped their grandchildren will one day mention and emulate with honest pride.

If such of you, my amiable hearers, as are in a situation to try whether Nature has given you talents for this beautiful accomplishment, would fairly make the essay, you might very probably open to yourselves, and to your friends, a spring of entertainment that would never run dry; that would contribute to improve, while it delighted you, by adding to your ideas of elegance and grace; that would prevent many a folly, and many a sin, which proceed from idleness; and, be not hurt, if I add, that would prove the means of future support, should it please the Supreme Wisdom to reduce you to a state of dependence.

There are other pretty works, extremely proper for female hands, which I need not specify here, since several of the remarks already made will, I presume, be applicable to them. Let it suffice to say in general, that whatever is genteel, and whatever is useful, in such occupations, should always claim your regard, when you have leisure and capacity. The former you will seldom want, if you have learnt to portion out your time with judgment; and in the latter you ought never to pronounce yourselves defective, before you have honestly tried.

The last accomplishment of the elegant kind, which I shall mention, is Music. This, I conceive, is to be recommended with more discrimination than the rest, how much soever such a notion may contradict the prevailing opinion. It is very true, there are young ladies who, without any particular advantage of a natural ear or good voice, have, by means of circumstances peculiarly favourable, made great proficiency in music: but it is as true, that they have made it at a vast expense of time and application; such as no woman ought to bestow upon an object, to which she is not carried by the irresistible impulse of genius.

In many other arts it is possible for original talents to lie dormant, till called up by assiduity or accident; but where there is a strong propension to this, it will, I imagine, hardly forbear to burst out; by means of the transcendant pleasure derived from it on all occasions. If it do not, if even the best music can be heard without a degree of delight bordering on transport; either the practice will never reward the pains necessary for acquiring it; or, there being no native vein of excellence in that way, it will, as has been commonly observed, be

discontinued on a change of condition ; in which case you lose the labour of years, that might have been directed with lasting benefit into some other channel.

Be this as it may, you will readily allow, that for a young woman who has no turn for the study I am speaking of, to be condemned both to mortify herself, and to punish her acquaintance, by murdering every lesson put into her hands, is a very awkward situation, however much her master may, for the sake of his craft, flatter her or her friends ; assuring them, perhaps with an air of great solemnity, that he never had a better scholar in his whole life. If she whose attainments in this kind are but indifferent, could be contented to amuse herself, and those of her own family, now and then, with an air that happened to please them, it were well : but how does a judicious hearer blush for the poor beginner, when set down by the command of a fond parent to entertain perhaps a large company, as we have often seen, with performing that of which she scarce knows the rudiments : while all is disappointment on their part, and, if she have any understanding, confusion on hers !

Is the preacher then an enemy to music ? Much the reverse. Where there is a real genius for it, improved by art, and regulated by sentiment, nothing surely can be more charming, or affecting. Its importance in the ancient Jewish worship is well known. Of its beauty and usefulness in all our churches, when conducted in a manner suitable to its sacred purpose, and not prostituted to levity, or perverted by ostentation, I am not insensible. Its influence in all ages and nations stands universally confessed. It is founded in some of the strong-

est perceptions of Nature, wherever she has seen fit to confer a lively sensibility to the melody of sounds.

But how much is it to be regretted, that this wonderful charm of melody properly so called, together with the whole merit of expression, should be sacrificed, as we frequently find, to the proud but poor affectation of mere trick and execution ; that, instead of rendering the various combinations of sounds a powerful instrument of touching the heart, exciting agreeable emotions, or allaying uneasy sensations, as in the days of old, it should be generally degraded into an idle amusement, devoid of dignity, devoid of meaning, absolutely devoid of any one ingredient that can inspire delightful ideas, or engage unaffected applause ! What lover of this enchanting art but must lament, that the most insipid song which can disgrace it is no sooner heard in places of public entertainment, than every young lady who has learnt the common notes, is immediately taught to repeat it in a manner still more insipid ; while the most sublime and interesting compositions, where simplicity and greatness unite, are seldom or never thought of in her case ; as if the female mind were incapable of relishing any thing grave, pathetic, or exalted !

Let me here call on every musical spirit of your sex, to assert the rights of good sense ; and to insist that those, who are entrusted with this branch of their education, shall not fail to introduce them as early as possible, into an acquaintance with whatever is most beautiful and noble in the article of melody. The more thorough knowledge of harmony may come afterwards, if you be ambitious, of advancing so far. In the mean time you will have the satisfaction of pleasing the best judges,

and of entertaining yourselves with such pieces as, while the words to which they are set convey no sentiments but what are elevated or virtuous, shall serve to refine and enliven your thoughts, to raise your spirits into joy, or compose them into sweetness, and on chosen occasions, by the diviner strains of solemn music, to lift your hearts to heaven, prove a kind of prelude to the airs of paradise and prepare you for joining the choir of angels.

SERMON VII.

ON FEMALE VIRTUE, WITH INTELLECTUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

1 TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themselves with Sobriety.

PROV. iv. 5, 6. 8, 9.

Get Wisdom, get Understanding.—Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee : love her, and she shall keep thee.—Exalt her, and she shall promote thee.—She shall give to thy head an ornament of grace : a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

IN a country like this, where there is certainly a native fund of good sense, where sciences and arts are widely cultivated, where works of genius and taste in every kind are allowed to abound ; is it not somewhat strange, that the common style of conversation should be so little instructive or entertaining ? How seldom do we fall into a company, in which we learn any thing useful, or hear any thing whatever above the rate of the multitude ; such as low jests, vulgar conceits, incoherent disputation, or impertinent tattle ! How very seldom does a thinking man come away from the visit of an evening, delighted with his manner of spending it ! One who has conversed only with a small circle of ingenious friends, will hardly conceive what frivolous, what a piteous thing, the ordinary strain of company appears to an intelligent by-stander.

The favourite communications of men of pleasure are beyond description corrupt and groveling, with scarce any diversity. Those of gay assemblies are the quintessence of dulness and dissimulation; except only that the first is sometimes tingured with a few sprinklings of smartness, and the last always concealed under the specious colours of civility. As to the busy, the learned, and the grave; the greater part are no sooner released from their respective pursuits, than they throw themselves loose into a listlessness of disposition, that wanders with impatience in quest of public diversion, or diffuses itself in private through the vacuity of idle talk: as if there were no medium between seriousness and folly, or as if people could not find relief from the stretch of application, in the agreeable unbendings of moderate amusement and rational discourse. In short, if we want to find a conversation enlivened with variety and spirit, enlightened by intelligence and tempered by politeness, we must seek for it amongst a few men who join sentiment to knowledge, and a few women who join knowledge to vivacity.

That the number of these should be so small, compared with the untaught and the ungoverned many, is surely matter of lamentation. To what shall we chiefly impute it? To what else, but to that whirl of dissipation, which, like some mighty vortex, has swallowed up in a manner all conditions and characters? That the young indeed should be often carried down the stream, till they sink into insignificance, is not much to be wondered at, how much soever it is to be regretted. But alas! they do not always stop there. From what is trivial, how easy the transition to what is mean! How quick the descent from thoughtlessness to vice! No-

thing perhaps, requires better sense, or a stricter guard, than to trifle without being foolish, or to be frolicsome without sin. They that would hold fast their righteousness, and not depart from the decorum of their character, cannot be too careful to regulate their conversation; as well as their conduct, by the great law of reflexion, and in the hour of gaiety itself not to lose sight of wisdom. But how should this be expected, where the mind is wholly unimproved, where no internal resources are secured in the days of youth, but all is left to nature neglected by education, and warped by fashion, or to the scanty supplies which company, news and accidents afford?

What I would therefore now labour is, with the help of God, to persuade you, my fair auditory, to enrich and adorn your understandings with such attainments, as shall render you not only less dependant on external amusements and empty gratifications, but more superior to every thing corrupting and dangerous; such as shall entertain and edify you at the same time, enable you to enjoy solitude, and qualify you to shine in conversation even without designing it, to inspire a mixture of complacency and respect, in fine, to unite decency and sense with mirth and joy. Thus would I still endeavour to promote that spirit of Christian Sobriety which our apostle inculcates, and by the same means contribute to the felicity and dignity of your sex.

The passage from the Proverbs, which I have read to you, by way of a second text, requires no commentary; and in truth I know not any that could do it justice. As it is, it must strike you at once with its simplicity, tenderness, and sublimity. The Wisdom or Understanding, so beauti-

fully personified by Solomon, is doubtless to be considered chiefly as representing Religion, which is certainly the highest exercise of our rational powers. But I see no reason for conceiving it to represent that only. In many parts of his writings it is manifestly used to signify Mental Improvements, in the proper sense of the phrase: nor is there any thing said of it here, which will not in one degree or another hold true of these, when under right direction; besides, in fact, the cultivation of those powers to every valuable purpose, is unquestionably a duty which we owe to their author. That the exhortation is addressed by our inspired writer to a male scholar, whom in the manner of eastern teachers he calls his son, makes no essential difference, in the spirit of his doctrine, as I hope will appear from the sequel.

The degree of those Intellectual Accomplishments which your sex should aim at, I pretend not to determine. That must depend on the capacities, opportunities, and encouragements, which you severally enjoy. With regard to all these however, this may be said in general, that they are better, and more than many of you seem solicitous to improve.

As to the first indeed, I scruple not to declare my opinion, that Nature appears to have formed the faculties of your sex for the most part with less vigour than those of ours; observing the same distinction here, as in the more delicate frame of your bodies. Exceptions we readily admit, and such as do the individuals great honour in those particular walks of excellence, wherein they have been distinguished. But you yourselves, I think, will allow that war, commerce, politics, exercises of strength and dexterity, abstract philosophy,

and all the abstruser sciences, are most properly the province of men. I am sure those masculine women, that would plead for your sharing any part of this province equally with us, do not understand your true interests. There is an influence, there is an empire which belongs to you, and which I wish you ever to possess: I mean that which has the heart for its object, and is secured by meekness and modesty, by soft attraction and virtuous love.

But now I must add, that your power in this way will receive a large accession from the culture of your minds, in the more elegant and polished branches of knowledge. When I say so, I would by no means insinuate, that you are not capable of the judicious and the solid; in such proportion as is suited to your destination in life. This, I apprehend, does not require reasoning or accuracy, so much as observation and discernment. Your business chiefly is to read Men, in order to make yourselves agreeable and useful. It is not the argumentative but the sentimental talents, which give you that insight, and those openings into the human heart, that lead to your principal ends as Women. Nevertheless, in this study you may derive great assistance from books. Without them, in effect, your progress here will be partial and confined. Neither are you to attach yourselves wholly to this study, important as it is, and grateful as you may find it. Whatever kinds of reading may contribute to your general improvement and satisfaction, as reasonable beings designed for society, virtue, and religion, will deserve your attentive regard. Suffer me to enter a little into the detail. And

First, I would observe that History, in which I include Biography, and Memoirs, ought to employ a considerable share of your leisure. Those pictures which it exhibits, of the passions operating in real life and genuine characters ; of virtues to be imitated, and of vices to be shunned ; of the effects of both on society and individuals ; of the mutability of human affairs ; of the conduct of divine providence ; of the great consequences that often arise from little events ; of the weakness of power, and the wanderings of prudence, in mortal men ; with the sudden, unexpected, and frequently unaccountable revolutions, that dash triumphant wickedness, or disappoint presumptuous hope ;—the pictures, I say, which History exhibits of all these, have been ever reckoned by the best judges, among the richest sources of instruction and entertainment.

On both accounts, we would also recommend books of Voyages and Travels ; a favourite study of the celebrated Mr. Locke. How amusing to curiosity ! How enlarging to our prospect of mankind ! How conducive to cure the contracted prepossessions of national pride, and withal to inspire gratitude for the peculiar blessings bestowed upon our country ; to excite on one side pity towards the many millions of human beings left by mysterious heaven in ignorance and barbarity, and to beget on the other admiration of the virtues and abilities displayed by numbers of these under all the disadvantages that tend to darken and overwhelm them.

Here too we would mention Geography, as closely connected with both the former ; as often useful in conversation ; and in which a competent

skill may be acquired with little application, but much amusement.

These several studies, to which may be added the principal facts, or great outlines of Astronomy, are beautiful; and they are improving. Some of them present the most interesting scenes; all contain the most pleasing discoveries. They open and enlarge the mind; they delight and humanize the heart; they remind us that we are citizens of the universe; they show us how small the part that we fill in the immense orb of being. Amidst the amplitude of such contemplations, superfluous trifles shrink away; wealth and grandeur "hide their diminished heads;" a generous ambition rises in the thoughtful mind, to approve itself to the all-inspecting eye of Him to whom none of his works are indifferent, but to whom those only can be acceptable, that, under the uncertainty and imperfection of sublunary things, seek their security, happiness, and glory, in doing well.

Permit me to ask, whence it proceeds that studies like these are neglected by the generality of your sex? Is it because they are not calculated to inflame the fancy, and flatter the passions; or because to relish them to purpose, requires some degree of solidity and judgment?—But did not the preacher say, that there were women who are no way deficient in these latter qualities? He did and therefore pleases himself with the hope, that the hints now offered may imprint conviction on such, where there has been an omission, and encourage perseverance where there has not.

As to works of imagination, it is allowed on all hands, that the female mind is disposed to be peculiarly fond of them; and surely when blended

with instruction, so as to be rendered more immediately subservient to it, they have a particular claim to your attention. In this view, we must not forget to recommend Fables, Visions, Allegories, and such like compositions, where Fancy sports under the control of Reason; Dramatic Writings also, where truth of character and purity of thought are preserved; (of these last how inconsiderable the number!) Poetry of all kinds, where a strict regard is paid to decorum, but chiefly of the sublimer forms, where Nature, Virtue, Religion, are painted and embellished with all the beauty of a chaste yet elevated imagination. What a field is here open within the reach, and adapted to the turn, of female faculties! What a profusion of intellectual ornament is spread before you, for memory to collect, and for reflexion to work upon! How many sprightly, delightful, and lofty ideas do here pass before the mental eye, all dressed in the brightest colours! How strangely inexcusable must those be, who complain at any time of want of amusement, when the genius and invention of every illuminated age have taken such happy pains to supply the noblest!

I say nothing now of Novels and Romances, having had occasion to speak of them so largely in a former discourse. But I must not omit to recommend those admirable productions of the present century, which turn principally on the two great hinges of sentiment and character; joining description to precept, and presenting in particular the most animated sketches of modern manners, where the likeness is caught warm from life; while the powers of fancy, wit, and judgment, combine to expose vice and folly, to enforce reformation, and in short but spirited essays, to convey the rules of

domestic wisdom and daily conduct. I need not here name the Spectator, or those who have followed him with various success in the same track; many of them ingenious, some of them masterly writers. How much are both sexes indebted to their elegant pens, for a species of instruction better fitted perhaps than most others of human device, to delight and improve at the same moment; such is its extent, its diversity, its familiarity, its ease, its playful manner, its immediate reference to scenes and circumstances with which we are every day conversant!

Works of this kind are peculiarly calculated to allure the lively and the gay, who are not yet delivered over to licentiousness. Hardly indeed will girls, for instance, who mean no ill, but whose fancies are all alive and restless, submit to have their understandings attired at Wisdom's glass; if lovely forms and smiling images be not often reflected from thence, to detain the eye, and captivate the heart. In reality, none of you, my dear hearers, can be too well acquainted with those approved masters of life, those able teachers of decorum, those singularly successful painters of truth and morality. Let me advise you to dwell on their pictures, to imbibe their sentiments, to replenish your minds with that inexhausted fund of stores and examples which they have furnished. You cannot fail of improving under such tutors. They too will provide you with a touchstone by which to judge of other writings, and while you are searching "for knowledge as for hid treasures," to separate between the pure ore and the alloy.

I should not on this occasion do justice to your sex, if I did not say, that such books as those last

mentioned are, in a particular degree, proportioned to the scope of your capacities. Of this I am certain, that amongst women of sense I have discovered an uncommon penetration in what relates to characters, an uncommon dexterity in hitting them off through their several specific distinctions, and even nicer discriminations, together with a race of fancy, and a fund of what may be strictly termed sentiment, or a pathetic manner of thinking, which I have not so frequently met with in men. It should seem that Nature, by her liberality to the female mind in these respects, has seen fit to compensate what has been judged a defect in point of depth and force; and a real defect, I believe, it is, if estimated absolutely. If estimated with a due regard to the design and formation of the sex, it ought to be considered as no defect at all.

I have already hinted, that to men and women the Almighty has allotted very different provinces, on the filling of which with suitable kinds of ability and excellence depends, under his conduct, the proper perfection and welfare of each. In all I have said therefore, or may yet say, concerning Female Accomplishments, I would be still understood as recommending what is refined in study, and useful in the milder modes of life; not what is profound in the former, or of no material advantage in the latter. This hinders not however, but that those ladies, whom Nature, not confining herself to her customary operations, has endowed with any signal strength of genius, may, if favoured also by their situation, give way to that original bent, by prosecuting severer studies to every prudent length. I say, to every Prudent length. For should they push their application so far as to hurt

their more tender health, to hinder those family duties for which the sex are chiefly intended, or to impair those softer graces that give them their highest lustre ; nothing, I think, can be more apparent than that, in such cases, they would relinquish their just sphere, for one much less amiable, and much less beneficial. But neither from this, nor from what was advanced immediately before, does it follow, that, in what relates to the acquisitions of the mind, women in general may not pursue studies, that are solid, as well as entertaining ; which leads me to add,

In the next place, that the most obvious branches both of natural and moral Philosophy should engage some portion of your time. That they are so seldom, and so slightly thought of, you must allow me to say, is a melancholy reflexion. Does Creation, through her infinitely extended, and infinitely diversified scenery, display innumerable wonders ? Have these been traced with skill and accuracy, by many learned and many laborious hands ? Are they laid open to you, and almost pressed upon you, from every quarter ? For of Natural Philosophy, I consider Natural History, as a part.—And can ye with a giddy eye turn away from this glorious spectacle, to gaze on the meanest ornament of beauty, or the silliest pageant of vanity ; thus poorly, not to say impiously, prostituting that admiration which ought to be consecrated chiefly to the works of your all-perfect Creator ?

Are the great and eternal obligations of Conscience, the maxims of a wise and worthy behaviour, the duties you owe to the Supreme of Beings, to your fellow-creatures, and yourselves ; the rules necessary for the government of your

own minds in particular, or for the management of those that may be hereafter committed to your care; are these mighty considerations, unfolded and enforced as they have been with equal clearness and eloquence by various writers—are these, I say, matters of so little concern with you, that the business of contriving some petty circumstance of dress, or the care of settling some foolish party of pleasure, shall be preferred in almost every case of competition?

Here, I must confess, it is difficult to repress the risings of indignation. Here I cannot deny, but the feelings of contempt, mixed with those of compassion, are in some danger of banishing the favourable ideas we entertain of your sex, when seen in happier points of light.—For shame, Ladies, let not this reproach rest on you any longer. Hasten to vindicate your reputation from the infamy of impertinence and nonsense. Be ambitious to demonstrate, by the most substantial proofs, that you are capable of better things than the placing of a ribbon, or adjusting a head-dress, than the glittering in an assembly-room, or prattling at a tea-table. Be all ardour to emulate those excellent ones of your sex, who, without affecting to despise any thing that is innocently female, discover in their conversation among their friends, a mind devoted to wisdom, and ennobled by knowledge.

The duty and advantage of reading the Scriptures, with a few books of the most serious and devotional strain, I will take another occasion to consider.—But, I think, I hear you exclaiming that, though God has given you the capacities of intellectual improvement, men have denied you the opportunities of it. Let us therefore proceed to examine how this matter stands, which was

Our second point. If your complaint be well founded, you are certainly objects of pity, instead of blame. If the men, jealous of dominion, do really seek to depress the women, by keeping them in a state of ignorance, they are surely guilty of equal cruelty and meanness. But though the complaint be a very common one, and very popular with your sex, I must take the liberty of saying, that it appears to me without any foundation adequate to the bitterness with which it has been made, or to the keenness with which it has been propagated.

That your minds are often much neglected at home, that they are neglected perhaps yet more at many Boarding-Schools, we readily admit, and heartily regret. But are you nevertheless desirous of knowledge? Then, what should hinder you from attaining it? Is there any law or statute by which you are prohibited, under severe pains and penalties, to read or to think, if you be so minded? Books you have, or may have, on every subject that is proper for you. This is not a country where these are scarce; where Friendship, if permitted, will not supply, or where Benevolence, if asked, will not lend them. You will be pleased to remember too, that the price of one expensive gown, or of one shining toy, will at any time furnish a little library of the best authors. Nor does it appear, that you are at a loss to find as many plays and novels as the most insatiable avidity can devour. But in fact there are few young ladies, who are not tolerably provided with books useful as well as amusing; and in those who are not under the necessity of earning their bread, it is both an idle and unthankful pretence, to plead that they want either

opportunity or leisure for any one study befitting their sex.

Not to speak of the time that with so much propriety they might, and that, for so many reasons, they ought, to redeem from endless visitings and other follies; what is there to prevent their reading alternately to one another, when custom or conveniency engages them at work together? Such an exercise would not only enlarge the stock of ideas in each individual, but also present materials on which their minds might operate with an energy quickened by mutual exertion. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the face of a woman her friend. You, my fair pupils, cannot be offended, that to suit the quotation to the argument, I should here read *Woman for Man*. How smoothly have I seen those hours steal away, which were thus employed in a little ring of intelligent females, all sweetly solicitous to improve and be improved by each other!

By this means too may be acquired a very valuable and pleasing accomplishment, that of reading well; and to this cause, I presume, it is to be ascribed, at least in part, that there are not a few women who possess it in no contemptible degree, and that there are some who read delightfully. It is likewise probably, in some measure, owing to that fine feeling of nature and of sentiment, which may be supposed to result from the delicacy of their organs. If, in the exercise I speak of, they are often deficient where force and vehemence are requisite, to that very delicacy it is obvious to impute it; and also perhaps to their running too commonly into a monotony, which their teachers have not taken sufficient pains to correct.

Having touched on this head, I will take leave to remark by the way, that nothing, as I apprehend, can be more erroneous than to begin the study of what may be termed the Art of Reading with poetry chiefly. For by the flow and harmony of the numbers, a learner is carried insensibly into the repetition of those musical tones, that chance to seize the ear with particular delight ; from which the voice, once got into the same strain, cannot without a struggle persuade itself to break away ; a principle source of the evil of monotony, where it has not been contracted by bad example, and where the sense of an author is understood or attended to. Where it is not, the proper emphasis cannot be expected.

Now to prevent or remedy this prevailing evil, the most likely method, I conceive, would be to begin with frequently reading aloud those productions in prose of which the style is plain and easy, such as unadorned Narrative, short Stories, Familiar Epistles ; but principally those that approach nearest to the language of conversation, such as Dialogues, and the best Dramatic Writings ; mixing for a considerable time nothing that is versified, and endeavouring to support the voice with firmness and simplicity, till you have formed a habit of so doing. Then by slow and almost imperceptible progression, you should advance to what is more varied, rhetorical, and raised ; such as Allegories, Orations, Moral and Religious Discourses, and Essays of the pathetic kind, together with the most beautiful and elevated parts of Holy Writ ; keeping to these, till your voice has acquired flexibility, expression, and energy. After repeated and patient efforts in this way, you may proceed with success to reading and reciting pieces of poetry, in

different styles ; setting out with those where there is least, and rising gradually to those where there is most of the tender, the impassioned, and the sublime. Need I add, that all this should be practised in the frequent hearing, and under the kind animadversion, of an experienced judge ?

But perhaps you think the practice too laborious and troublesome. Do ye ? Go, thou trifler, and be ashamed of thy folly.—To neglect the study of thy native English, the skilful use of which, joined to sentiment and knowledge, would render thy conversation charming ; and yet contentedly to puzzle thy silly head with learning a little imperfect French, which it is a hundred to one if ever thou shalt have occasion to use—how preposterous and futile ! To the language last named I am no enemy ; I only blame its occupying so large a place in the female education of this country. For women of rank the fashion has made it necessary. But what can be more ridiculous than to see our city girls, not excepting the daughters of plain tradesmen and honest mechanics, taught for years together, at great expense, a smattering of that which soon after they leave the boarding-school is generally forgotten ; while they are left ignorant of the superior beauties and just pronunciation of their mother-tongue ?

I mentioned the exercise of reciting verses. With relation to this, I would only say, that I do not wish a young woman to indulge it in any company, that is not very private and chosen indeed ; how much soever it is to be desired, that she should store her memory with some of the most select sentiments, and striking descriptions, from the best writers both in verse and prose.

On this last particular I am led to observe, that, for a disengaged hour, there can be few occupations of greater entertainment or utility, than that of imprinting on the mind those passages from any good author, which happen to please and affect more than ordinary; either by repeating them often at the time, till they are got by heart, or by writing them down, or sometimes by doing both. The advantages of such a practice are sufficiently apparent. Would it be one of the least, think ye, that the attention of her who was thus employed, would be often turned from viewing and admiring her person or dress in the mirror, to the contemplation of Truth and Virtue, and fixing their fair and venerable image in her soul?

Beside the several opportunities of mental culture now enumerated, I must not forget to add, that in all probability there are few young women who are not, or who may not be, acquainted with some persons of both sexes, endowed alike with worth and capacity, that would take the highest pleasure, by their conversation and counsel, to aid them in the pursuit of knowledge; which brings me to consider,

In the last place, your complaints of want of encouragement to that pursuit. Who are they then that seek to discourage you? I have read of foolish mothers, that would not suffer their daughters to read, lest they should dim the lustre of their eyes, or spoil the bloom of their complexions. But I have never met with one, that seriously carried her folly so far. On the other hand, I have known parents not a few, who, though they had no taste for knowledge themselves, would yet speak with the utmost satisfaction of a girl that was fond of her books.

But perhaps my little friend is afraid, lest the men should suspect her of being what the world style in derision a Learned Lady. Indeed? Is this then a character so very easily acquired, that you are in danger of it the moment you emerge from the depth of ignorance, and begin to think and speak like a reasonable being? You are overhasty in your apprehension. A Learned Lady is by no means a creature that we run the risk of being often shocked with. For my own part, I have never, strictly speaking, seen such a one; and when at any time I have met with what approached to that character, I must confess, I found nothing to excite terror. But possibly you mean a smatterer in learning. There, indeed, I join with you in wishing you may never incur the imputation.

That men are frightened at Female pedantry, is very certain. A woman that affects to dispute, to decide, to dictate on every subject; that watches or takes opportunities of throwing out scraps of literature, or shreds of philosophy, in every company; that engrosses the conversation as if she alone were qualified to entertain; that betrays, in short, a boundless intemperance of tongue, together with an extinguishable passion for shining by the splendour of her supposed talents; such a woman is truly insufferable. At first, perhaps, she may be considered merely as an object of ridicule; but she soon grows into an object of aversion. Be assured, however, that where a character so unnatural appears, it is not the effect of too much knowledge, but of too little. The deep river flows on with a noble stillness, while the shallow stream runs babbling along. Suspicious of her own deficiency, the pedant we describe suspects lest you should discover it; but instead of learning caution from

that consciousness, she strives to dazzle you with the little she does know: Or else, what is more probable, elated with that which to her circumscribed view appears great, she cannot restrain herself from displaying it on all occasions; when farther progress, and higher ground, would have taught her modesty, by showing her immense regions of truth yet untravelled, of which she had no conception before.

In fact, we find that the best scholars of either sex are the least ostentatious. It will ever be so, where erudition is accompanied with judgment, and matured by reflexion. Take care to preserve sober sense, and unassuming manners: far from giving disgust by literary attainments to any person whose regard is of moment, you will give pleasure to every thinking man and woman of your acquaintance. I am even inclined to believe that, when in conversation you claim no kind of pre-eminence, but instead of pretending to teach are willing to learn, instead of courting applause are ready to confer it, instead of proudly directing are content quietly to follow the current of discourse, every creature living will be delighted with your deportment, will listen with attention, and even deference, to one who has thus learnt, that the noblest improvement of superior knowledge is superior humility.

Now and then indeed there may be an invidious female, who cannot bear to see herself outdone. But that is a circumstance, which will only add to your exaltation; while every one else will be tempted, for the sake of mortifying her, to pay the more respect to you. Be this as it may, the notion that letters are apt to generate self-conceit, because it cannot be denied that abuse of them has often done so, will in those of the least can-

dour or discernment serve to heighten esteem for her, who considers an excellent understanding as only next in value to an excellent temper. If on any occasion it should happen, that the foolish or the worthless of one sex, or of the other, are prejudiced against a young woman for discovering, though without parade, a cultivated mind, what then? Is not the single plaudit of a real judge sufficient to outweigh a whole theatre of others?

But you will ask, do we not often see handsome idiots complimented and caressed by those men from whom better things might be expected; while the most accomplished women in the same company shall be overlooked, if destitute of personal charms? The fact cannot be dissembled, and far be it from me to justify such partiality. There is in beauty a magic, which certainly does enchant for a time the generality of beholders: But this will by no means excuse the injustice of neglecting merit in those who want that advantage. Let it be remembered however, that the triumph of their rivals is commonly, like that of the wicked, short. The spell on which it is founded is soon broke. Men at least of any significance, are seldom long in recovering their senses. The admiration raised by "a set of features, or the tincture of a skin," is often by the witlessness of the possessor thrown down in an instant. The witchcraft of a fair outside is always dispelled by familiarity. Nothing can detain affection or fix esteem, but that kind of beauty which depends not on flesh and blood. The least degree of understanding will be disgusted at petulance, caprice, or nonsense, even in the fairest form. External allurements are continually losing; internal attractions are continually gaining. A beautiful character "is as the morning light, that

"shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Sense, spirit, sweetness, are immortal. All beside "withereth like the grass." The power of a face to please, or indeed to displease, is diminished every time it is seen. When appetite does not predominate, and appetite cannot predominate always, the soul will seek a soul; it will refuse to be satisfied with any thing less. If it find none, in vain shall the brightest eye sparkle, in vain shall the softest smile entice. But if a mind appear, and, wherever it resides, a mind will appear, it is recognised, admired, and embraced; even though the eye should possess no lustre, and smiles should at the moment be banished by sorrow.

"Mind, mind alone, bear witness earth and heaven,

"The living fountain in itself contains

"Of beauteous and sublime! Here hand in hand

"Sit paramount the Graces——"

I cannot conclude this discourse, without taking so fair an opportunity of addressing myself to such of the men as, by directing their praises of young women wholly or chiefly to an outward appearance, turn the attention and solicitude of the little idols so strongly that way, as often to occasion the neglect of those inward perfections which can alone give them value. Have you forgotten, Sirs, that what they see you admire, and hear you applaud, they will be induced to think most worthy of admiration and applause; and that on it of course they will bestow their whole or their chief care? If you, who ought to assist their judgments, and animate their resolutions, in what relates to the conduct of life, be accustomed to pay your main homage to their persons, their persons likewise they will adore. Beauty with them will constitute Merit; and every other endowment will be employ-

ed as a handmaid to dress that, if not as a pandar to sell it. Accordingly I fear, that to your score must be charged many errors of the sex, often less justly imputed to them. Those errors I am sure, it would become you to prevent, or to correct at the source, by pointing out to them what, in your wiser hours, you want and wish them to be ; and what, when they are, will not fail to captivate love, to command veneration, and to add permanence to both.

Consider, I beseech you, how honourable it will be for you, instead of corrupting the fair, to mend them : instead of perverting their ideas, to lead their taste to knowledge and elegance, to worth and delicacy, to humility and meekness ; things, which in your inmost souls you cannot but prize, whenever you meet with them in an amiable woman, and of which you are secretly convinced the absence cannot be compensated by any advantages of form or feature, any decorations of fashion or show. How much nobler the power to save than the power to destroy ! How much sweeter the praise of being esteemed men of virtue and sentiment, the friends and patrons of the sex, advocates for their true interest, and zealous to promote it, than that of being looked upon as smooth-tongued courtiers, or good-natured triflers ! To flatter a giddy girl into good humour, or even tenderness, by telling her perpetually how handsome or how fine she is, requires no capacity. Every empty fellow, every frivolous dangler, every wretch of a parasite can do the same. But to engage the esteem of a woman of principle and discernment, to preserve that esteem, and even to insure in her breast a silent testimony, that you have contributed to establish this principle, and to improve this discernment — is triumph indeed ! Those coxcombs that in truth

make no distinction, but yet would persuade every young thing they see, that her face, her shape, her dress, her air, surpass those of all her sex; and after throwing her into ecstasies of self complacency go away and laugh to their companions—are a detestable race.

Concerning many of you, my friends, I hope better things. Nor do I mean by aught I have said, rigidly to preclude every degree of compliment in conversation with the fair sex. I am for commending with moderation, what is commendable; for acknowledging with prudence, what is pleasing. Young minds ought to be encouraged. In every young mind there is something good. An agreeable appearance is certainly engaging. Truth will never deny it; courtesy will readily own it. But then under the shelter of kind approbation, salutary counsel may be admitted. Wisdom may be found a welcome guest, when introduced by affection—I was going to say, that vanity may be successfully turned against itself. But why should the love of honest praise be deemed vanity? Even tell your female friends, that you do esteem them for whatever in their characters is estimable. Tell them without exaggeration, but generously at the same time, what that is. Describe with complacency the qualities and accomplishments which you have ever held most truly attractive which it is in their power to acquire, and which it will be their glory to possess. If they have beauty, be not afraid to add how alluring it appears, when illuminated by sense, and arrayed by virtue. If they have none, remind them freely that sense and virtue have often borne away the palm from the finest figure that ever Flattery deified, if destitute of those living and lasting graces.

SERMON VIII.

ON FEMALE VIRTUE, WITH INTELLECTUAL
ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

1 TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themselves with Sobriety.

PROV. iv. 5, 6. 8, 9.

Get Wisdom, get Understanding.—Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.—Exalt her, and she shall promote thee.—She shall give to thy head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

ON the subject of Intellectual Accomplishments much remains to be said. At a time when they are neglected by so many women, who, if they read at all, read only for a little transient amusement, they cannot sure, considering their importance, be inculcated too strongly. They may, it is true, be perverted. What is there of the greatest moment, that may not? Because works fit only for the veil of darkness have been wrought in the face of day, does it follow that "light is not sweet, or "that it is not a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun;" or that benefits innumerable are not derived to mankind from the resplendent luminaries of Nature? Were these extinguished, what were this world? And what, think ye, must be

that mind where all is enveloped in a night of ignorance? "For the soul," says Solomon, "to be without knowledge is not good." Of so great a defect do we not see every day the unhappy consequences in the conduct of both sexes?

With regard to yours, my beloved sisters, I am willing to impute much of the folly and misery that involve multitudes of women, not to their being altogether unacquainted with the main outlines of their duty, traced by the hand of God on every heart a little more or a little less clearly; but to their want of that relish for knowledge, and of those attainments in it, which certainly tend to exclude many temptations, and to fortify against the influence of others. On this account, I must again and again urge the culture of your Minds. Your Virtue, your Sobriety is intimately concerned in it. That shall be my first argument: its connexion with your dignity or figure in life shall be my second; and my third shall turn on its usefulness to promote your comfort and felicity: considerations surely that merit your attention. I pray God to bless them for your improvement.

I begin with showing, that the Intellectual Accomplishments briefly delineated in the preceding discourse will have a tendency to exclude many temptations. To what dangerous resources are the generality of young women driven by the love of pleasure and amusement, ill directed! Having formed no taste for those that arise from reading, writing, agreeable reflexions, and rational conversation, their passions, naturally ardent, fly without previous examination to every object which flatters that ardour by promising all the vivacity of joy. In this career, it is not difficult to conceive what snares may entrap Beauty, and what

habits may corrupt Innocence. When first entered on, it is very possible that no evil is intended. For that very reason none is suspected; and this confidence betrays. When Vice begins to unveil her daring front, Conscience is startled, and shrinks from the monster. But curiosity, opportunity, importunity, the flatteries of self-deceit, the dreams of youthful fancy, the bias of fashion, the fear of banter should they venture to oppose; all these concur with the powers of darkness in misleading the poor unexperienced adventurers: and to courses, of which the bare idea filled them at a distance with horror, familiarity at last reconciles them; if not so far as to procure real or thorough approbation, far enough however to engage perseverance attended with a feeling of remorse that gradually abates, till they are often inextricably entangled in a thicket of guilt and wretchedness.

What numbers of miserable beings are now lost there, whose first deviations were occasioned by nothing more than a desire of escaping from inactivity or dulness to something that might divert or employ! But had an early love of books prevented this languor, by furnishing at home a harmless and varied entertainment, such as was adapted to give play even to the liveliest imagination, there had been evidently much less inducement to seek it abroad; and many a soul that is at this day hurrying on to destruction, might probably, in that case, have been walking with Wisdom and Happiness. Nor would I have you think, that I speak of those only who have broke through all the restraints of decorum. There are a thousand tracks leading to sin and woe, besides that infamous road to which the hand of public censure is pointed.

The supposing, indeed, so wide a distance between the extremities of guilt and its intermediate stages, is among the most natural mistakes of a mind destitute of knowledge. Of this internal light one of the great advantages is, to throw such illumination on virtue and vice through all their essential, and even many of their minute distinctions, as to make them to be discerned with clearness, and felt with conviction; while there rise up to view nameless beauties in holiness, and nameless deformities in sin, that pass unheeded by the dim inattentive eye of an understanding uninformed. This delicacy of perception alone, in a breast not yet corrupted by evil custom, will create a salutary dread of many pursuits and connexions that often prove exceedingly hurtful. In general, it seems obvious, that by how much more we are acquainted with our duty, by so much the juster apprehensions we shall have of its importance, and by so much the greater capacity for performing it.

But the grand use of an affection for knowledge, as to the point before us, is that of preventing idleness and dissipation, which it certainly does where such affection is properly regulated: and this cannot be repeated too frequently, nor pressed too powerfully. The human mind was made for action. In virtuous action consists its highest enjoyment. It will not, it cannot, continue long unemployed, especially during the sprightly season of youth. Even feeble age finds its principal delight in recollecting the days of juvenile activity, and rehearsing the enterprises which distinguished that happy period. But now there are many young ladies, whose situation does not supply a sphere for domestic exercise sufficient to fill up that part of their time, which is not necessarily appropriated to female occupations

and innocent amusements. What then shall they do with it, or with themselves, if books be not called in to their assistance? Pursue the inquiry in your own minds. Many of you, alas! are but too well qualified to pursue it, can but too well imagine the insipid, foolish, and even pernicious expedients, which under those circumstances are daily practised for killing time and thought.

In truth, it cannot appear surprising to see those who have no notion of internal entertainment, hunting after fashionable diversions. For my part, I am only surprised, when those who from a better education have had opportunities of knowing what an extent and diversity of ideas and imagery, of information the most grateful to the mind, and of description the most affecting to the heart, may be found in a well chosen library; when such, I say, do yet prefer to all this the hollowness and dulness, which inseparably attend a perpetual train of public amusements, or private visiting.

But I am inclined to hope, that a preference so unjust and unwise is seldom made by those last mentioned; that they who have tasted the pleasure of conversing intimately with the best authors living and dead, and from this happy commerce have contracted an intellectual turn, will not be often tempted to mingle with the unthinking crowd. When for the sake of unbending the mind more entirely, and avoiding any unnecessary air of singularity, they do at any time join it; the same turn will contribute to preserve them from the seduction of vice and folly.

It is not to be denied, that from the head to the heart, the distance, in a moral reckoning, is often

immense ; that between sublimity of idea and elevation of conduct there is no necessary connexion ; that the finest sentiments and the grossest passions have been observed to meet in the same mind : that our First Mother was betrayed by the pride of knowing ; and that the height of capacity in Lucifer, only increased the fall of that son of the morning. All this is true. But shall we hence infer, that the desire of knowledge well directed, and wisely applied, is not likely to produce any worthy impressions ?

Imagine two young ladies, of whom one delights in elegant and virtuous studies, the other in fashionable idleness. Will you say, that the former is equally in danger with the latter, of descending to vulgar, or to vicious pleasures ! As familiarity with persons of refined manners may be expected to communicate a corresponding refinement ; is it not probable, that intimacy with the most beautiful compositions, will, in the same way, impart a beauty to the soul ? And is there not ground to believe, that this will make her who is possessed of it ashamed to allow herself in any thing unhandsome ; even as it is reasonable to suppose, that she who has been genteelly bred, will disdain the thought of a low behaviour ? Or, because the natural tendency of things is sometimes crossed, will ye say that it is therefore destroyed ? Have ye not heard, that a rule is not overthrown, but rather confirmed, by exceptions ? Young people, we know, are often corrupted by bad books ; and have we not likewise known them improved by good ones ? She must be depraved and sunk indeed, who from contemplating the majesty and happiness of Virtue in the best examples, together with the meanness and misery of Vice in the worst, that history or poetry

holds up to view, can go away, and in her own deportment counteract immediately the feelings of love and admiration for the one, of contempt and abhorrence for the other, which objects of this kind must unavoidably awaken. She again, who should not perceive herself prompted to a prudent and amiable demeanour, or guarded against the contrary, by those pictures of discretion and excellence on one hand, of levity and worthlessness on the other, with which sentimental and moral writers abound, must be absolutely void of decency, or of reflexion. To instance but in one subject more; she must be wholly given up to trifles that can pursue them with the same fondness, after having her imagination raised, and all her faculties expanded by those wonderful representations of the works of God, which are contained in many books of Philosophy and Geography, Voyages and Travels.

But now represent to yourself a young lady; whose understanding is utterly uncultivated. What is there to correct her passions, or to govern her practice? What is there to direct her in the choice of companions, and diversions; to guard her against the follies of her own sex, and the arts of ours; in short, to prevent her falling into any or every snare, that is or may be laid for her? Suppose her to have received from nature the seeds of common sense. Do these require no attention to raise them? or is this most useful plant to be reared without the aid of experience? But where, or how, is that to be obtained by a girl? Must she discover the wiles and wickedness of libertines by conversing with them? Must she learn how to defend against danger by having run into it; or how to avoid the blandishments of pleasure by having felt its bitterness? By men the knowledge of the

world is commonly gathered in it. Very different from the situation of women is theirs in this respect; and they, it is to be apprehended, often purchase a little wisdom at a great expense. By entering into any company that tempts, engaging in any friendship that offers, or accepting of almost any creature that happens to court them, it is but too well known what mischiefs a number of our young gentlemen incur. A female that acts upon the same plan is lost; and she who would effectually escape dishonour and remorse, reproach and ridicule, must endeavour to know the world from books, to collect experience from those who have bought it, and to shun misconduct herself by observing the calamities it has occasioned to others. But I said,

Secondly, that Mental Acquisitions were of importance to your dignity and figure in life. Consider, my dear sisters, how many women are, in a discerning eye, lessened by their extravagant attachment to dress and toys, to equipage and ostentation; in a word, to all the gaudy apparatus of female vanity, together with the endlessly ridiculous, no less than frequently fatal consequences, which these draw after them. Consider how trite and childish, men of sense must necessarily deem those arts, that are daily practised on our sex by multitudes of yours; not to speak now of worse enticements. Consider the emptiness, insipidity, and inelegance of their conversation—how contemptible! Above all the rest, consider the jealousy and envy, the mean suspicion and shameful malignity, to which we have seen the female breast enslaved, and frequently on the slightest foundation, frequently on no foundation at all—how debasing! Now from these evils the love, of letters with

that liberal cast of thought which they are naturally calculated to give, would, I am persuaded, be one powerful preservative.

A young woman so worthily, and so happily engaged, will not find leisure for unnecessary trifles and idle parade : or if it were possible she should, a conscious superiority will enable her very much to despise them. Endowed with her powers of pleasing, she will not find herself reduced to the little tricks played off by many of her sex. In the company of her friends, she must ever appear with peculiar advantage. In other companies, where she least thinks of appearing, an agreeable tincture of intelligence, an easy correctness of expression, if it should be proper for her to take any part in the discourse, will still diffuse themselves. Perhaps too she will deliver herself with a graceful, though modest freedom. Her letters, or any other composition that may fall from her pen, will be read with particular eagerness and approbation ; her correspondence will be prized as an honour, and her acquaintance courted as a privilege ; attention will hang upon her words, and respect follow in her train. Such a woman will know how to entertain and charm, beyond the duration of an hour. Is it carrying our ideas too far to say, that, in all probability, an emanation of sentiment and spirit will be visible in her air and manner, that her mind will radiate in her eyes ? It may not always, but it will often. With regard to those vile passions before mentioned, which arise from rivalry in dress, beauty, and the like ; as she has learnt to value herself on better things than the last, the first by consequence will not have the same hold of her soul ; besides, I suppose her to have acquired an enlargement and generosity, which nothing but

books, or knowledge of the world, or the principles of genuine piety, can inspire.

Of the two latter the operation is in some respects defective, without the concurrence of the former. How improving soever an acquaintance with life may be found on some accounts, there are instances, in which it will hurt the feelings of the heart ; if these be not from time to time softened and cherished, by the more soothing representations of men and things supplied by authors of a candid strain. It is also to be remembered, that, in matters of religion, a zeal without knowledge has been often destructive and is always hurtful. But suppose no such zeal to take place ; suppose that meekness, as it certainly ought, makes a part, and a large one too, of the pious character in any woman ; yet without the seasonings of a good understanding without something of that salt and poignancy which are derived from writers of taste and learning, there will arise, in repeated intercourse, a sameness and a flatness that must diminish esteem, though they may not destroy affection. Add to this that, on a variety of subjects, ignorance will inevitably produce a poorness and vulgarity of thinking, which, to persons whose views are nobler will be rather disgusting.

In truth, the acquisitions we recommend would prevent or cure most of those little prejudices and little passions, which often hurt the sex in the opinion of their best friends. Not to insist on what has been mentioned more than once, their astonishing prepossessions in favour of public places, greatly owing to their want of something rational and agreeable to employ them at home ; what shall we say of that absurd partiality, which they frequently show for well dressed fops, who pretend

indeed to admire them, but are too frivolous and conceited to admire any, in good earnest, but themselves? Surely a well informed understanding would enable women to despise such insignificance: and to give the preference to merit, and modesty, in a plain habit.

To what shall we chiefly impute that female curiosity, which has been so long, and in most instances, so justly a topic of satire? Is it possible, that women could show such amazing eagerness to be acquainted with every minute particular in the life, character, dress, fortune, and circumstances of others, did they possess a fund of domestic entertainment and liberal conversation? The original principle, by receiving a right direction, might certainly be turned into a rich source of improvement, that would spread increasing lustre around you.

That aptness also to be astonished, alarmed, affrighted at trifling accidents, imaginary evils, or natural events ever so little unusual, which, when carried far, and frequently recurring, makes a young woman appear quite silly, is often the effect of shallowness. Ignorance is prone to admire; and admiration readily swells into a passion, or sinks into a panic: whereas an enlightened mind is seldom wrought up to ecstasy, and seldom overwhelmed by terror.

The same reasoning will hold in relation to the incapacity of keeping a secret, with which your sex have been so often reproached. Those insignificant females, who are destitute of better ideas, will be naturally tempted to give themselves an air of consequence, by communicating every piece of information which they happen to receive under the notion of secrecy. But the acquisition of valuable

knowledge helps to remove this temptation, by conferring real importance, as well as by supplying fitter conversation.

Again, were women to contemplate the fatal consequences of avarice, ambition, vanity, luxury, the violence of love, and the fury of revenge, as appearing in the ruin of families, the devastation of provinces, and the fall of empires; is there not reason to hope, they would be less dazzled with those objects, and less affected by those occasions; that are apt to foment such propensities; —propensities which, though in their case not so consequential to others, are yet many times extremely degrading, as well as pernicious, to themselves.

And with regard to that ignoble disposition to scandal, by many deemed one of the characteristic blemishes of your sex; you could not possibly indulge it so often, were you furnished with a sufficient compass of observation and sentiment, on subjects much more innocent, and surely not less interesting—Not less interesting, did I say? How, in the name of God, are you concerned with the faults of those with whom you have no connexion? or what call have you to remark upon them, farther than may be necessary to guard yourselves or others against their contagion, or their consequences? Are you vain of the wit and vivacity which you display, or fancy you display, on such occasions? Ah, what superior honour would ye acquire from candour, sweetness, and self-correction! But those qualities are the offspring of self-knowledge, and a comprehension of what is truly beautiful and becoming in life. Let me persuade you, my beloved pupils, with all your improvements, “with all your gettings, to get” these two essential parts of

“Understanding.” From them will result benefits innumerable; this among the rest: they will prevent I know not what affectations, by which many a pretty fool of your sex is daily exposed.

But why be at all this pains? On these points you are under no kind of apprehension; confident that, wherever you appear, you cannot fail of commanding regard, sure that, whenever you are pleased to open those lips, which you have heard so frequently praised, every ear will be attentive, and every heart allured. Indeed? Are ye very confident, very sure?—Take care you be not disappointed. It is my duty to tell you, whether you will believe it or no, that I have known many a man, who, in the company of women, has applauded that which he inwardly despised; and with hypocritical rapture listened to nonsense, where the speaker was handsome. Obsequiousness and adulation will attend on youth and beauty. But can you be contented with an incense so cheap; an incense offered to a face or to a shape alone; an incense that does not rise from the altar of the heart; an incense, in fine, that is lavished, with an undistinguishing hand, on every insignificant image that happens to be cast in a regular mould, and coloured with a mixture of white and red? Where, alas! is your delicacy? Have you no ingenuous pride? Are you so vain, (pride and vanity are different things,) so very ignorant, after all the admonitions you have received, as still to construe flattery into approbation, and smiles into attachment? But, I intreat you, reflect. When beauty and youth are gone, and go they will—what then? Why, then, all this adulation and obsequiousness will vanish with them; and if you be not adorned with

attractions more substantial and durable, into what neglected things will you have the mortification to sink!

An accomplished woman never can become an object of neglect: she must always remain an object of distinction amongst her acquaintance. When she was young, she might please more; but as even then she pleased chiefly by her mind, she will therefore continue to please still. The discerning few at least will discover in her, beauties which neither the inroads of age, nor the ravages of sickness, can deface. When "declined into the vale of years," she will still, from the superiority of her character, stand forth an exalted figure. Sense and capacity, joined to worth and sweetness, are exempted from the condition of all things else; which is to lose their influence when they lose their novelty. "The ornament of grace which Wisdom shall give to thy head," will not appear with less real lustre, when infirmity shall cause that head to shake. "The crown of glory which she shall deliver to thee," will in Reason's eye receive new dignity from gray hairs: or rather, according to our inspired author, those "gray hairs are" themselves "a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness."

Do ye know a woman far advanced in life, but yet farther in virtue and understanding, who with mild insinuation employs them to render wise and happy those about her, especially the young; who for such in particular makes every kind allowance, not forgetting those early days, when she too stood in need of indulgence; who, when her health will permit, takes pleasure in seeing herself surrounded by a circle of youth innocently gay, condescending even to mix in their little sports, and

by a graceful complacency of look, and pleasing remainder of ancient humour, to encourage and promote their harmless amusement? Do you know such a woman? Then speak your opinion freely. Will this youthful circle be in any danger of despising her, because she is old? On the contrary, will they not contend with one another, who shall pay her most veneration, who shall stand highest in her affection? Can you conceive a character more respectable, and at the same time more amiable? What is there good or excellent, to which she will not have it in her power to win them?

And now think of a decayed beauty, who in the height of her bloom, and the career of her conquests, trusted solely to that bloom, and never dreamt of securing those conquests, such as they were, by any thing more solid and abiding. Inexpressibly mortified that both are at an end, she would fain, if possible, keep up the appearance of them still. How? By a constrained vivacity, by a juvenile dress, by that affectation of allurements and importance, which we so readily pardon to the prime of life, but which in its decline is universally condemned as awkward and unnatural. Place her in the young assembly we have just supposed. There let her endeavour to sparkle, as in the days of old; there let her lay traps for admiration amidst the wrinkles of age. How ludicrous, and how melancholy at the same moment! What girl, or what boy of them all, will not be struck with the impropriety? Every mark of decay, every symptom of change, will be traced and examined with acuteness. No part of her figure will be overlooked, not a single slip in her behaviour forgiven: whereas, if warned by the effects of time, she, prudently gave up to her juniors all competition of looks and

show, and studied only to make herself agreeable by her conversation and manners; there is scarcely one of those little critics that would ever reflect upon her years, or that would not be delighted with her good sense and obliging deportment.—No, my young friends, nothing can save you from contempt at that period, if during this you be not at pains to improve your minds. She who is shall, in one sense, and that the best, be always young.

If she should continue single, and her situation, or her choice, should lead her to cultivate but few acquaintance, amongst them she must ever be loved and valued. If she should be married; and to a man of tolerable judgment, with tolerable temper, he will count himself happy in such an associate; he will even be proud of those talents in her which do honour to his election. I have always remarked, that women of capacity and elegance have possessed the hearts of their husbands in a degree which is not common: I mean, where those husbands had any worth or discernment. You will easily imagine, that I suppose the women in question too wise, and too excellent, to affect superiority: or not to give their partners all the credit and consequence possible, on every occasion. Between men and women there is seldom any rivalships in what relates merely to intellect; nor are the former ever much hurt by any conscious inferiority in that respect, where the latter do not show themselves, especially before company, arrogant or pretending.

I must not forget to subjoin how much the Mental Improvements, now enforced, will contribute to adorn and animate the companion, to direct and dignify the mistress, to accomplish the mother and the friend, to spread a charm over the whole matri-

monial state, and to relieve those duller hours that are apt to steal on the most delightful condition of humanity.

Nor can I dismiss this part of the argument, without mentioning what has often appeared to me one very remarkable instance, amongst many that history records, of the transcendant power to captivate and preserve esteem, which Intellectual Accomplishments, worthily exerted, confer upon a woman. It is that of Madam Maintenon, the celebrated favourite and wife of Lewis the Fourteenth.

This monarch, born with strong propensities to pleasure, bred in its very lap, indulged from the beginning in all his passions, early possessed of unlimited power, constantly accustomed to the most exquisite flattery, formerly drunk with success and glory, always courted by the female sex with every art that beauty, wit, or ambition could employ, in his intercourse with them still addicted to novelty and change—this very monarch, not yet arrived at the age of fifty, in full health, environed with all the splendour of a most brilliant court, read in little else beside comedies and novels, finds in the conversation of that lady, whose origin was not high, whose fortunes had been always low, and who was now older than himself by several years—finds, I say, in her conversation such innocence, such sweetness, such unequalled charms of taste and intelligence, as induce him to break off every engagement of a voluptuous kind, and to enter with her into the most honourable of all connexions, in which he appears to have maintained his fidelity to the last. Madam Maintenon had from her youth improved herself by reading and the best company, whom her beauty and talents drew about her, in a country where the society of the women is much more

regarded than in this. Lewis was first attracted by the extraordinary spirit and elegance of her letters ; and then absolutely fixed by her sentiments, her attention, and her submission. These were a balm to his soul, tormented by domestic, personal, and political chagrins. In these he obtained a relief from that weariness and wretchedness, which the pomps and pleasures of the world had served only to increase, while they promised to prevent or cure them. We do not find that this illustrious lady was fond of fashionable diversions : her books and her work were the principal amusements of her leisure.

But it is time to proceed to our last point, namely, the usefulness of Mental Acquisitions to your comfort and felicity. And here it is worthy your observation, that the Most High, having formed his rational offspring for a happiness more refined and noble than the indulgence of the senses alone, has wisely made the gratifications thence arising in a great measure momentary. To prolong these inferior enjoyments, is the laborious task of the slaves of appetite and fancy, in league with each other. But as it is undertaken in opposition to the design of the Almighty, and prosecuted in defiance of his laws, it must ever be vain. They only fatigue themselves in the attempt. From efforts beyond her scope and powers, Nature will always recoil. Satiated with external pleasures, she turns inward. Experiencing there a void, which the whole system of matter cannot fill, she is prompted by an innate ambition to aspire after higher objects. Her spiritual faculties, and divine extraction, point her to the world of ideas. From that, and from what may be called the Commerce of Minds, she wishes to derive her chief satisfaction. But you will easily conceive that such commerce cannot be carried on to any extent, nor with any variety, without a

competent store of the goods proper to it ; those, I mean, which experience and reflexion, genius and reasoning, discourse and memory, have accumulated and laid up in the writings of different ages, as in so many convenient repositories, for the use of all who are willing to avail themselves of this better wealth. They who are not, must necessarily labour under much internal poverty. Accordingly, how do they strain to supply the needful demands of conversation, when in company ; and when alone, how do they struggle to elude, because they cannot content, the cravings of the immortal mind ! To the want of this provision, and the incapacity of sustaining the weight of their own spirits pressing upon them in solitude, must we not principally impute their impatience for all manner of entertainments, that may help to fill up the painful blanks of time, without any considerable expense of that which they can least afford—thought ? But this expedient is merely temporary, and extremely imperfect. Diversion long continued is drudgery ; and still the soul falls back upon herself.

Now, if in the intervals of leisure you can with relish repair to books, you need never be at a loss. You may happily avoid, if you will, the toils of restless amusement, and the sighs of immoderate mirth. Excuse this last expression. Have you not sometimes proved the truth of Solomon's remark, that " even in laughter the heart is sorrowful ?" Have you not now and then perceived a sigh to steal from you when oppressed and exhausted by frequent bursts of merriment ?—If she who is in love with reading should, on particular occasions, be led into scenes of that kind, with what redoubled ardour will she return to silence and

study ! From the noise, bustle, and barrenness of modern conversation, with what exalted pleasure will she betake herself to the society of the celebrated dead, or of admired authors yet alive, where all is still, serene and delightful ! After being disgusted with the nauseous or the meagre diet, served up in most companies, where low scandal, or mere town-talk, supplies the place of urbanity and sense, how rich and regaling will she find that repast which her library is always ready to furnish !

There she will not fail of meeting with food of every different flavour, whether of a lighter or more solid substance, agreeable to her present inclination ; at the same time that nothing is forced upon her, and she is left at liberty, not only to vary the entertainment as often and as much as she pleases, but also to rise from it whenever she will. Historians, Philosophers, Orators, and Poets, the best writers of every class, within her compass, are ever prepared to gratify without constraint or ceremony her intellectual taste. Nor will they take offence at any preference, which at any time she may be disposed to make. She can never intrude upon them at an improper season, nor appear to leave them with abruptness : And when she does leave them, instead of room for uneasy retrospect, the manner in which she has been employed will be productive of self-approbation. She will feel her soul nourished and strengthened ; her spirits cheered and elevated, or collected and composed. The duties of life she will go about with fresh resolution, and a quicker comprehension of what becomes her. To congenial minds her attachment will be increased. With them she will enjoy, as often as she has opportunity, sentimental and friendly de-

light, the circulation of thought, and reciprocation of confidence,

“ The feast of reason, and the flow of soul.”

And these, my friends, are satisfactions which depend not on youth, nor on the advantages peculiar to it : satisfactions which, in some respects at least, will grow with your growing years ; and which, in every case, will survive the transient flower of beauty. Let me again remind you of the period of its decay. Of that period you cannot be reminded too often.

When it arrives, those hollow-hearted men, that for their own ends now swarm about you with every semblance of love or admiration, will disperse like flies at the approach of winter. In a little time they will forget you, as if you had never been ; or remember you only to say to every one they meet, how much you are altered. But what words can paint the desolation of her who finds herself thus forsaken and despised, without any resource in her own breast ?

I think I see her flying to her glass, day after day, to observe whether that flatterer will prove more constant. At first she is astonished, she is shocked, at the stupidity of those men who can become insensible to a face or a form like her's ? But in a little that once soothing glass, which was wont to transport her with the reflected image of herself, begins to withdraw its flatteries too. She is alarmed and depressed. She seeks consolation from some low dependant, who, with a grave face and glozing accent, assures her she is handsomer than ever ; while the mercenary wretch secretly laughs her to scorn. Every artifice of dress, all

the seduction of ornament, is studied and practised with more exquisite solicitude. She views herself on every side : the waste seems repaired. Her spirits rise ; she is overjoyed. With renewed expectation she sallies forth : she dances her usual round : some one in pity tells her how well she looks : the evening is past in triumph. She returns home exhausted with the flutter. Next morning the mirror is consulted again. She is pale, sickly, faint ; her eyes are sunk ; the wrinkles appear—more than ever. Again she is startled, terrified, falls into a rage. The storm bursts on her domestics, spends itself, subsides. The usual methods are tortured, to make her up ; and if some new expedient is suggested, that can better disguise nature, and deceive the beholder—what a discovery ! Thus between the vicissitudes of hope and fear, of exultation and despondence, on a subject to her weak unfurnished mind the most interesting of all others, she is miserably tossed ; till by such repeated and violent perturbation, conspiring with the addition of years, she is consigned over to despair, the heart-overwhelming despair, of being ever praised more for those unhappy charms, which she at length perceives are beyond recovery lost.—What young woman of reflexion would not prevent such ridiculous distress ? But can you think of any way to prevent it, so efficacious as turning betimes your principal attention to your better part ? That even in this way you shall become wholly indifferent about the decline of an appearance which used to give your friends as well as yourselves pleasure, I will not affirm. But if so high a strain of philosophy be hardly practicable, still however I think you must acknowledge that the advances of age will be supported much the

more easily for such preparation. In the mean while, how many vexations, that harass and distract the greater part of your sex, will be thus obviated by you!

In truth, most of the grievances complained of by mortals are self-created. They proceed from that fondness of fancy which gives consequence to trifles, or from those gusts of passion which produce agitation without cause. But, next to the power of religion, can you imagine any means of avoiding both, so probable as the wise and calm pursuits to which I would now persuade you? Permit me, my much loved hearers, to succeed. Defer not, by the cultivation of your minds, as well as hearts, to lay in a store of enjoyment and comfort, such as you can repair to in secret, when all abroad is unsolacing and insipid.

Every thing external is hastening to change and dissolution. You yourselves are gliding insensibly down the current of time. You are on your passage to eternity; and can you bear the thoughts of resigning a passage as important as it is short, to the blind impulse of chance, caprice, and ignorance? Or suppose you are so far careful of consequences, as to secure a safe arrival; can ye, like illiterate and incurious mariners, sailing by some beautiful coast, be satisfied to hurry along without attending to the various prospects and numerous objects which Nature and Art have spread out before you; or without taking advantage of the best assistance you can find on your voyage, to improve in whatever is instructive, ornamental, and praiseworthy? Have ye forgotten that, when landed on the blissful shore, your felicity will bear no inconsiderable proportion to your present attainments in knowledge; that the most enlarged understandings,

where the dispositions have been of a piece, will be rewarded by the noblest discoveries ; in short, that they who shine now with the fairest lights of wisdom shall, like the more distinguished stars of heaven, be crowned hereafter with superior splendour ?

SERMON IX.

ON FEMALE PIETY.

1 TIM. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women professing Godliness.

PROV. XXXi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain : but a woman that feareth the Lord, She shall be praised.

THE frailty of women has been frequently a topic of triumphant declamation. On this subject much unkind wit has been displayed; and many a dull sarcasm is daily added, and circulated with an air of conscious satisfaction. Hardly can one go into a company of men, where licentiousness of tongue passes for freedom of conversation, without hearing the poor women abused for their worthlessness, or weakness, or both. But supposing them particularly frail, is it noble to exult over them on that account, and in their absence too, when they have not an opportunity of defending themselves? Should not the strong rather pity and support the weak? Yet after all, how does it appear that any singular strength of resolution belongs to our sex, or that yours stand chargeable with peculiar infirmity?

The loss of virtue is, no doubt, often followed with extreme depravity in women. But is not the

same thing to be seen among men ; although it is not remarked with the same attention, or censured with equal rigour? If many unhappy females run into such "excess of riot, and superfluity of naughtiness," as seems to justify the observation, that there is nothing so profligate as a vicious woman ; may it not be frequently imputed to their being driven almost to a state of despair? Forsaken as they are by the wretches that ruined them, abandoned by their relations, if any they have, commonly dreading the scorn of their own sex, and often too little considered by the virtuous part of ours ; what can be expected, in general, from creatures who have put off the modesty of nature, and are propelled by evil habits, co-operating often with base associates, and bitter poverty? Do I then plead the cause of vice? God forbid. But I cannot endure that want of candour which would aggravate the guilt and misery of beings, who to us should be objects of so much compassion ; I say to Us, of whom many are the first authors of this very guilt and misery, while the rest are all likewise subject to go astray.

Here I shall probably be asked, Does not the apostle Peter expressly style the woman the weaker vessel? He does ; but in the same sense that those vessels are so styled, which being of finer materials, or more delicate construction, and therefore easily broken or hurt, are for that reason, and for the regard also which people have for them, used with particular tenderness. That this is his meaning is manifest from the passage referred to, where he says, " Give honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel." Why honour on that score, if the epithet Weaker is not to be understood, as I have now, according to the best interpreters, explained it?

But does not St. Paul, some verses after the text from Timothy, observe, that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression?" True: it does appear from the history, that "the serpent," as our apostle says elsewhere, "beguiled Eve through his subtilty;" and that the man, though aware of the deceit, was by his fondness for his deluded yet still lovely partner drawn into the same transgression. But what was it that exposed the woman to that snare by which she was seduced? Passions, it must be owned, extremely culpable in their nature, and fatal in their consequences; but not the passions for which her daughters have been indiscriminately blamed. In reality, the resolute spirit and persevering vigilance, with which great numbers of women preserve their honour, while so few men in comparison are restrained by the laws of continence, seem to me no slight proof that the former possess a degree of fortitude well worthy of praise.

But what is all this to the purpose of our present meditation? Much every way. I meant it as my first argument in behalf of female Piety; and on what footing it stands I will proceed to show, after remarking that the persons to whom our text from St. Paul is addressed are by him supposed to profess a respect for religion—"As becometh women professing Godliness:" a supposition we are willing to make in your favour, my beloved hearers; so far, I mean, as to render it unnecessary to inculcate that profession from those general notions of truth and duty, which with a few exceptions, I do hope you readily acknowledge. Instead of this, our reasoning and exhortations will turn chiefly on such principles and facts as relate more immediately to your sex, situation, and time of life, considered in conjunction with the character and manners of the age.

And now for the argument already suggested, you will be more sensible of its force by attending to the following observations ; that the firmness with which so many of you guard your virtue, being transferred to the practice of Piety at large, will, by God's assistance, contribute to render it easy and delightful ; that the considerations of Religion will, in their turn, support and cheer you under the restraints of conscience and decorum ; that you will hence derive the mighty satisfaction of the divine approbation amidst the censures of the uncharitable, and the divine protection against the machinations of the ungodly ; and, in the last place, that the injustice, the unkindness, and treachery of the world, should engage you to greater prudence, purity, and devotion.

As to the first, it is certain that the practice of real Piety requires no small resolution and perseverance. Is it not likewise certain that in what concerns their reputation, many young women possess a large share of these ? Let them but apply this to the discharge of their duty as christians and the happiest effects will ensue ; uniformity, facility, and joy in religion. What cannot courage and constancy achieve ? In the point to which I allude you are often heroines. Your life is a series of self-denial. But self-denial from right principles is the perfection of christianity. Do but act on these principles throughout, and you shall one day walk with your Saviour in white : he will confess your names as worthy before his Father, and before his angels : you shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, singing to your golden harps a new song, expressive of signal triumph and praise.

It has been said of women, and I believe with truth, that they are remarkably steady to their purpose. Let it be seen that you are so in what is

good. And "let not your good be evil spoken of," on account of any thing that might give ground to suspect you control your passions in one way only, and that too from no higher principle than the fear of shame. By a noble command of yourselves in other points, where this consideration cannot be supposed to operate so strongly, make it appear that you are governed by religious as well as prudential motives.

We would not lessen the influence of any one wise, or useful consideration, from the side of this world: but we wish your minds to lie more open to the efficacy of the next. So far as mere reputation goes, it is much the same to a woman, whether the regularity of her conduct be the result of pious or of political maxims. But in the sight of God, and at the bar of conscience, how vast the difference! In that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, what will it avail you, if the decency of your behaviour should be found to have proceeded from no nobler spring than the desire of saving appearances? Who can express the horror of a female hypocrite at that all-revealing period, when, stript of every disguise, she shall be pointed out to the congregated universe as an infamous creature, whose soul was enslaved to sensuality, at the very time that she affected the strictest virtue, treated indiscretion in others with the severity due to vice alone, had no other allowances to make with human frailty, and with supercilious disdain looked down on many of her sex not half so wicked as herself?

Let it be carefully remembered, that as, in what regards outward trials, the gospel is literally the doctrine of the cross; so, with respect to inward

conflicts, it is properly the discipline of the passions. Here, in truth, the religion of a christian must begin and end. What pity, my honoured pupils, if you who have that amazing power over the exterior of your deportment, if you who offer to a spotless name those continual sacrifices which your greatest enemies cannot deny, should after all lose the reward of undissembled sanctity by being excluded from that vision of God, which Jesus has promised to the pure in heart! What pity, in the mean while, that such power is not more generally allowed to exert itself on the ample theatre of a life truly virtuous; and that such sacrifices should not by the consolations of devotion, be sweetened, consecrated, and turned into so many sources of sublime enjoyment!

But this reminds me of having likewise said, that the considerations of Religion will conduce mightily to support and cheer you under the restraints of sobriety and decorum. In proportion as those considerations are made more familiar, will these restraints become less painful, till at length they in a manner change their nature, and seem like silken bands, that even while they confine you, are as easy as they are ornamental.

Between all other philosophy and the philosophy of Jesus, one glorious distinction is this; that the latter not only displays a higher standard of moral excellence, but also communicates superior powers of virtuous action. To the fainter conclusions of Reason it superadds the bright discoveries of Faith. The future world, with the great transactions of the supreme administration, which are introductory to it, are there unveiled. There the vanity, and withal the importance of the present state is unfold-

ed. There divine pardon and eternal life, as "the gift of God through Jesus Christ," are ensured and ascertained to obedient believers. The history of the Redeemer is there exhibited with all the beauty of simplicity, and energy of truth; a history, my dear hearers, equally important to all that read it, and to those that read it with a serious unprejudiced disposition, unspeakably affecting; a history which involves the most extensive and lasting interests of human nature, and to such as view it in that light carries with it, beyond all other writings, a vital, home-felt, and heart-awakening influence. The ingenuous breast, inflamed by the friendship, and penetrated by the spirit of Jesus, burns with the love of virtue, and heaves with the hope of salvation. Jesus is the pattern of virtue: gratitude is one of its worthiest incentives, and faith, which is the fundamental principle of the whole system, faith in the mercy and acceptance of the Universal Father, through the mediation of his meritorious Son, by whom he is carrying on a scheme of grace, that comprehends all sincere penitents of whatever name or nation, throughout all successive ages—this Faith, I say, imparts to feeble and desponding creatures a strength and encouragement that no other system could ever inspire.

Nor are these ideas beyond the ordinary reach of female understanding. They depend not on a nice chain of reasoning, nor on the abstruse researches of science. How much soever they may have been disguised by the dreams of the schools, to conceive them as they are set forth in scripture, masculine intellects are by no means necessary. Connected with Facts the most astonishing to the imagination, and Sentiments the most touching to the heart, they seem

to lie particularly level to the best characters among your sex. In short, to feel their tendency, and experience their operation, a modest, susceptible, and affectionate mind is chiefly required.

Permit me to ask you, as in the presence of God, do ye in good earnest believe in the Holy Ghost, in the catholic church, in the communion of saints, in the forgiveness of sins, in the resurrection of the body, in the life everlasting, in Him who is the resurrection and the life, the all-sufficient sacrifice, the all-prevailing advocate, the meek, the lowly, and the loving master, as well as the awful and impartial judge? Do ye often by devout contemplation realize these, and the other wonderful objects of christianity, together with the grand principles of natural religion? To both do ye frequently join the heaven-moving force of fervent prayer, the powerfully combined influences of public worship, and the sweetly supporting communications of holy friendship? Then say, whether you can ever be at a loss for motives to animate, or for aids to second your endeavours after wisdom and virtue? Surely no.

Wisdom and virtue are beautiful forms, and for their own intrinsic worth unquestionably entitled to all possible love and veneration. But little acquainted with the human heart are they, who would build the morals of mankind on this single basis. Decency of character, dignity of conduct, the honours due to temperance, integrity, benevolence, magnanimity, and other qualities of that order, are ideas as solid as they are refined, and which ought certainly to be cherished by all who are capable of comprehending their moment. To offer to depreciate them is vile, and not more repugnant to reason than to scripture,

where the beauties of holiness are expressly named, and "whatsoever things are venerable, lovely, "and of good report," are, as mentioned in a former discourse, recommended in so many words. But, yet, on the other hand, considering the passions, disorders, and debility of beings, situated as we are; to trust the cause of righteousness and truth to the sole strength of such arguments—what is it, but hazarding the most valuable interests in the world on a bottom utterly unequal to so precious a freight?

A few select spirits, more liberal and elevated than usual, may, in their progress towards perfection derive some extraordinary assistances from these sublimer speculations; at least when under very difficult or delicate circumstances of temptation; But what, think ye, would become even of them; much more, what would become of the far greater part, when immediately under such circumstances, did not religion step in to their aid with her more forcible and striking sanctions, founded on their hopes and fears for futurity, as these are connected with a sense of the Almighty's inspection, and a faith in the illustrious facts of revelation? How little in general were the philosophers of antiquity themselves influenced by the system in question, with whatever pomp they professed, or with whatever eloquence they displayed it. Some of them, it is true, were men of great virtues, as well as great conceptions; while the rest were striking examples, how much easier it is to talk than to act well, and that to reform the world there is wanted a diviner power than reason alone.

With regard to the case now before us, it may be observed that those young persons, who have had the misfortune to be in a great measure left to

the common notices of nature, go astray much more frequently, than others on whom the principles of Piety have been early and judiciously impressed.

When I say judiciously impressed, I mean to insinuate, that many hopeful children have been lost through the imprudent efforts of their well-meaning, but ill-informed parents, to make them good by severe confinement and constant admonition. Those children alone will be truly good, and are likely to continue so, who are at once enamoured of their duty, awed by their Maker, and devoted to the securing of that "life and immortality which are brought to light through the gospel."

Here I cannot help recollecting a most memorable instance, wherein a much celebrated youth was guarded against the indulgence of appetite by the power of religion. I speak of Joseph, when tempted by the wife of Potiphar. Consider the complicated snare that was laid for his innocence; probably the blandishments of beauty; certainly the repeated, pressing, and passionate solicitations of an artful woman, of his mistress, who, if she pleased, could easily procure his farther advancement; the opportunities of privacy; the prospect of close concealment; his time of life; his plentiful condition; those warm affections, that strong sensibility, which the sequel of his story shows to have been natural to him; the extreme danger manifestly attending his refusal, I mean all the mischiefs to be dreaded from the resentment and violence of a proud but fond female resisted, disappointed, enraged, who would not fail, however falsely, to represent the unbounded confidence of a generous master abused; and, finally, those mischiefs falling at one blow upon a dependent and a stranger, whose

prosperity in that family had no doubt rendered him the object of envy to some; and whose protestations in his own favour would never be believed by others to the disadvantage of a woman of her rank and fortune. Such was the snare. And what was it that enabled our amiable hero to conquer it? The history will inform you. "He refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand. There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Excellent young man! From a crime, to which so many allurements concurred to incite him, he starts back with horror; so strongly are his natural feelings of gratitude and probity seconded by a reverence for the Omniscient; "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" —No, my sisters, there is not in the world such a preservative from vice as the fear of God. Temptations, by which human resolutions alone have been frequently foiled, are often overcome by the same resolutions when enforced by religious faith.

From these remarks you will plainly perceive, that what we wish for you is not a victory over your passions hardly gained, and at the expense of your tranquillity; but a sacred self-possession, a certain diviner control of your own wills, that shall distinguish you in the sight of him who "de-sireth truth in the inward parts." A sentiment this, that seems conformable to the best conceptions of nature; since we find the power which according to the pagan creed represented both wisdom and

fortitude, was supposed to be of your sex. On the same principle does the wisest of men speak so often of the former in the feminine gender. Thus at least did ancient genius treat the women with respect. It is particularly observable that of republican states, where that genius commonly appeared most eminent, the sage legislators prescribed to females a peculiar gravity and simplicity of manners; so different were their ideas of what was becoming from those of modern times!

But I added farther that, from the study of inward purity as well as outward decorum, even that purity which the gospel so strongly enforces, you will reap the mighty satisfaction of the divine approbation amidst the censures of the uncharitable, and the divine protection against the machinations of the ungodly. Hard enough, it must be owned, is the case of women, as to the general reflexions made on their deportment. If they behave with reserve, they are pronounced prudish; if with frankness, bold; if with that just temperament of both which is the proper medium, capricious and uncertain. What shall they do? What can they do, but hold the middle way, with that attention to the rules of caution on one side, and of affability on the other, which times, places, and persons seem to require; "committing their cause to him that judgeth righteously," and trusting for their safety to him that never forsakes the virtuous?

Such a respect for human judgment, as avoids giving occasion of censure, is undoubtedly right in every individual of society; of your sex especially, whose reputation is of so nice a contexture. But while for this purpose a christian woman pursues, as nearly as she can, the path of prudence;

what internal serenity does she enjoy, by following at the same time the direction of principle, that highest and happiest guide of life ! To say the truth, there may be situations, wherein the latter appears to be left the sole guide, so impossible is it for the former to find a way through the labyrinth. In this case you can have but one reasonable care ; which is, to do what conscience charges as your duty. In every case, that must be your principal care. In making it so, there will be this great advantage amongst many others, that you will every day grow less anxious about any thing else. The ease of mind, the gaiety of heart resulting from such a conduct, are not to be expressed.

If the world should approve, it is well. The approbation of the best people, at least, will give you a real pleasure ; and the best people are naturally candid. If the world should condemn, and even the candid few, which is by no means impossible, should be led by misrepresentation, or by mistake, to join in the sentence ; still however you will have the comfort of not having deserved it. And from this inferior tribunal you will also have the felicity of appealing to that which is supreme and infallible, with the humble assurance of being justified there through the powerful interposition of an advocate, whom no passion or misrepresentation can bias. At the same time too you will have the consolation to hope, that sooner or later, he in whom you trust " will bring forth your righteousness as the light, " and your judgment as the noon-day. " Seldom or never, I think, does a persevering virtue fail of breaking out with fresh beauty, and augmented lustre, from those clouds with which calumny may have obscured it ; even as the vernal sun by pursuing

his career, shines forth at last with a kind of victorious splendour, that dispels the remaining damps of winter, delights the eye, and inspires the heart of every beholder.

But suppose the worst, that the erroneous multitude should continue to load you with unmerited reproach ; I am not afraid to say that you are happy still, if you know how to avail yourselves of the supports of religion, particularly a sense of the Almighty's approbation. What ought to discourage her who can triumph in this, and likewise in that which is immediately connected with it, an assurance of the Almighty's protection ?

Nothing can be more certain than that your sex is, on every account, entitled to the shelter of ours. Your softness, weakness, timidity, and tender reliance on man ; your helpless condition in yourselves, and his superior strength for labour, ability for defence, and fortitude in trial ; your tacit acknowledgment of these, and frequent application for his aid in so many winning ways, concur to form a plea, which nothing can disallow or withstand but brutality. Appetite indeed is naturally brutal : untamed by religion, unchained by reason, what havock does it not commit ? Nothing can be more wild or ferocious than lawless desire. How often, alas ! does it disfigure and degrade minds otherwise adorned with very valuable qualities ! Have we not seen men, who in a sober mood were open to the tenderest feelings of humanity, incapable of any thing unjust or dishonourable, calm, and pliant to good advice ; who yet, in the rebellion of their blood, were as ungovernable and fierce as any beast of the forest, broke through all restraint, and to gratify the passion that impelled them, rushed on crimes utterly repugnant to the best sentiments of

their hearts ! Need I to tell you that from such men your virtue is in danger, and by so much the more by how much the qualities just named are, when allowed to operate, particularly engaging ? But the fact is, that, being inlaid in the constitution, they do operate frequently, and never perhaps more than immediately after those unhappy deviations, for which something within whispers the necessity of making every possible atonement. It is in this way that those good-natured but unhappy men keep themselves and one another in countenance, and often steal into your affection. Yet these are by no means the worst enemies of womankind.

It is your smooth, cool, complimentary libertines, who have steeled their breasts by a system, whom the boasted principles, or rather no principles of infidelity, have raised to a glorious contempt of all laws human and divine, delivered from the vulgar conceit of immortality, and enabled to conquer the little weaknesses of nature, and the ignoble prejudices of education, which happened to be on the side of justice, honour, sympathy ;—it is such men, my fair ones, such flagitious and obdurate wretches, whose wiles, should you chance to be thrown in their way, you have most reason to dread. And believe me, they abound every where. From you indeed they will carefully conceal the enormity of their characters, and the blackness of their opinions ; till by gaining your confidence they can insinuate the last with advantage, so as to take off your apprehensions of the first, and blunt the edge of your resolutions. A sense of piety, the love of virtue, a regard to reputation, the fear of consequences, every principle borrowed from this world and the next, they are well aware would be alarmed and excited, were they to disclose their designs, or ex-

plain their ideas at once, without preparation or preface.—But I will not attempt to unfold the mystery of iniquity, in which they wrap themselves, and work unsuspected. Let it remain involved in its native darkness and horror; which cannot however hide it from the eye of Heaven, whose hottest vengeance shall one day overtake and blast it.

Your safety, I said before, lies in retreat and vigilance, in sobriety and prudence, in virtuous friendship and rational conversation, in domestic, elegant, and intellectual accomplishments: I add now, in the guardianship of Omnipotence, as that which must give efficacy to all the rest; but which can only be obtained by something more and better than them all, I mean, True Religion. What reason have you to hope for a privilege so great, if you do not ask it? What cause could you have to complain; if your righteous Creator, on whom every consideration ought to teach you dependence were to leave you to yourselves amidst those dangerous attacks, or artful snares, which you presumptuously imagine you could resist by your own strength, or elude by your caution? That humility which does not depress, as christian humility never can, is the best means of security. She who is most sensible of her hazard, is most likely to be on her guard. She who perceives her own imbecility, will be glad to invoke a higher power. Nor will the Parent of all be deaf to one of his reasonable offspring, who, apprehensive of the difficulties to which her frame and situation expose her, heartily implores his help.

Vain very often is the help of man, even when afforded in its utmost extent. What then must be the case, when it is not only not afforded, but when

he who ought to protect is bent to destroy? To whom shall young creatures of your sex, little lambs, innocent, gentle, fearful, undefended, beset by ravenous lions, or "by wolves in sheep's clothing;"—to whom shall they flee, but to the Shepherd of Israel? And will he, think ye, reject or abandon them; he who has promised to "gather the lambs with his arm, and to carry them in his bosom;" he who has always shown himself more especially concerned for objects of distress and destitution, the poor, the prisoner, the stranger, the oppressed, the widow, the fatherless, and such as have none to help them; in a word, he whose providence is then nearest, and whose assistance is then readiest, when his creatures are most forsaken by others?

To obtain the divine interposition, it is urged by the Psalmist as a prevailing argument, that he was unprotected and desolate. "O be not far from me: for trouble is nigh at hand, and there is none to help me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge." The common Father "hears the young ravens when they cry unto him;" and are early left by their hard-hearted dams. Are not ye better than many ravens? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" says God by the prophet. He speaks of it as a monstrous thing, and scarce credible in any. Can she forget—She, in the singular Number. The answer is remarkable: "Yea, They may forget"—They, in the

plural: confessing it possible, that more than one such wretch may be found amongst the dregs of nature. "Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, They may forget, yet I will not forget thee." Can you figure any thing more tender and soothing? Can you hesitate a moment to throw yourselves on "the everlasting arms, on his right-hand, who rides on the heavens for your help, on his excellency in the sky?" Or having so done, can you harbour a doubt of your safety, while "your place of defence is the munition of rocks?"

But to proceed to our last argument: let the injustice, unkindness, and treachery of the world, engage you to greater Prudence, Purity, and Devotion. Any natural or amiable tie, by which you are or may be bound, God forbid that I should seek to slacken. Moderate affections for proper objects you are allowed, you are called to indulge. By such means you will fill your places in society, or be in the way to fill them; at the same time that you will enjoy the best thing in human life, the friendly feelings of the heart. But shall I repeat once more, what has in one shape or another been said so often, that whenever these are ill directed, or carried too far, they are sure to entangle in guilt and disquietude? Now to prevent, as much as possible, the wandering of your passions, the Almighty makes use of the passions of others. To bring good out of evil is the glory of his government. The worthlessness of those who have abused their freedom, he permits as a warning to you, no less than a punishment to them.

If men will endeavour to despoil that virtue which they should cherish, to corrupt those minds which they should improve; in a word, to ruin that sex whose honour and welfare are in a great

measure entrusted with them; should not such baseness fill you with disdain and abhorrence? Can any of you be so mean, so surpassing mean, as to doat on the traitors? Even where their aim is not destruction, where merely for amusement they flatter or soothe, should ye suffer yourselves to be seduced into fondness? How foolish to be taken with those little superficial attentions, that are so easily learnt in the school of fashion, and so frequently practised to hide a hollow, or disguise an unfeeling soul?

Are ye ignorant of its being an established system among men of gaiety and pleasure, that your sex have no principles; that you are designed only to serve their purposes; and that, when you refuse to do so, it is mere pride or gross dissimulation? Can ye think of this, and not be offended? Will ye continue to prefer such characters to the sober, sedate, and sentimental?

You often behold the wrecks of beauty that has been blasted, and of innocence that has been betrayed. Providence allows those miserable beings to carry their effrontery so far as to appear without shame in every public place, the monuments of male falsehood as well as female infatuation; and can ye fail of being impressed with salutary terror?

Can ye restrain the spirit of indignant virtue from darting out on those men that, in your company, dare to speak a language unfit for you to hear? Should not your eyes at least make them sensible of the affront offered to your ears? And if they are hardened enough not to be ashamed, does it not become you ever after to shun their sight, as you would shun a bear or a satyr? I am sure you will

think so, if you consult either the dignity of your sex, or the purity of your minds.

Love grafted on esteem, or fed by it, is a just and noble principle. But how has it been disgraced by worthless pretenders! Join, my sisters, with all your power to vindicate its honours. Let the sanctity of your conduct serve, as much as possible, to recall the passion from empty form and criminal indulgence, from the blind admiration of an outside, and the short-lived gratification of youthful desire, to a genuine, holy, and enlightened affection; such as springing chiefly from a sympathy of honest and generous hearts, shall flourish when fancy, youth, and beauty, are no more.

If women will marry men of bad morals, if from whatever motive they will manifestly endanger their own salvation, by forming so intimate a connexion with those who betray a total neglect of theirs; what can we say, either for religion or the sex, that will make any impression on those who are prejudiced against both? What can she plead that accepts without scruple the hand of a man, who is seldom or ever seen in a place of worship, and whose companions are known to be profane or licentious? Is this to act, in the greatest concern of life, like a person of principle?

It is a common complaint, nor can the fact be denied, that most of our young gentlemen now a days entirely disregard religious institutions. But how can it be expected they should do otherwise, so long as they find themselves, in general, no way the less acceptable to the ladies, for such fashionable impiety? What a scandal in "women professing "Godliness!"

Amidst so much disorder, and so many snares on all hands, what can be so wise for you, my

christian friends, as to take refuge more and more in the sanctuary of Devotion?—Let us not dissemble the truth. The greater part of either sex study to prey on one another? The world, in too many instances, is a theatre of war between men and women. Every stratagem is tried, and every advantage taken, on the side of both. On the side of the former, strength and daring, are joined to art and ambition, in which the latter abound. To make a truce they often meet. Even preliminaries towards a peace are often proposed. Individuals pass over to the camp of the enemy, and are reconciled. But what shall we say of the contending powers at large? Methinks they resemble this and a neighbouring kingdom, between which a general truce is always short, and a national peace never secure.

To many young women the preacher will seem as one that mocks. The men they consider as their best friends; and a lasting union is what they long for as the height of happiness. A union, by some means or other, will probably take place. And if it shall, to know that it proved lasting, entire, and happy, as happy as the present state permits, would, you may be well assured, give the preacher pleasure. But if from this, or any imaginable connexion upon earth, you hope for complete felicity; your hopes will be vain. Imperfect yourselves, you have no right to expect perfection from men. In the most agreeable attachments, you will still find a mixture. The best characters will sometimes say, or do that, which shall occasion pain; daily intercourse will dull the relish of delight; and disagreeable accidents, but especially severe distress, will not improve the taste for it. Devotion, dearly beloved, Devotion will

ever be your surest and sweetest resource. "Acc-
" quaint yourselves therefore now with God, and
" be at peace."

Even now, I doubt not, some of you perceive that all besides is uncertain and unsatisfactory. Your father and mother have forsaken you by death; or, which is far worse, by unnatural cruelty, or horrible selfishness. You have not perhaps in the world a friend to supply their place: Or if you have, you cannot but know that human friendships are often fallacious, and like other human comforts always precarious. Every thing in nature is subject to vicissitude; and nothing more usual than for men to adopt a different deportment as their circumstances or interests, their opinions or humours, vary. There is but one immutable friend, "a friend that sticks closer than a brother," a lover, or a parent. "He is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. He will never leave you: he will never forsake you." He has engaged himself by his promise; and "he is not man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent."

I have often thought that, in some respects, there is not any creature so forlorn or exposed, as a young woman, beautiful, unexperienced, single, almost wholly friendless, bred to affluence, left in dependence, perhaps in indigence, of which some wretch curst with wealth is willing to avail himself for the vilest ends. While I paint such a situation, who does not see the need of piety? What remains for this pretty sufferer, but to hold fast her innocence at all adventures, and look up to him "with whom the fatherless find mercy."—"Protect me, O my heavenly Father, my only sure and never-failing friend; protect thy poor, de-

' pendent, helpless creature. From this wilderness
 ' of life I lift up my eyes to Thee ; to thy throne
 ' of pity I stretch out my arms for succour. Be-
 ' hold, I am needy, and feeble, and full of afflic-
 ' tion. I tread among snares ; I tremble for fear.
 ' But Thou art merciful. Save me, O Lord, most
 ' mighty ; save me from evil men, from vain com-
 ' panions, from folly, from myself. My wants
 ' supply, most gracious : my weakness strengthen ;
 ' for ever guard the virtue by Thee implanted.
 ' Thou art the guide of my youth ; lead me in a
 ' plain path, because of my enemies. Let none
 ' have power to hurt me ; may some have the good-
 ' ness to support my steps. Send down wisdom
 ' from thy holy heavens that she may labour with
 ' me continually, and sweetly counsel me in all my
 ' doings. In Thee, O God, in Thee alone have I
 ' put my trust : let me never be confounded. Be
 ' my God for ever and ever, and my guide even
 ' unto death. I ask it for the sake of my divine
 ' Redeemer. Amen.'

SERMON X.

ON FEMALE PIETY.

1 TIM. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women professing Godliness.

PROV. xxxi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain : but a woman that feareth the Lord, She shall be praised.

DEVOTION, my beloved hearers, is a business of too much importance and dignity to be yet dismissed from our meditation. What has been already offered on this head, is but a small part of that which I would recommend to your attention. From a former hint you will readily conceive, that to present you here with a regular system of piety, is not my design. Such an attempt were superfluous. Of the spiritual kind there are books innumerable, in which you will meet with all that can be said on the subject in general. The Inducements to Religion, which are more immediately derived from your sex and situation, together with those Exercises and those Effects of it, that concern you more particularly, are the points to which my plan properly confines me.

I will begin this discourse by removing a bar, which has been thrown in our way by such as have appeared fond of every opportunity to depreciate

the better half of the human species. The devotion of women has been considered as nothing more than the passion of love directed to a divine object, when in reality they longed for an inferior one, or happened to be disappointed in their wishes: an opinion which has given occasion to some wit and more ridicule.

It seems to have proceeded chiefly from two causes; the amorous style which has by too many female pens been adopted into devotional writings; and the multitudes of young women who, denied originally the opportunity of indulging their natural inclinations, or afterwards crossed in the pursuit of them, have flung themselves headlong into the gloomy retreats of a mistaken piety, where they have been taught to offer at a heavenly shrine those fires which were not suffered to burn freely elsewhere.

But now on the former circumstance I would observe, that the language of love has not, so far as I know, been admitted into books of devotion by female more frequently than by male authors; and that, in this practice, both have probably thought themselves warranted by the example of Solomon in his well known Song; a composition, of which I must needs say, that how naturally soever it came from a monarch of his character, in those earlier days of eastern imagination and eastern ardour, it should by no means be made a model for christian writers. In the New Testament, although produced from the same region, we find very little of this sort, and that little in the chastest and purest strain: at the same time that there we are expressly required and taught, "to worship God, who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth." But when

we disapprove of the practice as indiscreet, must we condemn it too as sensual; or because in some it may have been the ebullition of a lascivious fancy, shall we pronounce it to be so in all? Certain it is, that among such as have used it, there have been not a few eminently distinguished by the purity of their manners.

In the case of those numerous votaries to the church of Rome, who by violence or craft, despondence or superstition, are immured in convents, what can be more natural, more reasonable, or in truth more necessary, than that being deprived of the pleasures of this world, they should ask consolation from the next? Or if finding it impossible to cultivate one of the strongest propensities of the human heart, by that kind of commerce which Nature intended, can they be justly blamed for turning to an object whose infinite excellence shall furnish endless scope for the best sentiments and noblest affections of the soul, those that are immediately connected with piety? Will not the same way of reasoning be applicable to women living in the world? I apprehend it will.

But, in reality, the opinion we now examine would reflect no dishonour on feminine devotion, did not those who entertain it proceed upon a low idea of the passion referred to. Whatever hold that passion, for purposes apparently wise, may take at first of the animal part of our frame, they are utter strangers to its genuine character, who do not know that it is capable of rising to the utmost refinement. By pleading the cause of Virtuous Love, I shall be able to prove its connexion with that which is Divine to be founded in nature; I mean in cultivated nature, where a sense of the Divinity obtains. As virtuous love operates on

both the sexes pretty nearly alike, what I am going to observe of its effects on the men may, I believe, be justly applied to the impressions produced by it on the women.

A man sees in some public place a great number of young persons to whom he never spoke. He surveys them all. He is struck with one who is really less beautiful than several others present, and who is so even in his eyes: in her favour he decides at once. It is a common case; how shall we account for it? I conceive thus: Every countenance expresses, or is thought to express, a character peculiar to itself; and that which corresponds most with our particular taste in the way of temper, behaviour, understanding, we necessarily and spontaneously prefer. By this character, therefore, whether real or imaginary, we are determined. As was hinted in a former discourse, it is the soul we seek. With mind only can mind unite. That which is presented to our eyes attracts us merely as an image of that which they cannot perceive. Our senses may be said to tie the knot; but, strictly speaking, the knot is formed in the soul. Our senses are properly the vehicles of our affection; but to that affection they still act in subordination. It is supreme. Its power is indeed so great, that were the gratification of the senses, in the passion we are now considering, to interfere with the interest of our nobler part, or with this exalted sentiment which constitutes its joy, they would be sacrificed without hesitation. To virtuous love the spirit of sacrifice is essential. What hazards, hardship, losses, pains, has not this generous attachment encountered, with pleasure and even with ecstasy; happy in manifesting its zeal by the most arduous proofs! To mention but one instance amongst ten thousand, and

that recorded in Holy Writ, we are told, that "Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and that they seemed to him but a few days." Why? "For the love he had to her."

But now suppose the man we have just imagined, to cherish with fondness the sudden impression made upon him by a certain appearance; to be introduced to the lady, and to admire her more and more for those internal qualities which from that appearance he presumes her to possess. With her looks too he is every day more deeply smitten, but still as they are the fancied picture of her mind. This ideal form follows him every where. Business, company, amusement, he could not endure but for the thoughts of her, which are for ever intermingling. Her conversation, her smiles, her approbation, even the slightest marks of her regard, are to him happiness unequalled, and such as can only be excelled by the entire possession of the endearing object: He pursues, he obtains it. And now suppose him to discover that the character he used to contemplate with transport was merely imaginary: that she is absolutely destitute of the dispositions, the sentiments, in one word, the soul which he had fondly figured—Need I speak the rest? Ah, what disappointment and misery! Where now is his love? Where the sacred, fervent, elevated passion, he so lately fostered as the felicity of his life? Intellectual and moral beauty he chiefly sought. He finds it not: and because he does not find it, what happens? His very senses, though remaining constitutionally the same, revolt, are disgusted, and chilled. The enchanting face enchants no more: and why? Because it no longer reflects the image that inflamed his breast. A fool or a tyrant starts up there, where sense and softness seemed to reside.

But let us reverse this unhappy part of the scene and suppose that the lady's real character answers to her appearance ; that, instead of losing, she gains by a more intimate acquaintance ; in short, that certain hidden graces which no feature, form, or air, could fully express, display themselves as circumstances rise to call them forth : what will be the consequence ? That the youthful ardour of our lover will increase ? No, but a better ardour will ; that of rational esteem, sentimental complacence, and self-congratulation. The other, as he advances in life, will gradually abate, and at length vanish. What then ? Will his tenderness vanish, or his affection abate ? By no means. We have seen that from the beginning it was the love of her mind principally. It is so now more than ever. It has less emotion ; it has more solidity : it is less earthly ; it is more divine. It is love mellowed into friendship. What shall I say ! It is the finest feeling of the human heart. And the attraction grows, partly by habit, partly by the increase of those qualities that caused it on her side, and partly by the improvement of good dispositions on his. The tumultuous and irregular pleasures to which, perhaps, before he knew her, he was addicted, have now lost their relish. The calm, yet interesting joys he tastes in her society, occupy all his leisure. From every engagement, whether of the busy or idle kind, he returns to her with new delight, glad to shake off the interrupting world, and impatient when it compels him to any long absence. By the lovely sympathies of her gentle bosom, his cares are soothed, his labours softened, and his losses rendered easy. Is he successful ? His success is triumph, from this thought ; " I shall be able to make her more happy.

"whom my soul loveth." Is she in pain or sickness? does her health decline? Will this man look on unconcerned? Ah! no: he will hang over her bed of distress with augmented fondness, with an anguish more charming than all the luxury of sensual indulgence. Is her bloom withered? are the allurements of youth gone? Will he grow indifferent? No, no! in his eye she is handsome still. In all she says, and does, and looks, he still beholds, and still admires, the unfaded and unfading beauties of her soul.

If any profane or insensible wretch, prone "to speak evil of the things which he knows not," and which he cannot know, should affect to treat this representation with ridicule, as visionary and unnatural, I can only pity him. You who are disposed to be ingenuous and candid, may rest assured that it is taken from life. Those whom it resembles will own it is true, while they find it imperfect. But imperfect as it is, it will, if I mistake not, be sufficient to prove the point for which I have produced it.

Abstract, my sisters, from that regard to person, which in the purest passion between the sexes we have acknowledged to be an original ingredient, but which we have found to be only an inferior ingredient, and one whose operation is soon diminished; abstract from this, and what is there in all the rest, that may not be traced to the love of excellence? But what else, I would gladly know, is the leading idea in the love of God? Between that First of Beings, and the most accomplished of his creatures, the distance is indeed infinite. The fairest virtues we see around us are at best but faint emanations from him, who is "the perfection of beauty." But from these and from the admira-

tion they inspire, it is that we are led up to him, as by so many pleasing though scattered streams to their fountain.

And now suppose that a young woman, possessed with the belief of this highest excellence, is disappointed in her prospects of an agreeable union with one of our sex; she turns her thoughts to heaven. She contemplates truth and rectitude, wisdom and goodness, power, mercy, and faithfulness, in their source. She considers them as all working together for her good; she sees them shining through the cloud of disappointment. From this cloud she hears, as it were, her Maker thus addressing her: 'My daughter, give me thy heart. Thy supreme affection none upon earth can deserve. Human attainments are all defective; human regards are often insincere. Put not your trust in the son of man; he may deceive, or he may change, or he may not be able to protect you. But of this kind you have nothing to fear from your Creator. Throw thyself, my child, on my friendship.'—She is not disobedient to the heavenly call. She prostrates herself in the presence of the Most High. To him she devotes that heart which he formed; to him she pours it out with freedom. She adores the perfections of his nature; the frailties of her own, with all the failings of her life past, she penitently confesses; her tears flow. Her mind is relieved; consolation pervades her soul: out of weakness she waxes strong. Virtue never appeared to her half so fair; Religion rises before her in full majesty; everlasting objects open to her view; solitude and silence begin to charm. Converse with her God, with her Saviour, with her Bible, with Herself, yields a pleasure hitherto unknown. In the midst of society she longs for

its return ; from the dissipation of amusements she retreats with joy ; self-denial for the sake of God, and goodness, loses its name ; her duty is her delight ; the spirit of sacrifice is felt in all its nobleness. She is great, and she is happy.—Say, ye sons of raillery, ye scoffers of female devotion, declare : what is there in all this, unnatural, irrational, or in any respect unsuitable to the best conceptions of the human mind ?

From what I have said let none imagine, that I mean to insinuate female devotion may not be found in married as well as single life ; or that a woman will not have recourse to piety unless she be driven to it by disappointed love. This, like every other distress, and more perhaps than any other, will prompt a young person of reflexion to turn to the Almighty. But of worth or ingenuity those surely have no true feeling, who think that the character of the Supreme cannot, from a heart well disposed, command an affectionate veneration in any condition, or under any circumstance whatsoever.

That in female nature there are certain qualities, which seem peculiarly calculated, by the grace of God, to dispose it for the reception and culture of this divine principle, I will proceed in the next place to demonstrate.

That your sex are, in a particular degree, susceptible of all the tender affections, will, I presume, be allowed by most. Their propensity to those, with which the passion of love is more immediately complicated, has been charged upon them by many as matter of reproach. What to me appears in general to do them honour, is the warmth of their attachments, and their aptitude to be affected with whatever has a tendency to touch the heart. But I

have always thought that the spirit of devotion depends on sentiment, rather than ratiocination ; on the feelings of gratitude and wonder, joy and sorrow, triumph and contrition, hope and fear, rather than on theological disquisition however profound, or pious speculation however exalted. Religion, it is certain, has been often mazed and lost in the labyrinth of school-divinity. Although, in "contending for the faith once delivered to the "saints" against the attacks of unbelievers, sound criticism and dispassionate argument be undoubtedly the proper weapons, and although to thinking minds they be also the natural instruments of information and conviction ; yet is it not by them that the devotional principle is awakened and kept alive ?

For unintelligible impressions, or wild enthusiasm, I am not an advocate. He that is, exposes religion to disgrace. Common sense, calm reflection, universal righteousness, a humanity unlimited by party, a moderation that can applaud virtue in an enemy ; these, my dear charge, must never be given up on any pretence, or for any persuasion. A faith without morality, a devotion repugnant to reason, are not christianity ; but hypocrisy, or superstition. Beware of such as under the mask of zeal would seek to remove you from the only ground which, by God's blessing, can secure your steadfastness, improvement, and comfort ; I mean a sober evangelical piety.

In the days of the apostles there were those that "lay in wait to deceive ; that crept into widows' "houses, and led captive silly women." In our days their successors are numerous. I say again, Of such beware, "lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your

"minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Remember always, that whatever teacher or teachers would avail themselves of the warmth of your passions, or the vivacity of your imaginations, to seduce you into any system unfriendly to a good temper and a good life, do either mistake the true design of the gospel, or have an ill design on you. But then on the other hand you may be equally assured, that whatever teacher or teachers would attempt by dry disputation, or cold inquiry, to convert or edify souls, are strangers alike to nature and to christianity. What in truth is the latter, but an affectionate and powerful address to the former; divinely adapted to take hold not of the understanding only, but of the conscience, the will, and the passions; that is, of the most vital and operative principles of the heart?

Among the rest I mentioned the passion of Fear. We are told by an apostle, that "perfect love casteth out fear." But perfect love, in matters of religion, cannot, strictly understood, be supposed compatible with human frailty. To that is the system of Jesus graciously proportioned. There the passion I speak of is applied to, in a manner the most striking that can be conceived. For what purpose? To damp resolution, or dishearten hope? No; but to restrain the impetuosity of desire, and to prevent the misery of disorder; not to frighten you from the mercy-seat, but to show you the necessity of taking shelter there. You, my female friends, are naturally fearful. A conscious weakness prompts you continually to seek protection. Feeling yourselves, and knowing your sex to be helpless, you flee to men for safety. But do you always find it in them?—Need I point you to a sure refuge? I have done it already. Are you

mortified at the timidity of your nature? Are you depressed by the feebleness of your frame? I know not that you have cause. I am certain you have not; if a sense of your condition have induced you to put yourselves under the guardianship of Omnipotence. Many of you, it is evident, have the art of turning your infirmities to your own advantage, so far as concerns your influence with our sex. But that power, which you thus extract from imbecility, is often, alas! by the unhappiness of your passions, only rendered productive of new and greater weaknesses; whereas, if you were wise, you might on your natural frailty build an invincible strength, by securing the protection of the Almighty.

Your encouragements to do this, by the practice of such a piety as I am now recommending, I will consider in the next place; those encouragements, I mean, which both Providence and Scripture present to your sex with an appropriation as observable in itself, as it is merciful to you.

Nothing can be more plain, than that Providence has placed you most commonly in circumstances peculiarly advantageous for the exercises of devotion, and for the preservation of that virtue, without which every profession of godliness must be regarded as an impudent pretence. The situation of men lays them open to a variety of temptations, that lay out of your road. The bustle of life, in which they are generally engaged, leaves them often but little leisure for holy offices. Their passions are daily subject to be heated by the ferment of business; and how hard is it for them to avoid being importuned to excess, while sometimes a present interest, frequently a pressing appetite, and

yet more frequently the fear of ridicule, stimulates them to comply ! How very hard for a young man to withstand

“ The world’s dread laugh,
“ Which scarce the firm philosopher can scorn ! ”

In the case of our sex, do we not often see ranked on the side of licentiousness that reputation which ought to attend on sobriety alone ? Is not the last openly laughed at by those to whose opinion giddy young men will pay most respect, their own companions ? Is not its contrary cried up as a mark of spirit ? And if, in their unrestrained conversation amongst a diversity of humours, they meet with affronts, are they not constantly told, that the maxims of honour require them to take revenge ? Is not all this extremely unfavourable to the religious life, of which so great a part consists in purity and prayer, in regularity and coolness, in self-command and mild affections ? But from such snares your sex are happily exempted.

In many instances men are attacked by folly, before they surrender ; whereas women must generally invite it by art, or rather indeed take it by violence, ere they can possess themselves of its guilty pleasures. So far the Almighty, in consideration of their debility, and from a regard to their innocence has raised a kind of fence about them, to prevent those wild excursions into which the other sex are frequently carried, with a freedom unchecked by fear, and favoured by custom.

Corrupt as the world is, it certainly does expect from young women a strict decorum ; nor, as we have seen before, does it easily forgive them the least deviation. Add that, while you remain with-

out families of your own, few of you are necessarily so engaged, as not to have a large portion of time with daily opportunities for recollection, if you be inclined to improve them. I go farther, and subjoin, that your improving them by a piety the most regular and avowed, if withal unaffected and liberal, will be no sort of objection to the men, but much the reverse.

A bigoted woman every man of sense will carefully shun, as a most disagreeable, and even dangerous companion. But the secret reverence, which that majestic form Religion imprints on the hearts of all, is such, that even they who will not submit to its dictates themselves, do yet wish it to be regarded by those with whom they are connected in the nearest relation. The veriest infidel of them all, I am apt to believe, would be sorry to find his sister, daughter, or wife, under no restraint from religious principle. Thus it is, that even the greatest libertines are forced to pay, at the same instant, a kind of implicit respect to the two main objects of their profligate satire, Piety and Women; while they consider these as formed for each other, and tacitly acknowledge that the first is the only effectual means of insuring the good behaviour of the last. Let them talk as long, and as contemptuously as they will, about that easy credulity, and those superstitious terrors, which they pretend to be the foundation of your religion; something within will always give them the lie, so long as they perceive that your religion renders you more steadily virtuous, and more truly lovely.

But let us turn to scripture, and see what peculiar incitement you have from thence to the profession and practice of godliness. How encouraging to

reflect, that the very first promise made to the human race distinguished your sex with a mark of honour, as signal as it was unexampled ! Need I explain myself by saying, that the greatest personage who ever visited our world, he who came on the most important design, and who executed it in the most wonderful manner, none other and none less than " the Son of God, who was manifested " to destroy the works of the devil," and on their ruins to raise an empire of righteousness and happiness, elevated as heaven, and lasting as eternity—that He, I say, was from the beginning predicted under the singular and interesting character of " the seed of the woman !" How exalting a circumstance for your whole sex, that the Saviour of men, the admiration of angels, and the prince of heaven, was accordingly " in the fulness of time " made of a woman ! " And Oh, my young friends, what dignity will it for ever reflect on maiden virtue, that " a virgin conceived and bore " a son, the only begotten of the Father, full of " grace and truth !" Where is the religion, or the philosophy, that has lifted your nature so high, or placed the beauty of female purity and excellence in a light so conspicuous and noble.

Nor must we forget to take notice of the particular honours, with which individuals of your sex have had their memories transmitted to posterity by the sacred records. Not to insist on the females of the Old Testament, that " through faith " have obtained a good report ;" it merits your observation, how many we read of in the New, who for the duties of devotedness to their Saviour, the liberalities of respect to his person, and even the heroism of zeal in his cause, are mark-

ed out with a pre-eminence perfectly distinguishable.

When of his apostles the most sanguine had denied, had even forsworn, and all the rest had forsaken him and fled; we find those faithful and gentle creatures surrounding his cross with lamentations, which they were neither ashamed nor afraid to avow. Never sure did female tears appear more graceful. Nor were they merely that transient flow of mechanical grief, so easily furnished by too many eyes, where the heart has little or no share in the soft effusion. The love which those devout daughters of Jerusalem bore to their master, nothing could extinguish. Who has not read that affecting story of the visit to his sepulchre, paid by the pious Marys and their little company, together with the kind, generous, and, as it might have proved, very hazardous purpose which produced it? Their setting out alone, at so early an hour, while it was yet dark, to engage in so solemn a scene, afforded a striking proof of the courage and constancy with which their piety had inspired them, amidst all that spirits like theirs must have suffered from so many circumstances of sorrow. In their countenances, words, and gestures on that occasion, I think I read the painful, yet amiable emotions, that wrought in their tender throbbing hearts. I am particularly charmed with the eager anxiety, and beautiful distress of Mary Magdalene, whose gratitude for the transcendant mercies she had received, did then flame out with such uncommon fervour. While I contemplate the whole transaction, with the conduct that preceded it, I cannot but admire that justice which, in preference to all others, honoured those excellent women with being the first witnesses and publishers of Christ's resurrection, or, as an

ancient writer has expressed it, Apostles to the Apostles themselves. A very natural, as it is in effect a most memorable attachment, and unconquerable fidelity ! Surely it was not in vain, that the annals of inspiration have registered those pleasing facts with such particularity. There they stand, and will for ever stand, illustrious monuments of female worth, in a conjuncture most peculiarly trying, and of the extraordinary approbation it met with from him, in whose sight devotion and perseverance, affection and faith will always outshine the more showy qualities that fill the world with history and wonder.

I should have mentioned before this, the friendship of Jesus to the sisters of Lazarus, his applause of the woman of Canaan, and his pathetic address to the women who followed him weeping, while he carried his cross. It is likewise worthy of remark that of all the disciples, he who seems, in a certain divine sweetness of disposition, to have resembled him most, directed one of those epistles which make a part of our scriptures to a Lady, a person of distinction much respected by him and all the believers of that time for her eminent piety, and that of her children.

And now, if with encouragements like these to the love of God and of your Saviour, any of you, my fair auditory, should live in forgetfulness of both ; what shall we say of such, but that they are destitute of true ambition, and totally insensible to the most distinguishing favours of heaven ?

But perhaps we shall be told, that the perpetual flatteries which many of you meet with from men on account of its inferior gifts, such as youth, beauty, fancy, sprightliness, prevent or destroy those better sentiments which you might be other-

wise disposed to cultivate. I doubt it not. But do ye plead this as an excuse? Your situation, we have granted all along, subjects you to temptations in particular instances. But we have now seen, that it frees you from other very dangerous snares, and includes the most powerful attractives to your duty. What are you to infer from the whole, but that you ought to avail yourselves of these advantages, for fortifying and guarding you wherever you lie exposed?

I have just named what appears to me your sex's weakest side. To arm you on that I have had opportunities of offering a variety of precautions. I now add, and it shall be my last consideration on this occasion, that Revelation concurs with reason to furnish the strongest weapons of defence against that adulation, which is so great an enemy to your souls.

That your souls are immortal is probable from reason, and certain from revelation. But the arguments from either I hold it unnecessary to propose here. To attempt the conviction of female infidels falls not within my present design. Indeed I fear it were a hopeless undertaking. The preposterous vanity, together with the open or secret profligacy, by which they have been warped into scepticism, would in all likelihood baffle any endeavours of mine. If they be not however so far gone in that unhappy system, as to be resolved against all sober inquiry, I would earnestly recommend to their perusal a few of the many excellent writings, which this age and country have produced in favour of religion both natural and revealed. At the same time I would just remind them, that the daring and disputatious spirit of unbelief is utterly repugnant to female softness, and

to that sweet docility which, in their sex, is so peculiarly pleasing to ours; not to mention, that from an infidel partner a man can have no prospect of consolation in those hours of distress, when the hopes of futurity can alone administer relief. To you, my christian hearers, I was going to observe, that the stedfast and serious belief of immortality, as pointed out in your frame, and brought to light by the gospel, will excite such a mighty concern to secure its grand interests, such a high sense of your internal dignity, such a predominant ambition of being acceptable in his sight, who can make you happy or wretched for ever, as must necessarily lessen in your esteem every external and perishing advantage.

If you be really possessed by those principles, he that from spiritual and everlasting objects would turn your chief regard to skin-deep and short-lived allurements, will surely, in a moment of recollection at least, be looked upon by you as a tempter to be shunned. That pride of life, which in the eye of folly swells into such importance, will shrink and fade away into its native idleness in her view, whose thoughts are often entertained with the magnificence and splendour of eternal things. To that young woman who, like her of Bethany, "has chosen the good part," who meekly pensive sits at the feet of Jesus, and with delighted reverence hears his words; the insinuation of the vicious, impertinence of the vain, in short, whatever would rob her of her portion, or obstruct her enjoying it, will not, I think, be overpleasing. To her the care of her salvation is the one thing needful. Compared with that, even the best things of this world appear, what in truth they are, but trifles; in which, because the condition of mortality makes it unavoidable, she shares with cheerfulness, but in

which she shares with moderation too, because she has business to mind of infinite moment.

“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” The question was asked by him, who knew right well the value of both. Had he asked, “What shall it profit a Woman, if she shall gain the whole world, and lose her own soul?” would the state of the question have been altered? You will not say it. Weighed against a sword, the empire of the earth were dust in the balance. What then shall we call those things, for which sinners are daily forfeiting their salvation? Tell me, ye flattered fair ones, what is the worth of praise or admiration from knaves, or from fools, for which so many of you are ready to forfeit yours? Ye daughters of Vanity, tell me what will dress, or show, or gaiety of any kind, where God and goodness are neglected, “profit in the day of wrath?” In that day of discovery and decision what will appearances avail?—Give me back these last sentences: I had forgotten: Dress, show, gaiety, appearances, will be then no more.—But hold; before we look so far let us see what they can perform now.

They can attract attention; they can allure desire; they can excite encomium, deceive the unwary, and captivate the weak, for a little. But inform us, ye boasted beauties, who are told every day of your power, what permanent essential good can it procure? Bring it to the proof. Bid the sun that measures your days, stand still; command the current of time that hurries you along, to stop; say to wrinkled age, to fell disease, Approach me not, ye frightful forms. Alas! they are deaf as the adder, and stubborn as the rock. Try then your influence in some smaller thing. Make the experiment on the head-ach: enjoin it to be gone.

It goes not. But perhaps the heart-ach may hear, and obey : your inward feelings at least should be under your control. But you have given them the rein ; nor will they be checked on a sudden. While you have thought only of conquering other hearts, you have suffered headstrong passions to conquer your own. Summon then your worshippers, and order them to interpose ; see if by all their incense, and all their zeal, they can keep you young in spite of years, or make you glad in spite of affliction. They are silent. Ask them, if they will undertake to die for you ? They retire. Call after them—" Will you answer for us at the judgment day ?"—Again that awful period rushes on the mind. Ah, my friends, what will ye do then without religion ? The thought is big with horror. Then, then it shall be seen, with an evidence bright and terrible as the funeral fire of Nature, that " beauty is deceitful, and favour is vain."—But what means that universal shout of human and angelic voices ? What words are those, which I hear resounding through the assembly of the universe ? " A woman, that feareth the Lord, She shall be praised !"

SERMON XI.

ON FEMALE PIETY.

1 TIM. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women professing Godliness.

PROV. xxxi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain : but a woman that feareth the Lord, She shall be praised.

IF from what has been advanced concerning Female Piety, you be satisfied of its importance and necessity ; you will naturally attend, while I proceed, without any preface, to show you, in what manner it may be cultivated with most success.

It is difficult to say whether the instrumental duties of religion, as they are usually termed, have been more misrepresented by superstition and hypocrisy on one hand, or by vicious refinement and vain philosophy on the other. By the former they have been extolled, as if they were the whole of religion ; while the latter have decried them as vulgar, unavailing, and insignificant. The real truth is, that they are not only a part of religion ; but an essential and important part of it ; essential, as expressing its several affections, and important, as nourishing and maintaining them ; essential, as a direct compliance with the divine authority, and important, as rendering such compliance more ready and habitual.

Habits, we all know, are formed by many reiterated acts ; and if these be discontinued, those will in time be lost. As good impressions are at first produced by proper attention, so if this be suspended, they will soon fade from the mind ; and the sooner, no doubt, that many of them at least were produced there in opposition to appetite, fashion, and the maxims of the world. Even friendship itself, which has originally so powerful a hold of the human heart, is not to be preserved alive, without that interchange of words and actions, if the parties be near ; or that commerce of thoughts and wishes, if they be not, to which it naturally inclines. What could you expect from him, who should profess to entertain an affection for you, and yet testify no desire of your company, take no delight in your conversation, or if absent never inquire after you ? Religion is a Divine Friendship, to be begun and continued in the same manner with that which is Human ; making allowance still for the infinite disparity between the Creator and the creature, between the Sovereign Spirit all pure and perfect, and a dependent mind embodied and frail ;

In cultivating a friendship which you wished to be thorough and lasting, you would often step aside from the crowd to enjoy the freedom of undisturbed converse ; you would lay open your heart with confidence to the object beloved, listen to each communication with pleasure, enter more and more into the same conceptions, exchange every possible mark of esteem, and, in the end, establish a union of interests and of souls alike close and tender. Now here we have some resemblance of private devotion. It is not my design to pursue this resemblance through its several parts ; neither do I pretend to say, that it holds minutely in every one of them : but

the ground is clear to her who believes in an omnipresent Deity, and knows that between minds there may be an intercourse independent of the senses. The application can only be learnt by practice, and much practice too.

It will not be learnt by those who have no relish for retirement. The Almighty's voice must be often attended to in the silence of the passions, and the secrecy of the soul. Those are yet strangers to their Maker, who cannot endure to think of him, or do not love to turn to him, when alone. Is the reverse of this, my dear hearers, your case? Are your meditations of God'sweet? Does your heart go out after him, as its best and greatest object? Is it your joy to pour it forth into his paternal bosom? Do you frequently find the exercise so delightful, as to quit it with unwillingness? Do you generally perceive your sentiments raised and refined by it, your ideas of your duty quickened and enlarged, your detestation of the contrary confirmed and heightened, your resolutions invigorated of course, your gratitude, humility, meekness, resignation, and good affections of every kind improved? Then are you a true worshipper. These are some of the genuine workings of piety.

I inquire not, whether they be the result of longer or shorter prayers, of studied forms or extempore address, of more or fewer stated seasons for such offices. In these particulars, different minds require a diversity, or a different education occasions it. But she, I suppose, will be the greatest proficient in the Spirit of Prayer, who is at the greatest pains to be so; I do not mean in the way of science or art, but in that of earnestness and perseverance.

Beside the regular, invariable, and solemn performance of your morning and evening devotions, it would be well if now and then, especially on the day of sacred rest, you took repeated opportunities of entering into your closet, shutting your door, and praying to your Father who sees in secret; according as you found yourself in a happier disposition for such employment, or were prompted to it by some peculiar occurrence in your situation, or exigence in your soul. And if at certain times of the year, pointed out by religious custom, or fixed upon by personal choice, you were to consecrate a whole day to holy retreat and devotional exercises, joined with prudent fasting; you would, I am persuaded, find it as highly beneficial in your own practice, as it comes strongly recommended by the experience of the saints.

If you might be advised by me, you should in prayer neither trust wholly to your single fund of thought and expression, supposing it even rich and various, nor confine yourself entirely to forms, by whatever man or set of men composed; but use sometimes one, sometimes the other, and sometimes a mixture of both, just as the attraction of your mind seems to lead at the moment, or as any of these methods may on trial be attended with most satisfaction and advantage. In effect, I am convinced that of those who, in this kind of commerce, limit themselves to their own unassisted stock, the greater part will often, particularly in circumstances of bad health or spiritual dryness, be reduced to such straits as may produce a poverty of devotion which they could not suffer, did they proceed on a larger foundation. On the other hand, I cannot conceive, that, even amongst those who are most devoted to forms, any sincere worshipper should

not by the swelling of sentiment, and the current of elevation, be frequently carried away into a freer and fuller effusion of the heart.

As to the length of those duties, I would only say, that you must be governed by your condition both outward and inward? that you are to avoid every thing careless, or formal, whether with or without preconceived words; that little intermissions are often extremely useful to relieve the mind, and fit it for new exertion of its powers: but that on the other side, by praying in continuity, the soul is often warmed into life and energy, till that exercise which was begun with languor is concluded with affection.

When I speak of affection, let me warn you not to mistake the effervescence of fancy for the spirit of devotion. They are two things widely different, "By their fruits ye shall know them." The fluency, tears, and rapture, produced by the first, are mechanical, superficial, and ineffectual; engendering only the confidence of Enthusiasm, or wasting them in the scrupulosity of Superstition. The last, though frequently accompanied with fluency, tears, and rapture, at least in minds of much sensibility, is yet often not so; but then it leaves the heart better, however this may not be discerned immediately. She who sometimes perhaps, like the self-abased publican, is able only to sigh out "God be merciful to me a sinner," may in that all-seeing eye be as acceptable as the most eloquent petitioner that ever addressed the throne of heaven. We read of "the Spirit's helping our infirmities" in this very exercise, "and making intercessions for us with groanings that cannot be uttered."

Mental prayer, and silent ejaculation, I will not now consider. They are the attainments of persons

far advanced in devotion. By pursuing the track I point out, you may hope to reach them in one degree or another; and some experience in them will lead you to more. Those who can abstract and concentrate their minds, so as readily to place themselves in the presence of God, wherever they are, and to converse with him even in a crowd, whether by continued contemplation, or by sudden darting of pious affection towards him on the point of a vigorous thought, certainly possess a very noble secret, fruitful alike of edification and enjoyment; such too as renders them much less dependent on the accidents of their situation, since let their business or other engagements be what they will, they may be still with God, calm, self-possessed, and happily disposed to "pray always:" a state of spiritual life, which there is reason to fear is known by few.

There is a kind of middle practice, which is probably less uncommon, as it is certainly more easy; that of praying with a repressed voice, or one not in the least audible to a second person, while yet the words are distinctly and deliberately spoken by the worshipper, who by such means preserves his ideas from dissipation, and impresses them more deeply on his own heart. I said deliberately; because, in this as well as in every other method of prayer, hurry and precipitation are utterly incompatible with the spirit of devotion.

Of even the strongest and most retired minds it may, I believe, be affirmed, that they never think at all, on whatever occasion, without the secret or internal use of language, although they seldom attend to it. Be that as it may, I am satisfied that vocal prayer, whether more or less articulate, will be found in general, by far the most

proportioned to the human and particularly to the female faculties. Of the manner last mentioned we have a remarkable example in the mother of Samuel. It is a beautiful passage, strongly expressive of the workings of a devout but sorrowful spirit, and at the same time of the power of devotion to turn sorrow and sighing into joy and praise.

* One thing we may boldly pronounce, as a maxim which will never fail; that she has worshipped to purpose, in whatever mode she has worshipped; who comes away improved or established in worthy dispositions, whether these be attended with much emotion or with none, with much delight or with little, at the time. This remark I judged peculiarly necessary here, considering how easily you, my young friends, may be misled on this subject by that ardour of passion, and that vivacity of fancy, which are so natural to you; and which, wherever devotion is concerned, are so prone to assume its name, when at the very best they can only aid its flights.

On the same principle, I would caution you not to lose yourselves in generalities; which, however they may chance to engage the understanding, or entertain the imagination, seldom touch the conscience or interest the heart. In conversing with a virtuous and intimate friend, you would choose certainly to dwell on those matters that affected you most nearly, or to throw out those reflexions that most daily occurred. In this higher correspondence, you should do the same; only with more solemnity, and greater abstraction from secular objects.

Nothing can be more erroneous than the common opinion, that the several parts of prayer, as they

are usually termed, ought to enter into every longer act of devotion. What is this, but to reduce into a mere trial of skill, or to restrain within the trammels of a system, and thereby degrade into a laborious and jejune piece of formality, that which ought to be free and unaffected, natural and noble? — 'I am going into the company of a bosom friend. Let me settle beforehand the whole plan of our conversation; that I may be sure to introduce such and such topics, in order to discuss them severally one after another, at full length, and with due connexion.'—He who should talk in this manner would discover, methinks, very little acquaintance with the spirit of friendship. In that, my sisters, and in true devotion, there is nothing, believe me, artificial, nicely managed, or elaborately studied. Esteem, sentiment, confidence, a sympathy of soul, and the overflowings of the heart, are all in all. I think not at present of the public offices of religion, where, in those who lead them, more regularity and accuracy, are no doubt required.

On the whole, when you address the seat of mercy, you ought to speak what you feel most strongly at that particular season; to follow, without scruple the inward attraction beforementioned; to insist on those things of a spiritual nature, that are then attended with the greatest relish; to continue your attention to them calmly, but fixedly, while that relish remains; then to pass on, if time and other circumstances permit, to something else, still without any agitation or violent effort; nor deeming it necessary to follow out this new track, should another present itself that seems more promising, or that lies more parallel to the course of your thoughts on the occasion;

chiefly concerned to keep alive the sense of that great presence in which you are, of those wants and weaknesses under which you labour, of what you owe to others as well as to yourselves, and of that divinely efficacious intercession, through which alone you wish and hope to be heard and accepted.

A composed, affectionate, and steady attention to these and such like rules (for I cannot now enter into the full detail) will, if I be not greatly mistaken, prove one effectual mean of cultivating the life and power of religion within you. I need not add, what you have been told times without number, and what your own hearts cannot on the least reflexion fail to repeat; that no prayers can be effectual for this or any one good purpose, which are not accompanied with a correspondent watchfulness and faithful discharge of every other duty.

But it may be necessary to subjoin, that the practice of devotion, now recommended, cannot take place without much preparation from time to time; of which one well known part is the Reading of the Scriptures. On this a very few observations shall suffice.

For acquiring what is generally styled Religious Knowledge, reading the scriptures throughout, and often large portions at a time, may be perfectly proper. For improving in that which those scriptures speak of chiefly under this denomination, I mean a practical and vital sense of things divine and everlasting, a different method, as I conceive, should be followed.

Short and select passages from both Testaments, but especially the new, and more particularly from the history and sermons of our Saviour, should be

perused and pondered at leisure, first without any commentary at all, and so indeed for the most part, except where there is a manifest difficulty : in doing which, you should with awful reverence and child-like simplicity lay your minds open to the native impressions of the truth, and to the secret teachings of its Author. When, in this way, you meet with one or more verses, that strike you with peculiar conviction or delight ; close the book, revolve them again and again, look up to heaven, and implore the Father of Spirits to write their meaning on your hearts, as " with the point of a diamond." Read nothing more at that time, nothing at least that has not a near relation to the ideas and affections they excite. Give these an easy unstudied vent in prayer. The pleasure and the benefit will be unspeakable. Only suffer not the tincture thereby left upon you, to be lost in the succeeding scenes. Next morning review the same passage ; endeavour to recall the same sentiments, and with your pencil mark it for your future benefit.

A young lady formerly of my acquaintance, who is now reading the character and will of her Creator in the light of the beatific vision used daily to follow this practice. Her bible was infinitely prized by her ; whatever was most excellent in it, she had thought and weighed all over. Its sacred contents were engraven on her soul ; or rather her soul was delivered into the mould of it. She lived in innocence and died in triumph.

Is it necessary, my beloved disciples, that I should urge you to the study of a book which, while it tends to make you wise to salvation, is calculated also to convey the most affecting views, and awaken the sublimest sensibilities, on a thousand topics ? A book it certainly is full of entertain-

ment as well as instruction; composed by a great diversity of authors, and all of them divinely taught. I think I see them, one after another, presenting for your improvement their respective writings, with an aspect of dignity and sweetness combined, the dignity of truth, and the sweetness of benevolence; both derived from him, who inspired them to be the teachers of mankind, and who, in order to gain the more belief and veneration, invested many of them with a command over Nature, and a knowledge of Futurity, which none but the God of Nature, and the spirit of Omniscience could impart. I think I hear them severally addressing you, in the name of God, with an authority that can only be equalled by their mildness, on subjects the grandest and most important, in a happy variety of styles, amidst a uniformity of sentiments, and an agreement in facts, which, the multiplicity of them considered, must ever appear truly admirable! What shall I say more?—I will not desire you to read this book called the Bible, if you can show me another containing so much to inform, impress, and delight reflecting minds, laid together in a manner so extensively adapted to their various turns of understanding, taste, and temper; which people of different and distant countries, through a long succession of ages, have held in so much reverence, and read with so much advantage; where it is so difficult to determine which are most distinguished, ease and simplicity, or sublimity and force, but where all are so beautifully united; where there is so little to discourage the weakest spirit if docile, and so much to gratify the strongest if candid; where the fancy and the heart, to the intellect and the conscience, are applied to by turns with such familiarity, and yet such majesty; in fine, where the

frailties, disorders, and distresses of human nature, are all so feelingly laid open, and the remedies which heaven has provided, so tenderly applied. But to proceed :

Of books in Divinity I do not wish you to read very many. Those in the way of Religious Controversy, as it is called, but which are frequently written in a most irreligious spirit, that is, without any candour or fairness, I do not wish you to read at all. Mere argumentative theology I have never known to improve the temper, or regulate the conduct; but often to hurt both. Happily for you indeed, the female taste very seldom lies in that way; never, I think, where there is female sweetness. By a good providence you have been taught "the truth as it is "in Jesus." Be it your ambition to practise, not to dispute about it. Enjoy your faith in modest silence, and think well of those who differ from you in opinions, if they agree in morals: but learn to despise the futility, while you discourage the impudence, of such as would pretend to talk you out of your religion. Be assured they are often empty, and always worthless. If they attempt it in the style of banter, they offer you an affront. If they affect to seem in earnest, to be sorry for your prejudices, and solicitous to remove them by conversation, and by books which they are ready to lend you; a hundred to one, but they are actuated by the worst designs. Flee them my fair pupils, flee them with horror, as tempters and ravagers at the same instant:

By making conscience of sincerely obeying the precepts of the gospel, while you meekly embrace its doctrines, as they appear to you set forth in the scriptures, you will have the witness of its divinity within yourselves. From thence you will be disposed to choose and to adhere to those writers, of

whatever communion, that are calculated to make you most in love with your Saviour and your duty. The formal and frigid you will naturally dislike; the uncharitable and illiberal you will nobly detest; the trifling and superficial you will very easily condemn. Those books, how well soever recommended, that even in your gravest hours do not attract and persuade you, (I now suppose you pious,) ye will readily perceive are not the books for you. Such as do both, in a greater or less degree, it is apparent, are adapted to your cast of mind. Those in short will be your favourite authors, whether in verse or prose, whom you find most frequently new and interesting; who present the most pathetic pictures of this world and the next; who tell you most convincingly what you are, and what you ought to be; who, in a word, seem to address themselves with the greatest power to the spirit of ingenuity, humility, contrition, self-denial, solid virtue, and affectionate devotion.

I take it for granted you attend on the Public Institutions of religion. The superior regularity of your sex in this respect the men, to say the truth, show very little inclination to dispute. May the women take care to convince them, that it is something more than mere regularity! In the mean time I am sure, that they who perform their first duties, are much more likely to perform their second also, than they who do not.

Let your attendance be more than what the world calls decent: let it be punctual. She that becomes deficient in punctuality, will soon become indifferent about the whole. Having omitted her duty unnecessarily once, a second, and a third time, she will omit it the fourth with less compunction; and ere long will be ready to neglect it without any

It is wonderful, how soon a sense of futurity dies from the soul. Have you ever known it to live, after the Sabbath was grown into contempt? What multitudes have been forced to date their ruin from that period?

But not to speak of the openly profane, do those sanctify the sabbath to whom it is not a delight; who visit the house of God without preparation; and worship there without devotion? What shall we say of many a young woman who passes for good and pious, although she cannot for an hour together behave with sedateness or composure, in the immediate presence of the Most High? That mind must be volatile indeed, which the solemnities of a christian assembly cannot fix for a little. Do we wish you then to disfigure your faces like the Pharisees, to hang your heads like a bulrush; or to practise religious grimace of any kind? No. Is even the gravest look, or most recollected manner, a certain sign of piety? It is not: and yet will you say, that such a look and manner are of no importance on such an occasion; that they are not naturally suited to it; or that the spirit of piety may very probably dwell in her heart whose countenance and carriage even on that occasion do not bear the marks of it, who even then cannot restrain the rolling eye, forget the conscious air, or leave the fluttering demeanour?

Believe me, ladies, a different behaviour would appear much more becoming. Men of sense and sobriety would entertain a much better opinion of your principles; nor would it be any disadvantage to your persons. Never perhaps does a fine woman strike more deeply, than when composed into pious recollection, and possessed with the noblest considerations, she assumes, without knowing it,

superior dignity and new graces; so that the beauties of holiness seem to radiate about her; and the by-standers are almost induced to fancy her already worshipping among her kindred angels.

But to return to the point immediately before us; I say, that the habit of seriousness and devotion in church, will produce very desirable effects on your temper and conduct out of it. By beginning the week well, you will retain through the remainder a certain impression of goodness, that will follow you every where; at the same time that, by such avowed testimonies of respect for your Maker and Saviour, you will ensure the continuance of the divine benediction and assistance.

The great advantages arising from a diligent attention to the preaching of the word, and also from an early, frequent, and devout participation of the Lord's supper, I will not now enter on. They are abundantly obvious, and have been frequently enforced. But I cannot quit the subject of the sabbath without observing, that to those, who join in the public services of that day, its utility is often totally defeated by their resigning the evening to company and recreation; the general tendency of these being to efface any serious impressions made in the preceding part of it. For such a practice you, my fair charges, who have commonly so much leisure upon your hands, cannot plead the least excuse.

Very hard it is, if those who give so many other evenings to amusement, cannot find in their heart to give this or a part of it to God. But, alas! it is that very passion for amusement, which prevents or dulls the taste for devotion. To her indeed, who will not be persuaded to rescue so small a portion

of her time from the gaieties of the world for the purposes of her salvation, we cannot hope to say any thing that will be of use. She who cannot enjoy the company of her Creator for an hour or two, remote from all other company, was never initiated into the mysteries of divine friendship; she is yet in her sins, "alienated from the life of God, dead while she lives," in a spiritual sense dead, alive only to animal nature and the tumultuous dreams of a distempered mind; in short, a poor giddy worthless creature, incapable of what-ever is wise or happy.

" Oh ! lost to virtue, lost to sober thought,
 " Lost to the noble sallies of the soul,
 " Who think it solitude to be alone.
 " Communion sweet ! communion large and high ?
 " Our reason, guardian angel, and our God !
 " Then nearest these, when others most remote ;
 " And all ere long shall be remote but these.
 " How dreadful then to meet them all alone,
 " A stranger unacknowledg'd, unapprov'd !"

I tremble at the thought. Nor will it avail you, in this case, to plead even the utmost exactness and constancy in your attendance on the sanctuary. That alone will prove nothing. Entertainment may still be the idol which you worship, and worship even in the temple of Jehovah. If you say it is not, let us bring you to the test. When you return home from the house of God, can you retire with pleasure to your closets, impose silence on your fancies, command your passions to be still, exclude every thought of dress, and diversion, company, and admiration; review what you have been doing, recall what you have heard, make application if it admit of any; (there are few discourses that admit not of some;) and then casting yourselves down

at the footstool of the throne of God, pour out your hearts before him, confess with simplicity and sorrow your sins and corruptions, implore the grace of repentance and remission for what is past, of discernment to know your duty for the future, and of fortitude to do it, forming at the same time unfeigned resolutions to that purpose; joining to the whole the adoration of the divine attributes, as they successively or jointly rise to your view; and, finally, throwing yourselves on the divine mercy through Christ Jesus?—Can you do this? Is it your favourite and habitual employment, in the evening of that day which God has made for himself? To her who can honestly answer in the affirmative, I will acknowledge freely that, next to the daily tenor of a conduct uniformly christian, she gives one of the best proofs of sincerity in her religious profession; nor is there any thing excellent in that, which I should not expect from a practice so wise and pious. But what is to be expected of those who know nothing of this? Or what can be said of their intentions in going to church, who the moment they leave it, leave every reflexion which it ought to have imprinted, and resolve to think of religion that day no more than if they had not heard or mentioned a syllable relating to it? St. James will inform you whom they are like. They are “like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”—Do men then so readily lose the image of themselves? No; but the apostle must be understood to speak of some thoughtless creature, who, on looking accidentally into a glass, and observing certain spots or stains in

his face, which he ought instantly to wipe off, turns away in haste without availing himself of the discovery, and, in the pursuit of other objects, entirely neglects a circumstance that demanded his immediate attention. I leave you to apply the remark, and only add in general, that the closet must enforce what the pulpit has suggested; that as, like Lydia, you should attend diligently to the things which are spoken in the name of God, so, like Mary, you should keep and ponder them in your hearts; and that as Jesus himself, dismissing the multitudes together with his disciples, "went up into a mountain apart to pray," so you, disengaging yourselves from the interruption of a crowd, and the company even of your most intimate connexions, should step aside, more particularly at the season in question, to converse with his Father and your Father, with his God and your God.

Think not from any thing I have said, that I want to subject you to the rules of Jewish rigour, under the mild dispensation of the Gospel. What I propose will render the Christian sabbath no less pleasant than improving. Nor do I mean to preclude on that day the cheerful reciprocations of holy friendship; which they that have a taste for them will easily distinguish from the unseasonable pastimes and promiscuous visitings, in which many fine ladies of the present age pass their Sunday evenings.

Thus I am brought to say something of Religious Conversation. An attempt to discuss so important a topic would carry me too far. To manage religious conversation with propriety and advantage, is for the most part an affair of great delicacy. In the more retired intercourse of congenial minds,

well taught and well furnished, it may not be difficult. But such, I fear, are not often found; and even where such have the happiness to meet, grave discourse will require to be frequently varied; relieved, and suspended, in order to keep up its relish.

Much sentiment is apt to overwhelm. The soul quickly seeks relaxation. The bow cannot be long bent without having its elasticity impaired. In general company, subjects of devotion and morality would, as the world goes, be utterly improper. Good Lord! to what is this generation sunk, that even amongst characters otherwise decent, a man can seldom or ever introduce a solemn reflexion, without incurring the imputation of cant or impertinence? When shall it be the mode to converse like immortal beings? Where is the fashionable circle now, in which a serious observation can be prudently hazarded, if not stolen upon them with art and insinuation? Neither is this a part for you to take upon yourselves.

Female modesty is often silent; female decorum is never bold. Both forbid a young woman to lead the conversation; and true religion dreads every thing that might look ostentatious. The most prudent course you can pursue is to associate, as much as possible, with those that from real principle love the shade. With them you may safely unbosom yourselves on the best subjects, without the danger of ridicule, or the suspicion of affectation. When the children of Wisdom assemble, out of the sight and din of Folly; what improvement and felicity crown the scene! How delightfully do they then mingle souls! Nor does their parent disdain to sport with her offspring. I mean, that genuine piety knows how to blend recreation and smiles with sentiment and gravity.

Having mentioned Sentiment so often, I will now once for all offer you a caution, on which I lay a particular stress. It is this; not to mistake the capacity of thinking justly, or of talking well, for the same thing with a disposition to act wisely. The truth is, that people are not wise in consequence either of profound knowledge, or vast learning, or beautiful notions, or the most cultivated taste, or the greatest ability in displaying these; but by virtue of a few plain notions settled into principles of conduct; even as people are not healthy by feasting on rich dainties, or indulging a too nice palate, but by living on simpler fare, where temperance does not wish for much variety, and where hunger does not want it.

Nevertheless, there is not perhaps any thing that flatters the human mind more than depth or fluency of remark, than compass or facility of conversation. In effect, they are talents not often possessed, and such as confer a superiority felt by all, however it may be acknowledged by few. When it is acknowledged, such praise transports; and those who receive it set themselves down for every thing that is great and accomplished. Alas! they forget, that these are still at best but in the second class of excellence; that in a moral view they are of no value; and that fine discourse and a fine character are things totally distinct.

In reality, your best talkers are very seldom your best lives. From their encomiums on virtue, and their declamations against vice, they often receive such high pleasure as with them passes for love of the one, and abhorrence of the other; when it is only perhaps a vain complacence in their own powers, joined to that natural sense of right and wrong, which is common to them with all others.

In this they rest, well satisfied to leave to others the less showy, and more troublesome part, which belongs to practice. To that also speculation is frequently an enemy, in the same manner as familiarity is to respect.

Religion, beloved, is a majestic form always to be treated with reverence; with affection too, I confess, as being likewise an amiable form. But this affection resembles that which a wise subject would show for his prince, into whose friendship he found himself graciously admitted. Such a man would never forget his own subordination so far, as to drop the reverence due to royalty. If his prince condescended to treat him with the openness of confidence, and the caress of joy; yet still would he bear in mind, that he was only a subject, and every freedom on his side would be tempered with respectful modesty.

Perhaps there is nothing so uncommon as to speak of divine objects with the proper veneration. How have I been shocked to hear the sanctimonious, yet audacious, prate of some pretenders to religion! Those that have the strongest perceptions of it will be most struck by its sublimity, and most conscious how far they fall short of so high a standard. By consequence they will profess it with the greatest modesty, and mention it with the utmost caution. Those that are most intimately acquainted with God and themselves, will be most deeply impressed with his grandeur and their own littleness, will most clearly perceive the difference between knowing his will, and performing it, will feel most sensibly how much easier it is to descend on all his perfections than to copy one of them.

In conclusion; let me beseech you beyond all things, to converse much with your Maker and yourselves;

to study his character and your own ; to trace his attributes wherever displayed ; to learn his counsels however revealed ; to examine your consciences, chiefly by the written word ; to canvass your past actions, present pursuits, and prevailing views ; to approve or condemn, as under his eye ; to ascertain your interest in the friendship of your Divine Sovereign, and cherish an unalterable Faith in his Spirit, and Providence, as ever ready to assist your honest though feeble efforts ; together with a joyful assurance, that if you are not wilfully wanting to yourselves, you shall at last attain immortal excellence and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XII.

ON GOOD WORKS.

1 TIM. ii. 8, 9, 10.

I will—that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but (which becometh women professing godliness) with Good Works.

YOU have seen a venerable matron encircled with a race of lovely daughters, all different from one another, yet all marked with an air of mutual resemblance, and taking jointly after their honoured parent, to whom from time to time they direct their looks with dutiful attention; while she smiles on each by turns, superintends their behaviour, and prescribes their several occupations, encourages them in every thing praiseworthy, and, with a proper regard to their respective talents and dispositions, trains them to growing excellence. In her, my fair ones, you beheld an emblem of Religion. Thus is that most dignified of all forms surrounded by the Virtues, her beautiful offspring; thus do they bear the lineaments of their common descent; and near affinity; and thus—But I leave you to trace the particulars of the similitude. The general truth on which it is founded, seems plainly intimated in our text, where Godliness is assumed as the leading principle of all that the apostle inculcates on women. As women professing Christianity

he addresses them: and whatever a consistency with that profession demands, he would be understood to enjoin. He mentions particularly modest apparel, shamefacedness, sobriety, and Good Works. It now remains to enforce the last of these, together with those Kind Affections which they presuppose; and to touch as we go along on their connexion with the Religious Principles which gave them birth.

But before we proceed, truth requires one mortifying observation. It is this, that amongst the many women professing godliness, the number of those that practise it is comparatively small. In all professions the mere pretenders will ever be numerous. They will be most so, in those that are at once reputable and difficult. That of Religion, as was formerly remarked, is approved of in your sex even by such as laugh at it in ours. At the same time it is certain, that when the habits of piety have not been very early acquired, and very happily directed, by means of a wise education, the rarest as well as the greatest of blessings, the forming of them afterwards will always prove a task too arduous, and painful, for the generality of those who are bred to dissipation and pleasure.

But then, on the other hand, where this divine principle is cultivated with care and judgment, it is no less certain, that we may expect from it the most valuable fruits. And first; I say, that a young woman professing godliness with understanding, and from choice, will never be wanting in the great article of Filial Duty. On this subject, as on many others, the subtlety of speculation has put cases, which there is little probability of happening in life. But where Christianity is not neces-

sary, it is apt to be hurtful, by involving the mind in perplexity and distress, if not warping the heart from that rectitude and simplicity, which, next to the immediate illumination of heaven, are the surest guides to a worthy conduct.

Of filial duty in all its branches she will naturally acquit herself best, who has the deepest sense of religion. "Keep thy father's commandment; and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thine neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou wakest, it shall talk with thee. Whoso revileth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness. The eye that mocketh his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." Jesus was subject unto his parents. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." All this a christian daughter has read with attention, and reflects upon with awe. It corresponds, in substance, with the instinct of nature, which it contributes at once to corroborate and exalt. She who truly reverences her parent in heaven, would tremble at the thought of dishonouring his representatives on earth. From their authority she has acquired the idea of his, and this last, including all that can be conceived of great and good, is the commanding idea of her life. If your parents be indeed pious, and you have profited by their instruction and example; how will your natural respect for them be heightened by religious

gratitude! You will think of them with secret rapture as the instruments of a happy and immortal existence; your devoutest prayers for their preservation and comfort will daily ascend to the throne of God. Those prayers will, at the same instant, cherish the affections by which they are prompted, and strengthen your resolutions never, for any consideration, to transgress the laws of filial piety. For how could they bear to be the wilful authors of pain to those for whose felicity they are led by every motive to present every day the most fervent supplications?

But many of you have not the happiness of such parents as I have supposed. I am heartily sorry for it. But the want of principle in your parents will not dissolve the ties of duty, however it may affect the sentiments of esteem: and if you think rightly, it will only excite your endeavours, by every winning, respectful way, to promote their reformation; for which you will at the same time offer up, from the depth of retirement, your sighs and vows to him who has the hearts of all in his hand. In truth, I am inclined to believe that if there be any one thing more likely than another to draw down the grace of conversion on a parent, it is such a conduct in a child. Ah, my young friends, what honour and joy would in this case be yours! What a noble superiority to those unfeeling creatures of your sex, who shew no solicitude with regard to their parents, but how to obtain from them some new article of dress or other gratification, on which they have fixed their foolish fancies!

But some of you complain, that your parents are cruel and tyrannical. I sympathize with you yet more, if your complaint be just. But what do you mean by Cruel and Tyrannical? That they will not

indulge your extrayagant vanity, or that they choose to restrain from pursuits, which they are apprehensive would be hurtful? It is a wise and kind severity, if severity it must be termed. How much are you indebted to them for preventing, by a little temporary mortification, real and permanent infelicity! Not to say, that a small degree of delicacy and consideration would teach you to spare them in points, where your stations and their circumstances concur, it may be, to render your requests particularly improper.

But I will suppose the worst, that they are really hardhearted, and unnaturally rigid. It is a mighty trial. To bear it well will require all the fortitude of faith. Here then is an opportunity for displaying your principles in their utmost power. You are called forth to the conflict, as into a field of battle, where even your sex may reap immortal laurels. She is a heroine indeed, whose regard for her parents no unkindness of theirs can conquer.

But they would force you to sacrifice your happiness to a man whom you cannot love. There your submission must stop. No rules of duty can oblige you to involve yourselves in misery and temptation, by entering into engagements to love and to honour, where your hearts withhold their consent.—Barbarous wretches, and base, to offer thus to dispose of your children, as you would of your cattle, to the highest bidder; to attempt, against every maxim of Nature and Religion, to drag the reluctant victims to the altar, and compel them, in the most solemn manner, to profess what they do not mean, and to vow what they cannot perform!

I am willing however to believe, that such compulsion is used but seldom. The greatest danger is lest you, my unexperienced friends, should be

tempted to form the most important of all connexions, without the approbation of your parents. What shall we say in such a case? Where the resolution is once formed, he who should undertake, by any methods of dissuasion, to prevent its being executed, might as well propose to check a torrent rushing from the top of a mountain. But we would address you while in your sober senses, before your imagination is perverted and inflamed. Assure yourselves, my young hearers, the step in question is very seldom taken but it is sincerely repented; with this bitter addition, that such repentance can do no good. The passion that guided and hurried the parties is quickly abated. There is nothing so transient, as the enthusiasm of mere youthful lovers after marriage. And now that reflexion takes place, and consequences begin to press; a thousand improprieties, fears, and disquietudes, unthought of before, rise up to view, and quite disenchant our romantic adventurers. It is indeed wonderful, what appearances of firmness and satisfaction a woman in such a situation will wear before the world, in order to justify her choice. But surely unhappiness is not lessened by being devoured in secret, and in public disguised. Perpetual restraint is perpetual wretchedness—Allow me to repeat it. Under the immediate impulse of a violent attachment, I should hardly give you or myself the trouble to argue: but while you are disengaged and calm, it may not be amiss to remind you, that a parent, generally speaking, is much more likely to judge with soundness for a daughter, than she is for herself; that Fancy alone is too sanguine a counsellor to be a prudent one; that protestations of eternal fidelity, of uninterrupted affection, made in the heat of blood, have no solid

basis ; in a word, that the deliberate advice, which is dictated alike by the length of days, knowledge of the world, and earnest solicitude for a child's welfare, ought to be relied upon, rather than the hasty conclusions of juvenile desire.

After all, it is certain, that the wisest parents may be mistaken about the man with whom they wish a daughter to be connected. But she that marries with the sanction of their countenance, will from that, and from their continued or even augmented kindness, derive in the case of disappointment a consolation which she could not enjoy, had she brought it on herself by her own indiscretion and obstinacy.

One thing here must not be forgotten ; that the reflexion of having acted undutifully, in this, or any other instance of importance, to those who gave you birth, were alone sufficient to poison the whole pleasure of life ; that is, if you be not lost to every ingenious impression ; but especially should their death put it forever out of your power to make atonement. The horrors of guilt that in such a circumstance are apt to haunt and distract the mind, more particularly if the parents were uncommonly worthy, I have had repeated opportunities of observing, but have no adequate language to express ; so profound is the conviction implanted by nature of the sacredness of filial piety !—Need I add, that this extends so far as to demand submission in every case, where your duty to God or your peace of mind does not interfere ?

But it is not submission alone that is demanded ; nor will she prove in any relation an amiable character, who does not show herself an affectionate daughter. On the other hand, when a young

woman behaves to her parents in a manner particularly tender and respectful, I mean from principle as well as nature, there is nothing good or gentle that may not be expected from her, in whatever condition she is placed. Of this I am so thoroughly persuaded, that were I to advise any friend of mine as to his choice of a wife, I know not whether my very first counsel would not be, 'Look out for one distinguished by her attention and sweetness to her parents.' The fund of worth and affection indicated by such a behaviour, joined to the habits of duty and consideration thereby contracted, being transferred to the married state, will not fail to render her a mild and obliging companion.

Your situation in life, which keeps you more at home than sons, together with the turn of your education, and the softness of your frame, that fit you for a thousand little soothing offices, as well as domestic services, which they cannot properly perform, seems to point out to you a peculiar sphere of filial excellence.—And here I please myself with the thought, that some of your bosoms are at this moment throbbing with tenderness towards a sick or aged parent, whom heaven, willing to furnish a field for the exercise of all your gratitude and zeal, has at last thrown upon your care. I think I see you, my charming friend, like some guardian angel, tending day and night the bed of an honoured father, who has lost your mother, and who is worn out with toil, and years, and pain. I see you listening, in deepest silence, to catch the least intimation of his wishes. I see you watching eagerly every look, to learn his wants before he speaks them; now gently raising his languid head to smooth the pillow, or minister some reviving

cordial ; and then wiping from his reverend face the cold sweats that begin perhaps to announce the approach of his end. His groans are answered by the sighs stealing from you, but suddenly suppressed, for fear of adding to his anxiety on your account. To be the instrument of imparting to him a minute's ease is rapture. Mean while the good old man's eyes are now turned to you, with all the unutterable fondness of parental love, melted by those marks of duty ; anon they are lifted to heaven in thanksgiving for such a child, and supplication for everlasting blessings on your head.—Great God ! what must a mind like yours experience in this conjuncture ? Where is the daughter of disobedience or folly that ever felt in the gayest hour, a satisfaction, a transport to be compared with that, which conscious piety diffuses through your bleeding heart ? Nor will these exalted sensations be at all diminished, if (Providence having denied the supplies which affluence gives) your virtue has prompted you by your labour or ingenuity, or, it may be, by parting with some admired ornament worn in your better days, to procure for a parent in those circumstances, necessary support or seasonable refreshment.

Let me next say somewhat concerning sisterly affection. “ Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren,” and sisters, “ to dwell together in unity ! ” Precious ointment is not more grateful to the snail, nor morning dew more refreshing to the sight, than domestic love is to the soul. Represent to yourselves a numerous young family, free from care and animosity, full of reverence for their Maker and their parents, ambitious to please and to excel ; in a word, pious, dutiful, friendly, happy ; where the good humour and good sense of each cor-

tribute to the ease and entertainment of all; while those agreeable diversities of temper and understanding that take place amongst them serve, like discords in music, to carry on the intellectual harmony. Who would not wish to be acquainted in such a house; who would not consider it as the abode of felicity? I hope, I paint no unusual scene,

Where the members are but few, felicity perhaps is not so often found; unless it be in the more shady walks of life, where love and innocence delight to frequent. And why is it not? When I see two sisters, both of them pleasing and both esteemed, living together without jealousy or envy, yielding to one another without affectation, and generously contending who shall do most to advance the consequence and happiness of her friend, I am highly delighted: dare I add the more highly, that such characters are not very common! And why are they not? The love of a sister for her brothers is much more usual. Whence does this too proceed? Examine your own hearts on these several points. Possibly they can explain to you the difference, so observable where there is a competition; and where there is none, or where any tendencies towards it are happily lost in the involutions of a larger number.

Martha of Bethany was on the whole a worthy woman. She certainly loved her Saviour with sincere devotion. Her solicitude to entertain him in the best manner she could devise, was the result of her respect. But it was carried to an extreme; and her sister's conduct should have taught her wisdom. Instead of this, she grows peevish, and complains of that sister. She is admonished of her fault, while Mary is commended for her better

behaviour. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful
"and troubled about many things: but one thing
"is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part
"which shall not be taken away from her." What
pity that any tincture of ill humour, under what-
ever disguise, should have place in any breast where
Jesus is revered! Surely there is nothing more
beautiful in a christian woman than good temper
and kind affection upon all occasions.

I was once acquainted with a lady, who seemed
to be held up by Providence, as an example of the
joint power of these and of divine principle. She
lost her father early. Her mother's want of health
made it necessary for her to exert herself with dou-
ble assiduity and attention, in a family by no means
small, of which she was the eldest child. She was
naturally active, to a degree very uncommon in
one of her disposition, which was the softest and
meekest that can be conceived. She had imbibed
from her infancy the deepest sense of devotion,
that I have ever known. It was a devotion of
that kind, which meeting with a heart originally
upright, produces uniform excellence. Such ex-
cellence was hers. When, in the course of a few
years, her extraordinary character recommended
her to the choice of a young man of singular worth,
and good fortune; she did not, with the selfishness
common on such occasions, forget her mother or
the family she had left behind her; but continued,
with the entire approbation and cordial concurrence
of her husband, to manifest her filial and sisterly
regards in the most effectual manner. She was
none of those narrow-souled women, who no soon-
er step into houses of their own, than they seem
to have all their affections and ideas absorbed in
their new condition; relinquishing at once the best

companions of their youth; dropping the pen of friendly correspondence, and shrinking up into a little wretched circle of anxieties, that exclude every liberal sentiment, and every enlarged connexion. When the mother of this lady died, which happened not long after, she became a mother to the helpless orphans, superintended their education, watched over their deportment, promoted their settlement in the world, and sympathised with them in all their distresses. When they also spread out into families, she acted like a parent to their children.—To her own, of whom she had many, blessed Lord, what a parent! Was it possible for them not to love one another, with such a pattern before them, and with such instructions as she gave them? For they too were deprived of their father, while the greater part were very young. Her instructions were pious and wise: but it was her example, it was that ineffable charm of humble worth and modest dignity, of maternal complacency and mildness almost unparalleled, which rendered them irresistible, and diffused amongst all about her the spirit of amity and the smile of happiness. You will not be surprised if I subjoin, that there were many other families who shared in her labours of love, and among the rest a very large one, the Poor; whose blessings attended her through life, and whose tears followed her to the grave; for, when she died, they also had lost a mother. It is hard to say upon the whole, whether she was most beloved; or venerated, by those who knew her. But I used to think, that wherever she appeared, her presence inspired sensations somewhat like those we should probably feel, if we beheld a good angel.

And thus I come naturally to speak of Good Works in a comprehensive view; that is, those

which proceed from kindness and compassion in general. When such dispositions predominate, let it be observed, in the first place, that they are ingenious to discover, and diligent to improve, those ways and means of beneficence, which pass unregarded by the giddy and unfeeling. Many of you, my honoured audience, have it not in your power, through the obscurity of your situation, and the straitness of your circumstances, to indulge the generous propensions of your nature. While thousands of your sex are inflamed with the emulation of beauty, or agitated by the conflict of rivalry, or miserable because they cannot be gratified with such an article of show, or admitted into such a party of pleasure; you are sighing, because not able more extensively to succour indigence, or more effectually to comfort sorrow. Your sighs, beloved, are heard in heaven; your wishes are registered there under the head of Virtues; the willing mind is accepted now and shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just; your least good deed shall not be forgotten by him, who marked and applauded the widow's mite. "Whosoever shall give to drink" unto a follower of Jesus "a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." You shall be estimated by the largeness of your hearts, not by the size of your fortunes. "The liberal soul, that deviseth liberal things," that executes what it can, and stops only where it must, or rather goes on panting and praying for that happiness to the human race, which it cannot have the joy of imparting;—how honourable in the sight of God!

Let me remind you farther of what ought also to solace you amidst all your kind cares. Human happiness is made up of many little ingredients,

with a few principal ones; and next to religion, those in reality contribute to it most largely, who give the greatest consolation by their sympathy, and the greatest pleasure by their friendship. Friendship and sympathy, when thoroughly awake, are constantly employed in numberless pleasing services, and amiable attentions, to which language cannot appropriate names; but which the heart of the person obliged feels, and which rebounds with redoubled light on the heart of the person obliging. I go farther and say, that the very idea of your being disposed to oblige is obligation; because it is in itself agreeable, and we are indebted to every one that supplies us with an agreeable idea.

Who has not likewise remarked, that in doing benevolent things there is, both as to the time and the manner, a propriety which gives inestimable value even to the least? The manner, in particular, is of marvellous effect. A charitable action gracefully done is twice done. To some people one would be willing to owe almost every thing, so handsomely do they confer a kindness; while from others a favour, for the opposite reason, is a load. But who so capable of delighting by the manner, yet more than by the deed itself, as a lovely young woman, whose words, and smiles, and softness, are, to the last of these, what a beautiful symphony and judicious accompaniment in music are to a well managed voice?

But, in truth, the advantages which your sex and age afford you in this divine employment of doing good, are not to be expressed. Would to God your zeal were but in proportion to it!—Forgive me, Protestants, if on this occasion I remark with concern, how far many of you are outdone by multitudes in the church of Rome, especially

amongst her female votaries. Their frequent visits to the abodes of misfortune and pain, of poverty and sickness, their gentle ministrations to the sufferers, their stooping so meekly to the meanest offices of compassion, offices of which the most distant thought would shock the false refinement of a gay lady, have to me, I must own, notwithstanding all the errors of their faith, still placed them in a point of light highly respectable and engaging. Who can help me to a reason, why a practice so christlike is not adopted in this country, where the gospel is professed in so much purity? are we afraid of being thought to embrace the doctrine of merit by good works, entertained in that church? It cannot be, amongst those who have learnt the truth as it is in Jesus. None surely was ever more self-denied on this head than St. Paul; yet St. Paul was a flame of charity. In his doctrine, and in his conduct, grace and virtue, faith and good works, went hand in hand, inseparable and triumphant.

Ah ye fair ones of Britain, who doat on the parade of public assemblies, and saff along in the full blown pride of fashionable attire, of which the least appendage or circumstance must not be decomposed; thoughtless of human wo; insensible to modest worth at that moment pining in many a solitary residence of want—ye gaudy flutterers, “with hard hearts under soft raiment;” how much more brilliant and beautiful would ye appear in the eye of saints and angels, were ye now and then to exchange those scenes of selfish splendour for the gloomy dwellings of wretchedness, in order to light them up by your pity and beneficence! I blush for many of my country women, possessed of fortune, who have never yet learnt its noblest

and happiest use; in whose ears the circulated whisper of a well-dressed crowd admiring their appearance, is a more grateful sound than the praise of widows and orphans sharing their bounty; who prefer the empty breath of adulation to the blessings of them that were ready to perish.

God be thanked, there are exceptions. Among the rest I recollect, with peculiar pleasure, one lady of rank, whose name is never mentioned by those who know her, without calling up the image of charity; who having no family of her own, has adopted the indigent and deserving; whose whole life, not a short one, has been devoted to munificence: who, in a word, seems to regard her wealth merely as a fund deposited in her hands by the Almighty, to be laid out with the strictest faithfulness for the god-like purpose of making thousands happy. Exalted creature! how honourable, independent of thy birth; how blessed, to understand so well the destination of riches! A rare, and, as it should seem from this circumstance, a difficult science! Justly might the poet exclaim,

"The rich must labour to possess their own,
 "To feel their great abundance; and request
 "Their humble friends to help them to be blest;
 "To see their treasures, hear their glory told,
 "And aid the wretched impotence of gold."

He adds indeed,

"But some, great souls! and touch'd with warmth
 "divine,
 "Give gold a price, and teach its beams to shine,
 "All hoarded treasures they repute a load;
 "Nor think their wealth their own, till well bestow'd."

Amongst the properties of the Virtuous Woman, in that celebrated passage formerly surveyed, it is said, "She stretcheth forth her hand to the poor, and reacheth her hand to the needy:" On which it has been remarked, that after her industry for the acquiring of wealth is described, her liberality is next mentioned, as being the principal use she made of it, and precedes her providing scarlet for her household, or fine linen and purple for herself. What shall we call those women, who either never think of the poor at all, or never till they have first sacrificed to superfluity and pride?

Where are those female penitents of this land; that, like her of Judea, convert the instruments of their former folly and extravagance into matter of humiliation and piety; that consecrate, so to speak, the spoils of Vice, by offering them at the feet of their Saviour, while they prostrate themselves there in deep contrition?—The poor you have always with you; and by showing mercy to them you may at once show your respect for him, and help to ensure mercy for yourselves.

It is worthy your observation, that in the list of female names recorded in scripture with renown, that of Tabitha stands marked with a particular note of approbation, as "a disciple who was full of Good Works, and alms which she did." What a glorious memorial! And what additional honour does it receive from the account immediately following! This excellent woman dies. An apostle is in the neighbourhood. He is sent for in haste; he arrives; he is conducted to the chamber of the deceased. Her female friends stand by him "weeping and showing him the coats and garments

"which she had made" for the poor. How natural a circumstance; and how eloquent! He felt it; "kneeled down, and prayed, and turning him to the body said," with a voice of power, "Tabitha, arise;" working a miracle to restore a life so useful. From this amiable person's being denominated in the history a Disciple, I would only remark, that in those days a Christian was known and characterised by real excellence: whereas every thing now is a christian, not excepting her who never, but when forced, went into the house of mourning; never knew the joy of giving purely for the love of God, without expecting any thing again; let me add, never denied herself one trapping of vanity to clothe the naked, nor one indulgence of luxury to feed the hungry. Alas! my poor friend, what wilt thou say for thyself at the tribunal of Jesus? I leave with thee that question: answer it to thy conscience, as in the presence of thy judge. You have read the process which he will observe, nor can you have forgot it.

On these points it were easy to enlarge at great length, and with exact method. I am willing however to hope that, by the grace of God, a few hints thus thrown out with plainness and affection, may suffice to every mind that is open to the sentiments of humanity; but especially to every heart that is impressed with the principles of religion. It is these principles, my honoured hearers, that serve beyond every thing else to enlarge and inspire those sentiments. It is the love of God, the faith of Jesus, and the hope of immortality, that chiefly expand affection, and animate zeal. The divine character is the sovereign standard of benevolence, the christian institution its brightest display, and a happy futurity its highest reward. Can you worship

the Universal Father, and not feel for his family ? Can you believe in the Common Saviour, and not live to those for whom he died ? Can you contemplate yonder world of friendship, and not anticipate its joys, and not cherish an ambition that your works of charity may praise you in the gates of heaven ?

SERMON XIII.

ON FEMALE MEEKNESS.

1 PET. iii. 3, 4.

Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a Meek and Quiet Spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

THE apostle of the Circumcision, like him of the Gentiles, seems to have been no stranger to female nature, or to what becomes it. Both were sufficiently aware, that ornament was a favourite object with women; and both were too well acquainted with the arts of persuasion, to think of combating the general idea. It was their business to make the best use of such a handle. Accordingly their converts of that sex might continue to study embellishment as much as ever; only those inspired teachers wished them to direct it right, by turning their chief care to that which was of greatest value and longest duration, namely, "the hidden man of the heart." The doctrine of St. Paul on this point we have examined very fully. That of St. Peter, now read, we propose for the ground-work of our concluding discourse, with a view to complete the plan which we have prosecuted thus far. We have reserved it for this place, as believing, that Meekness, cultivated on christian principles, is the proper consummation, and highest finishing,

of female excellence. The subject being so important, may we not hope to be still honoured with your attention ?

I begin with observing, that the virtue in question has its foundation in the softer composition of the sex. That there is a sex in minds was hinted before. This original distinction has never, I think, been better understood than by our great epic poet. As in his admired work of *Paradise Lost* he has with equal judgment and delicacy marked, throughout, the separate characters of the First Pair ; so, in two lines, he has happily expressed the principal objects of their respective destinations :

“ For contemplation He, and valour form’d ;

“ For softness She, and sweet attractive grace.”

The virtue of meekness, it is true, our religion requires of all without exception. Moses is celebrated for it in an eminent degree ; and our Saviour characterizes himself by the epithets of Meek and Lowly. The disposition, in general, may be considered as Charity’s first-born, appearing in all the mildest attitudes of forbearance, gentleness, and peace. But still in men, it may be often found connected with the greatest boldness, and most undaunted magnanimity. Much for the honour of true courage, it has been observed, that the bravest minds are commonly the most humane, generous, and forgiving. These several qualities are beautifully blended in many parts of the history of that man of God just now mentioned. Nor can you have forgotten the calm heroism of our divine deliverer, together with that dignity of goodness which

dwelt about him, in circumstances of the deepest humiliation and sorrow.

As for you, my fair pupils, we no doubt wish you to possess such fortitude as implies resolution, wherever your virtue, duty, or reputation, is concerned. But along with that we expect to find, on other subjects, a timidity peculiar to your sex; and also a degree of complacency, yieldingness, and sweetness, beyond what we look for in men. Neither do we, so far as I know, ever rank amongst feminine qualities, valour, strictly so called. A woman heading an army, rushing into the thickest of the foe, spreading slaughter and death around her, or returning from the field of battle covered with dust and blood, would surely to a civilized nature suggest shocking ideas.

Your best emblem, beloved, is the smiling form of peace, robed in white, and bearing a branch of olive. Like the apostles and first christians, your highest glory is to conquer by benignity, and triumph by patience. Roughness, and even ferociousness, in a man, we often overlook, and are sometimes diverted with. In a woman, we are always hurt by them. A loud voice, a bold gesture, a daring countenance, every mark of bravery, shall please in the former, when his courage is particularly called forth: but in a female we wish nothing to reign but love and tenderness; and where they do reign, they will produce very different effects.

No, my friends, you were not made for scenes of danger and opposition. I repeat it again; fearfulness to a certain degree becomes you; not that cowardice, which many of you show, and some of you affect, on every trifling occasion, and frequently without any occasion at all. Such behaviour is

in you childish, and to us uninteresting; if not an object of contempt. But a worthy woman, shrinking from manifest hazard, or threatened violence, we are always forward and proud to protect; while, on the other hand, an intrepid female seems to renounce our aid, and in some respect to invade our province. We turn away, and leave her to herself.

Let it be likewise observed, that in your sexmanly exercises are never graceful; that in them a tone and figure, as well as an air and deportment, of the masculine kind, are always forbidding; and that men of sensibility desire in every woman soft features, and a flowing voice; a form not robust, and a demeanour delicate and gentle. These are considered as alike requisite and natural; I mean where there is any taste for elegance. I am inclined even to believe that, supposing other circumstances equal, the coarsest clown would be better pleased with them than with their opposites.

Yet farther, the aptitude observable in all the better kind of women, to commiserate and comfort, to melt into tears at the sight or hearing of distress, to take the care of children, to play and prattle with those pretty innocents; to mingle in all the mild sympathies and tender charities of life; the wonderful dexterity with which they disarm fierceness, and appease wrath; the powerful eloquence they display in assuaging the cares, and calming the sorrows, of those men with whom they are connected; their strong propensity to a union of hearts, and their unutterable fondness where it takes place;—these lovely peculiarities in their temperament; these finer tunings of their mind, seem additional proofs, that softness is your proper attribute. Womanish Softness, as it is styled, has never been imputed!

to any man by way of reproach, without a tacit acknowledgment of this truth in your favour. In the male composition, it is certainly a blemish wherever found ; in the female, a beauty.

From these remarks, I think it appears, that the basis of the virtue we now recommend is laid in the original make, or specific character of the sex. The superstructure which Christianity raises upon it, or, in other words, the improvements it receives from religious principles, shall be our next consideration.

The gospel is, in truth, the religion of human nature ; building charity and all virtue on whatever is kind, ingenuous, or praiseworthy in that ; correcting its disorders, mitigating its distresses, supporting its weaknesses, and from each educating good, by turning them into matter of humility and circumspection, of faith and resignation, of docility and meekness. These are all connected together ; but the first and last are nearly allied. They are twin-sisters. Humility is even disposed to serve ; and she affords the other singular assistance.

They that have a just sense of their own infirmities and failings, will be naturally of an unpretending, a forbearing, and a forgiving temper. The reverse of this is the genuine offspring of pride. A proud character was never a meek one ; whereas there is no act of kindness, no instance of condescension, which the self-diffident are not ready to perform. They enter thoroughly into the spirit of those precepts that require christians to " be courteous, to condescend to men of low estate, and in honour to prefer one another."

Picture in your own minds a young lady, lively, agreeable, caressed ; as yet unacquainted with her Maker, with herself, and with the claims which

society has on every reasonable being that is sent into life. The magic power of fancy, set to work by vanity, ambition, and hope, creates a kind of world within, to which she fondly refers that without, as always subordinate, and chiefly subservient. In this little empire "she sits as queen, and saith "in her heart, I shall see no sorrow," and dreams of conquest and triumph, of splendid houses and shining equipages, of passionate lovers and disappointed rivals, with nameless enchanting visions more, which may never be realized, but which she regards as the most certain realities; so certain, that he who should attempt to undeceive her would run the risk of being hated as her greatest enemy. This world of phantoms, it is true, is always fluctuating; the gay and the gloomy succeed by turns. But in each our conceited fair one is still the principal figure; and the value of every thing is measured, according as it contributes to her importance and elevation. Hence innumerable illusions, and ungoverned passions; the swelling of self-sufficiency, and the stateliness of disdain; violent resentment, or sullen discontent, if not treated with the respect she supposes to be her due; in fine, a total inattention to the expectations of others, and absolute insensibility to whatever is beautiful in an unassuming, or noble in a disinterested behaviour. Now what is it that can dispel this visionary scene and disabuse the much deluded sorceress? Nothing so effectual as christianity.

If it should please the Almighty to impress upon her heart its sacred doctrines, they will show her, in the most affecting lights, her own littleness, the degeneracy and misery of corrupted nature, the emptiness of temporal and the reality of eternal things, the duty she owes to her Maker, her Re-

dearer, and her fellow-creatures; with the necessity of securing the divine favour, by a life of faith, contrition, and charity. By such views, the fantastic structures of pride will be presently brought down; and on their ruins the plain and modest, but pleasing and graceful fabric of meekness, will be easily raised. To speak without a metaphor: She will be delivered from the chief causes of ill humour; such, for instance, as the obstinacy of self-will, the exorbitance of self-love, a passion for those gratifications that at once disappoint and enervate, and, finally, the expectation of too much homage, and too many compliances. The salvation of her soul, and the spirit of her Saviour, will become her principal objects: every virtue connected with these, will be her habitual study; and among the rest "peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness." With such a temper she will not be apt to think herself affronted; that revengeful disposition, of which your sex have been accused even to a proverb, will be her abhorrence; she will not dare, for a moment, to withhold from others that forgiveness, which she is conscious of wanting from the great God to herself; and as for her behaviour in general to those about her, it will breathe that winning mildness, which seems to me the most distinguishing lineament in the image of Jesus.

He, my sisters, was the perfect model of kindness and courtesy. The Friend of man was his characteristic. He conversed with those whom the world despised; he stood still to hear the cries, and relieve the miseries, of the wretched; he even stooped (astounding goodness!) to wash the feet of his own disciples; "the son of man came not to

"be ministered unto, but to minister." The greatness of humility, and the beauty of compassion, he exemplified on all occasions. He showed by his own practice, that there is nothing more becoming than the tear of generous sorrow, nothing so soothing as the language of a benevolent heart. Jesus weeping over the grave of Lazarus, consoling his mournful sisters, and instructing the solemn circle in the ideas of immortality, with the means of attaining it, is surely an object by infinite degrees more interesting and glorious, than all the conquerors of the earth crowned with laurels, and riding on the car of triumph, with numberless captives in their train.

His institution is of a piece with his character. It includes the grand principles of universal humanity. Every wall of partition between the nations it throws down; abolishing the narrow distinction of Jews and Gentiles, and exploding the illiberal opposition of Greeks to Barbarians. The spirit of conquest for the sake of power it discourages, while it proclaims, enforces, and inspires "peace on earth, and good-will toward men;" whom it teaches to consider and love as brethren, forming one great family under one common parent, held together by charity as the bond of perfection, and of such account with the Supreme, that he gave his only begotten Son to save them.

Need I labour to prove how sweetly such discoveries as these coincide with the dispositions to modesty, sympathy, generosity, the desire of pleasing, the dread of violence, the horror of barbarity, the promptness to cherish tender sentiments, and form endearing connexions, which are so natural to the worthiest part of your sex?

The virtues of a Roman Matron, in the better times of that republic, appear on some accounts to have been greatly respectable. They were such as might be looked for, from her education amongst a people where ideas of prowess, patriotism, and glory, ran high; where, in effect, these things were regarded as the summit of human excellence and felicity. But not to insist on the national pride, and ungenerous prepossessions, on which those ideas were founded; it is manifest to me, that whatever force or grandeur the female mind might in other views derive from them, such advantage was overbalanced by the loss or the diminution of that gentleness and softness, which ever were, and ever will be, the sovereign charm of the female character. Nor do I wish the women of Great Britain, who profess a system so much more just, amiable, and happy, to adopt for the regulation of their temper any standard different from that in my text.

Some of the most agreeable and important consequences of a meek and quiet spirit in your sex, let us now proceed to survey. Where nature has bestowed any kind of personal beauty, be it ever so inconsiderable; how early is it known, and at what pains are the generality of the too conscious possessors to display it, on all occasions, to the utmost advantage! But Nature has endowed the greater part of the sex with a constitutional softness, which, under right direction, would render them unspeakably more pleasing than any possible attraction that is purely external. Yet how few of you seem acquainted with its proper use, so as to turn it to any valuable account. What esteem might you not procure, and what happiness communicate; if, instead of employing this softness, merely to

foster passion in yourselves or others, you made it subservient to all the amiable purposes of a mild and obliging behaviour! How preposterous to think of any allurement, rather than that which would chiefly adorn you as women!

The gift I speak of is imparted in different degrees, and with various mixtures; nor will any culture prevent a diversity from appearing in individuals, with regard to this, as well as other features of the female mind: neither indeed ought it. Such diversity is not only beautiful in itself, but agreeably adapted to the various and different tastes of men. But still some portion of the quality under consideration is absolutely essential to feminine excellence. Like every other one, no doubt, it requires the guard of Virtue, and the guidance of Discretion. The truth is that any good disposition you can name, how laudable or how eminent soever, if you could suppose it to be found alone, would constitute a character extremely imperfect, and produce effects sufficiently hurtful. Where an easiness of temper is particularly prevalent, and the heart uncommonly susceptible of warm emotions in the way of love and friendship; there, without question, a peculiar strain of prudence and fortitude is required, to prevent a young person's being betrayed into great inconveniences and dangerous tendernesses. But while I consider meekness as the crowning grace of a woman, it will be naturally understood, that some share of the virtues and accomplishments before recommended is presupposed.

A cultivated mind and delicate spirit, together with strict principles of conduct, will teach you to make the necessary distinctions amongst those you converse with, to join caution with freedom, and,

while with a graceful ease you give to others what their characters claim, with a modest firmness to support your own. There are few things, perhaps, more contemptible than an undistinguishing female, who can smile alike upon all, who seems prepared for every address, who looks as if the freest would not be unwelcome, who scatters herself amongst promiscuous objects; who, if I may be indulged the expression, prostitutes to every vagrant eye, and every new comer, any mental charms she may possess, instead of preserving them for the intimacies of virtuous love, or of sacred friendship. You will readily conceive, that the deportment I would enforce is something widely different.

In effect, were religious and moral considerations set aside, such women would not be very pleasing on the footing of female softness alone. Coquettes have commonly but little sensibility. Their natural graces, if any they had, are lost in levity and affectation. While they court the regards of all, they have none to bestow upon any. Let what was said long ago be here remembered, that a forward appearance, and light demeanour, immediately disgust a man of the least delicacy; who, if he be weak enough to love the courtship, has commonly however so much perception as not to approve of her who offers it. But good-nature, under the government of good sense and real worth, will engage our esteem without flattering our folly, and reach that just standard of the female character, which consists in a fine composition of gentleness and dignity, of sweet complacency and virtuous reserve, the happy medium so hard to hit between prudery and its opposite extreme.

As the former of these is most directly repugnant to that lovely quality which we are now considering,

I will proceed to offer a few remarks upon it; willing to rectify the notions were it but of one of your sex, on a subject which, in the present age, may be reckoned, by severe judges, least of all necessary in discoursing to young women.

That a prudish behaviour is never sincere, I will not take upon me to affirm. It may arise sometimes from an original frigidity, or strange insensibility of make. I speak not of the dislikes that women conceive to particular men, while from others they are by no means unsusceptible of kind impressions. Neither do I speak of those females whose first address is frequently forbidding, occasioned by a peculiar reservedness of manner rather than temper, not at all incompatible with good affection; since it evidently wears off in a little, and that excessive bashfulness gives place, on proper encouragement, to a carriage equally courteous and modest. But where a woman bears amongst candid spirits the character of a prude, there I must confess myself tempted to doubt both her honesty and her understanding.

This we are sure of, that it is very common for people to affect most the appearance of those virtues which they least possess. What they want in reality they would fain supply in show, afraid of suspicion, where they are conscious of guilt; whereas those that are sound at heart, are seldom apprehensive of being suspected. "A good man shall be satisfied from himself," and generally leaves others to collect his principles from his practice. An honest confidence in the rectitude of his own intentions begets a simplicity of manners that despises ostentation in all cases, and supersedes profession in most. I do not mean Religious Profession, which a good man will never think unnecessary, though

he will always make it with modesty. In short, true virtue, whether male or female, is like the sun, best seen in its own light.

Of a defect of sense I look on prudery as an indisputable proof. It never succeeds in its attempts to impose. A woman of this character is considered by our sex as a hypocrite, by yours as a hypocrite and a spy at the same time. Both are incited to a keener inspection into her conduct. On the least failure, both are provoked to sharper reproach; and should the ungracious dissembler at last drop her disguise altogether, the triumph over her is universal: nor does the world ever forget a miscarriage which was preceded by pretensions to superior strictness. In any case she is a disagreeable creature, whom none can love, and whom most will shun. How just the words of an elegant writer on this subject!

- “Virtue is amiable, mild, serene;
- “Without all beauty, and all peace within:
- “The honour of a prude is rage and storm;
- “’Tis ugliness in its most frightful form.”

Should such a woman live to grow old in the single state, she will be regarded with a mixture of hatred and contempt. When I say this, every one will recollect the imputation which has been so frequently brought against unmarried females at that age. Is it an unpleasant idea? The inference is plain: Let it be your care to lay in now such a store of good humour and christian meekness, as, mingling with other agreeable acquisitions, may prevent the advance of life from spoiling your cheerfulness, or robbing you of that benignity which communicates a grace to every condition, and of that consequence which youth and beauty alone can-

not 'perserve. Establish it betimes as a certain maxim, that to be married is neither the one nor the chief thing needful. Are all in that state happy? Or must she be necessarily unhappy, who is not in that state? May not a single woman be wise and virtuous? and if wise and virtuous will she not be contented? and if contented, is she not happy in the best sense, as much so as can be expected in the mixed and variable lot of mortals? Is there any thing wrong in this reasoning? If it be right now, will it not be right ten, fifteen, twenty years hence? And in the mean while do you not see women in the situation supposed, who from the goodness of their temper, breeding, and understanding, are objects of tender regard; a regard so much the more valuable, that it is entertained by the worthiest of their acquaintance, that it is no longer a tribute levied by the power of beauty, or aided by the influence of custom, but the pure reward of genuine merit; a merit tried by time, and matured by reflection?

But do ye imagine, that those only are disregarded and avoided who are peevish, fretful or suspicious from age? Depend upon it, that such dispositions are always disgusting; were she that indulges them blooming as the spring, or beautiful as the day. No heart was ever won by disdain; no lover was ever kept by coldness. A man, whom the extravagance of his passion has weakened, may submit for a while to the petulant airs, and even insolent treatment, of a female that is handsome and young. Nay, such is the debility sometimes produced by this passion in men of little spirit or low understanding, that bad usage, blended with fits of kindness, shall actually make them doat the more. But what shall we say of that woman, who finding a man in her

power sports with his heart, and to show her dominion plays the tyrant? Alas! she knows not that true greatness consists in generosity, that a graceful compliance is inexpressibly pleasing, and that a man of worth may be forever obliged by a noble frankness. She forgets too how soon an immoderate fondness is cured by connubial familiarity, and what severe revenge may be taken after marriage by him whom she treated ill before it, were he disposed to retaliate.

But you want to maintain your dignity; and why not? Would you do it in the most effectual manner? Worth and understanding are the proper means. Haughtiness is always little, violence impotent, and peevishness the infirmity of a child. Worth and understanding confer a consequence that is seldom in danger of being despised. She who shows a just sense of what belongs to her as a woman, and as a christian, will engage respect without seeking to command it. From her a word, a look expressive of virtuous disdain or pious indignation, will dash the boldest offender, if not uncommonly obdurate indeed. Nor can she probably be often obliged to bear the company of a wretch, who is proof against the lightning of excellence provoked. Be assured, on the other side, that good nature well placed will never lessen your value.

Look up, my fair ones, to the First Lady of this land, and learn affability; learn to know, that however grandeur may secure external reverence, it is goodness only that inspires heart-felt esteem; that royalty itself derives lustre from meekness; and that the highest prerogative of rank is the power of imparting felicity more largely. Happy prince! thus to have found a companion, by whose cheerful

temper and gentle manners the cares of government are softened, and that satisfaction is enjoyed at home which the splendour of a crown cannot confer. Illustrious pair! live long blessed in each other and in your children, bright examples of nuptial sanctity, parental affection, and domestic joy.—The personage I speak of seems so thoroughly good, so naturally obliging, that I cannot doubt but she would have proved such in any station. But certain it is, that from those who are placed in the higher walks of life, a little condescension, a little favour, gives great delight. Is it not wonderful that women of birth and fortune should not please more generally, when they might please at so cheap a rate?

But not to dwell on these accidental distinctions; what man is not charmed with an amiable courteousness in any young woman, especially if otherwise attractive? Even common civility is grateful. But would ye be resistless? Acquire a habit of fixed attention. It is a sort of silent flattery truly exquisite, and withal perfectly innocent. To the most attentive person in company you may observe the conversation almost always directed; while by interruption, listlessness, or a vacant look in those that are present, every creature that offers to speak is sure to be mortified. As a small degree of knowledge entertains in a woman; so from a woman, though for a different reason, a small expression of kindness delights, particularly if she have beauty. But, in truth, without uttering a word, she has it in her power by this single mark of good-breeding to captivate more than I can tell. In short, listening to the person who speaks, with a recollected, mild, and steady aspect, which nothing frivolous can divert, is perhaps the most valuable secret in the

whole science of genuine politeness. From an agreeable young woman to an intelligent man it is incredibly soothing.

If to your natural softness you join that christian meekness, which I now preach; both together will not fail, with the assistance of proper reflexion and friendly advice, to accomplish you in the best and truest kind of breeding. You will not be in danger of putting yourselves forward in company, of contradicting bluntly, of asserting positively, of debating obstinately, of affecting a superiority to any present, of engrossing the discourse, of listening to yourselves with apparent satisfaction, of neglecting what is advanced by others, or of interrupting them without necessity.

When these are not the effects of mere youthful folly, and even then they are displeasing, it is plain they proceed chiefly from pride and vanity. But we said before, that meekness is nearly allied to humility, and mightily assisted by it. If you be truly humble, you will manifest a noble forgetfulness of yourselves, with a becoming respect for others; a diffidence of your own sentiments, with a deference to theirs in doubtful points, or in such as they are entitled to know better; a readiness to learn of every one, with a disposition to give each an opportunity of appearing to advantage, and thus to make all happy in their turn. Where the prevailing modes happen to be innocent, you will not affect to display the refinement of your taste, or the strictness of your principles, by a scrupulous singularity, or a saucy contempt of the opinions and manners of others. Nor will those contests and differences about precedency, form, and fashion, which inflame so many of your sex, interest minds that have learnt the dignity of yielding, and that

despise the littleness of pride. In a word, the most important branches of christian breeding you will practise with ease and pleasure, from an internal principle. A meek deportment is the natural and spontaneous growth of a lowly mind. Politeness in you will be the offspring of the heart. How much preferable to that specious, but hollow complaisance, studied by the fashionable and the false, which consists in an artful disguising of their own passions, and a flattering application to those of others, in a supple framing of the face to all occasions, in professing the greatest respect without feeling the least, and in hiding very often the worst designs under the smile of familiarity, and the show of friendship.

I used the phrase Christian Breeding; that kind of courtesy, which I point out, being expressly enjoined by one of the writers of the New Testament. Perhaps you think of St. Paul, that accomplished apostle, who himself became all things to all men, that he might gain some. Such a precept might have been readily suggested by his early education in a seat of learning, and would have come very naturally from the hand that drew so divine a picture of Charity, the parent of Meekness. But the fact is, that it fell from the pen of an illiterate man, bred to the roughest of all employments. It was St. Peter, the inspired fisherman, that said, "Be courteous:"—to intimate that the religion which he had learnt from the meek and lowly Jesus, was able to soften the keenest, and subdue the hottest temper, and even give gentleness to one trained amongst winds and waves.

What strangers to the spirit of the gospel are those women who have never controlled their own humours, whose looks are contempt, and whose

words are arrogance; whose general demeanour, unless when they are propitiated by adulation, or soothed by submission, is big with insolence and scorn! How shall we express our horror at those female furies that, lost to decency and every mild feeling of their sex, can abandon themselves to "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, and all malice?" "It is better, says Solomon, to dwell in the corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house;" he might have added, or in a magnificent palace. In so doing, he would have probably spoken from experience; since it may be presumed that some of those eastern ladies, who had by their beauty enslaved the unhappy monarch, were willing now and then by their tongues to convince him of their prerogative. The saying of the son of Sirach, on the same subject, is yet stronger, as well as more ironical. "A loud crying woman," says he, "and a scold, shall be sought out to drive away the enemy." That spirited writer satirizes the female vices in general with great freedom; but there is scarce any of them which he more frequently or more severely exposes, than this of unquietness and ill temper.

When a woman of such dispositions enters into the nuptial state, what wretchedness can equal his to whose lot she falls? To be tied for life to a being, whom neither reason can convince, nor patience win, nor any thing conquer but main force; a domestic plague, a bosom fiend, from whom only her death or his own can deliver him—mysterious Providence! who can unfold the reasons of thy procedure, when such is the portion of a good man; who, mild himself and amiable, would have given

and received peculiar felicity, had he been connected with some gentle female?

But let it be remembered, that violence is not necessary to constitute ill temper. Obstinacy alone will do it. Let me conjure you, by all that is dear and lovely, to guard against that. Be assured there is not a man living, whose affection it does not chill, let him be otherwise ever so warm an admirer. There may be those who, during the short reign of beauty, will support it. But that being over, and the fascination of appetite dissolved, a disputatious, perverse, and stubborn female, will always offend; and, where there is any manhood left, will often provoke to a dangerous degree. In the mean time, every one who is not in love will be disgusted; nor can any charm of understanding, or of person, compensate in a woman the want of soft compliance, and meek submission. These the men are taught by nature, by education, and by custom, to consider as your duty, and their right; neither will they be easily brought to dispense with it. Some of them you may subdue; but you can persuade none of them into a different system. If yet, after all, you will place your glory in despotic rule instead of kind attraction, choosing rather to tyrannize over dastardly slaves under the form of husbands, than to influence those husbands as tender friends; what can we say, but that we pity them much, and you more? For the idea of a little paltry power assumed without title, and exercised without discretion, to give up the worthiest triumphs of your sex, how mean and how miserable! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."

SERMON XIV.

ON FEMALE MEEKNESS.

1 PET. iii. 3, 4.

Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a Meek and Quiet Spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

AS a friend to your sex, I cannot forbear lamenting, that so many of them should lose their consequence, by building it on qualities insufficient to support it. Dress and show will never long captivate any but superficial minds. The reign of youth and beauty is necessarily short. Mere vivacity may amuse in a girl, but in a woman cannot give lasting delight; and trifling accomplishments are all too feeble to fix the heart. Yet such things, I am sorry to say it, are the only sources from whence the generality of young women at present seek to derive their power. In this pursuit the unmeaning applause, or momentary admiration of a few, is supposed to found a superior and permanent importance with all. What are the effects? From that moment, female softness is forgotten; christian condescension is held mean; humility, the parent of almost every excellence, is utterly despised; and hence a perpetual aim at proud dominion, instead of that obsequious majesty ascribed by the poet to innocent Eve—an aim, indeed, frequently thwarted in these her daughters, and, when successful, pro-

ductive of a triumph always disgusting to us her sons—Hence to an unnatural compound of conceited allurements and affected prudery, in place of those genuine attractions which are attendant on modesty and sweetness: hence, to say no more, rivalry in figure, and quarrels for conquest, without end. How often, alas, have we seen these things disgrace the single state! Nor need we wonder, that from habit they are often carried into the conjugal; with this difference, that the folly and presumption, before diffused and practised on all, are now, perhaps, concentrated and turned upon the husband. Would you, my dear charge, avoid a conduct so indecent and unhappy? Would you secure, in both conditions, an influence equally just and amiable? To all other virtues and attainments befitting your sex, learn to join meekness. Meekness is followed with every honour, while she arrogates none. Female Meekness the better part of mankind have always conspired to crown with never-fading wreaths of love and of praise. It is thine, thou fair form, to command by obeying, and by yielding to conquer. In the family of religion, “many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.”

The merits of this most lovely grace I have engaged to display. Its importance in the married state I mentioned in the close of my last discourse. Let me press that consideration, and then proceed.

In the passage from which we have taken our text, the apostle exhorts christian women to be in subjection to their own husbands, adding, as motive which deserved their regard, “that if any obey not the word, they also without the word may be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation, coupled with fear;” and so he goes on to recommend

that meek and quiet spirit, which ought to be their principal ornament. With relation to the particular case by him supposed, his meaning evidently is, that those his female disciples might, by a pious and exact deportment, full of sweetness and moderation, gain their husbands over to a religion which they had not yet embraced, but which they would be no longer able to resist, when they beheld and experienced its happy effects on the tempers and manners of their wives. To every excellent woman, that in this way has been instrumental to save a soul from death, we may address, though in a lower sense, those words which were spoken by Gabriel to the Virgin Mary on a great occasion, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

I cannot do justice to this part of my argument without remarking, that there is reason to fear much of the worthlessness of many married men, as well as much of the unhappiness both of them and their partners, must be imputed to the turbulent passions, or uncomplying humours of the latter. Such is the sameness of the matrimonial state on one hand, such its cares on the other, and, it is but fair to add, such the indisposition of numbers of men to be long delighted; that, to preserve the attachment of a husband unimpaired, the utmost attention and the mildest complacence are commonly requisite on the side of the woman.

"E'en in the happiest choice, where fav'ring heav'n
"Has equal love and easy fortune given,
"Think not, the husband gain'd, that all is done,
"The prize of happiness must still be won;
"And oft, the careless find it to their cost,
"The lover in the husband may be lost:
"The Graces might alone his heart allure;
"They and the Virtuous meeting must secure."

I am astonished at the folly of many women, who are still reproaching their husbands for leaving them alone, for preferring this or that company to theirs, for treating them with this and the other mark of disregard or indifference; when, to speak the truth, they have themselves in a great measure to blame. Not that I would justify the men in any thing wrong on their part. But had you behaved to them with a more respectful observance, and a more equal tenderness; studying their humours, overlooking their mistakes, submitting to their opinions in matters indifferent, passing by little instances of unevenness, caprice, or passion, giving soft answers to hasty words, complaining as seldom as possible, and making it your daily care to relieve their anxieties, and prevent their wishes, to enliven the hour of dulness, and call up the ideas of felicity: had you pursued this conduct, I doubt not but you would have maintained and even increased their esteem, so far as to have secured every degree of influence that could conduce to their virtue, or your mutual satisfaction; and your house might at this day have been the abode of domestic bliss.

There may, it is true, be some husbands whom no goodness can impress. We owned it before; but still we have ground to believe, that of men who would have turned out better, had they met with discreet and obliging women, multitudes have been lost by the inattention and neglect, as well as not a few by the impertinence and perverseness of their wives. Little do many of you think how easily the heart may be alienated. A generous readiness to make every kind allowance for what may be amiss in others, is perhaps the rarest quality in the world; it is however one of the most necessary, in the se-

veral connexions of society, but, especially in the nearest of all connexions. And yet how few husbands, comparatively speaking, have the good nature to exercise it towards the companions of their life ! How soon after marriage does it often happen, that every error is magnified into a fault, every fault into a vice, and often a single look is construed into I know not what enormity ! One great source of this misery is, that most men expect too much from the women they marry, expect to be always received with smiles, and cherished by endearments, forgetting that they do not always deserve them, that those women are like themselves imperfect, that even the best temper will be hurt by circumstances, and that the brightest sky cannot for ever remain unclouded. But, notwithstanding all this, it continues true, that women might often do much more to please. Their dropping to the husband, as we have frequently seen, those engaging manners which they practised on the lover, is impiety and distraction at the same instant ; as if the solemn vows they made at the altar were words of course, and their only concern was to be married, not to be happy, or to gain a heart, not to keep it. They are apt also to forget in their turn, that the complacence and obsequiousness of courtship seldom extend into wedlock ; that the raptures of a common passion are necessarily short ; that an attachment without tenderness, or at most an affection without delicacy, is as much as can be hoped from the ordinary run of husbands ; and that to preserve even this, requires both vigilance and gentleness.

But that vigilance which is forced will be frequently suspended ; and that gentleness which is put on will be always precarious. Therefore we wish you to acquire early the habits of self control, and

to cultivate from principle a meek and quiet spirit. This you will do with success, if imploring and depending on the grace of God; you make conscience of curbing betimes the irascible passions of nature, of submitting calmly to the daily mortifications of life, of generously yielding to those about you, and particularly of condescending to persons of low estate.

I have never seen a woman eminent for the last of these qualities, who was not excellent in many other ways. Respect to superiors may be enforced by fear, or prompted by interest, and is therefore no demonstrative proof of a good heart. But habitual mildness to those of inferior rank, is one of its surest indications. That young lady cannot have a bad mind, who readily enters into the distresses, and affectionately contributes to the felicity of those whom Providence has placed beneath her. In reality there is no such discovery of your tempers as your treatment of domestics. She is always the worthiest character, who behaves best at home, and is most liked by the servants. They are the truest judges of a woman's dispositions, because to them disguise is laid aside, and they see her in all lights. An unaffected propension to use them well, without partiality and without caprice, argues a confirmed benevolence. Those who use them otherwise, will urge indeed their mercenary spirit, their want of gratitude, their want of worth; and such complaints may in many instances be too well founded. But humanity is noble, and will rise above little considerations; Christianity is divine, and will not be overcome of evil, but will overcome evil with good. A faithful servant is a treasure, entitled to every possible mark of regard; and some such there certainly are in this country. But it must be confessed, the generality of that

class are often highly provoking: they are ever ready to corrupt one another; and there can be little attachment where there is no principle. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that treating them with tenderness when sick, and with gentleness at other times, without making them confidants, would, joined to a wise and pious example, go far to gain and reform many of them. At any rate, condescension and generosity to those of lower station, will always give satisfaction to that mind in which there is real superiority.

Your behaving handsomely to your friends, and courteously to all with whom you converse, though not so certainly characteristic of the virtue I paint, will yet be a natural and agreeable effect of it. Meekness is like the light, which spreads itself every where: though, like the light too, it pleases most where it is least looked for. To carry on the resemblance; like that it will be sometimes obscured, but like that also, we cannot bear its being long absent. Starts of petulance may be forgiven to prosperity; fits of fretfulness are natural to affliction; but what can be pleaded for harbouring a passionate or a peevish temper, easily provoked and hardly pacified?

When I have seen a woman in rage, I have always wished for a mirror at hand, to show her to herself. How would she have started back from her own image, if not an absolute Demon! To those of such a stamp I have nothing to say but this, that a place awaits them where their rage will have its full scope for ever. But some are of a calmer strain, sour, splenetic, and sullen; not less unchristian, or less unfemale than the others, and on one account much worse. In those the storm breaks and clears; in these all is settled gloom,

that admits no sunshine, that presents no prospect of the cheerful kind. For vulgar and unenlightened spirits, thus continually overcast, there may be some excuse, from the want of better instruction, that might have helped to correct their natural infelicity of temper. But what shall be said for habitual rancour, deep resentment, and cool malignity in those women who, together with understandings originally good, (for some such there are,) have enjoyed the advantages of books, and conversation, of elegant breeding and knowledge of the world? In truth, their heads seem to have starved their hearts; and the talents they possess serve only to render them completer fiends.

It is a strange mistake of many who think, that, provided they do not indulge in one particular passion, they may give a loose to all the rest: as if a woman could offend only by incontinence; or as if her not committing a sin to which perhaps from the coldness of her complexion she has no propensity, or from which she is restrained by the dread of immediate infamy and ruin, would atone for the commission of others without number; for vanity and arrogance, for selfishness and envy, for suspicion and revenge, for unbounded censoriousness, or the blackest malice. I am sufficiently aware that pride may not comprehend the remark, and that uncharitableness may not forgive it: but no candid hearer will mistake me when I say, that, however scandalous and however destructive the lusts of the flesh may be, those of the mind are much more heinous, being the proper and peculiar image of the worst and wickedest being in the universe; in one word, they are infernal.

Our Master understood the distinction well, and was not afraid to show that he understood it. In the capacity of a teacher he conversed freely with publicans and sinners; he treated them tenderly; he came not, as he himself said, "to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." What gentleness did he not display to the poor creature taken in adultery! What forgiveness of the well-known female penitent, who but a little before had been plunged in disorder and shame! Such he declared should enter into the kingdom of heaven more readily than the Scribes and Pharisees, in spite of all their ablutions and prayers, their frequent fastings and specious demeanour; a proud self-justifying, and most unmerciful set of men, whom he scrupled not for these reasons to pronounce "the children of the devil." Let me persuade you, from the example of your Saviour, to learn pity towards such as have gone astray. How ungracious in women not to show mercy to women! Let me prevail with you never to express a supercilious contempt, or unforgiving severity, on the subject of those hapless beings whose misery pleads for commiseration yet louder than their crimes call for censure. Which of you can be sure that you would not have yielded to the same temptations which overcame them? Where are those perfect characters that can answer for their own stability? Who made you to differ from the wretchedest of human kind? Believe me, Christians, the most genuine virtue is always the most humble, and the most charitable.—Merciful heaven, may the best gifts of thy providence, and the sweetest influence of thy grace, descend evermore on that blessed establishment, which has opened a sanctuary for wretched females weary of vice, and willing to reform. May all its benefactors obtain

mercy in the day of the Lord. What superior honour does such an establishment, with its sister institution, that happy asylum for the helpless young creatures of your sex who are yet uncorrupted, reflect on this nation ! They are truly the most distinguishing glory of Britain ; the fairest flowers, if I may so say, in all the garland of English humanity.

But let me recommend to you candour with regard to your sex in general, as well as compassion towards the unhappy part of it. Ah, my fair clients, what shall we say in your behalf to those men who are always telling us of your ill-natured remarks, or illiberal insinuations to the disadvantage of one another ? Such as resign themselves, without control, to this accursed passion, we give up at once with indignation and abhorrence. Those wilful and deliberate destroyers of reputation are of their " father the devil, who was" an accuser, and " a murderer from the beginning ;" nor, while they do his works, will it avail them aught, though like him they could in other respects " transform themselves into angels of light." No lustre of beauty, no brilliancy of understanding, can, even among the warmest friends of the sex, make compensation for the spirit of censoriousness in a female. For my own part, I consider good nature and candid sentiments as so peculiarly indispensable in every woman, that, when I want to estimate the character of any young lady, I take the first opportunity of commending highly some person of her own sex, and about her own age, but rather younger, whom she knows, and who is deservedly a favourite with the men. If without hesitation, reserve, or a single But, if with apparent pleasure and cordiality she joins in the praise ; I am willing from that mo-

ment to form a favourable opinion of her heart. I may be mistaken : it may be all artifice ; but, for the most part, I think not. If on the contrary—but I need not express the rest. Inform us, ye students of human nature, what it is in the female mind that, without the restraints of superior worth, inclines it so strongly to the love of scandal? I am disposed to hope that, besides the competitions formerly explained, it may be often owing to the acrimony produced by disappointment, and often to the habits contracted by associating with those who, having no fund of entertainment in themselves, are forced to seek it at the expense of others. Be it owing however to what it will, one thing is certain, that a proneness to indulge it is always detestable ; as on the other hand, she who has the generosity to approve most, will have always the satisfaction of being most approved ; and for the best of qualities, an amiable temper.—No, my fair ones, nothing can make amends for the want of that. It is like wisdom ; “ It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire. “ The gold and the crystal cannot equal it ; and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. “ No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls : for the price of it is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it.” Preserve it, dearly beloved, and cherish it forever.

Let “ the law of kindness ” be in your tongue. “ A froward mouth and perverse lips put far from you.” Guard against every word, against every hint that would give pain unnecessarily to any creature. Beware of mistaking pertness for vivacity, or petulance for spirit. Tremble at the thought of sacrificing friendship to a jest. Indulge in no case a propensity to contradiction, or the itch of criti-

cism. Be not hasty to draw characters, in general companies, especially. Whenever you do, be sure to touch on what is praiseworthy: something praiseworthy there is in every character. Over what is culpable throw the veil of charity as often as you can. As well in this as in other respects, "charity shall hide a multitude of sins." When the absent are condemned, justify their conduct, if possible; extenuate it, if not: some circumstance of extenuation may be almost always found. If in your judgment of human actions you must frequently err, let it ever be on the favourable side; and remember, that one of a noble nature had much rather be thought humane than witty, simple than severe. Show yourselves pleased, as often as you really are so; and you will seldom fail of pleasing. Join to all the rest the magnanimity of applauding freely in other women that beauty, and those accomplishments, which you yourselves may chance not to possess, or to possess only in an inferior degree.—How lovely and great will you appear by an unaffected attention to such maxims! The sparkling of wit, or the splendour of fortune in others, they amuse and dazzle for a time; but you shall secure solid and lasting esteem. Your society will be sought, as easy and safe; your friendship will be prized, as sincere and affectionate; in your tender bosoms your acquaintance will long to repose their hearts; and from your sympathetic manner of entering into their concerns, they will receive consolation.

But is there no danger of sinking into insipidity by such a behaviour? Not the least; if it be accompanied with those other qualities which women ought to cultivate. And what should hinder the softest spirit of your sex from acquiring, if she

will, any one virtue or accomplishment proportionate to her capacity? It is possible indeed, that such a cast of mind may be attended with less resolution in difficulties, with less endurance of affliction, with less acuteness of wit, or less force of understanding; but by due pains taken with herself a woman of this sort will, I apprehend, beyond all others, improve into that form of character which we would willingly convince you is the most beautiful in a female. There are, I will acknowledge, now and then in some of a different mould, certain little caprices, or lively sallies and starts of humour, that are not displeasing on particular occasions. But then they require to be bounded by decency, and blended with sense; nor must the great principles of good affection be ever forgotten.

Amongst the many other advantages resulting from female meekness, I must not omit to mention how much it will conduce to personal attraction. As it commonly implies calm passions, so it naturally produces, or happily promotes, that serene manner which is always engaging, (a flutter never is,) and which, meeting a sentimental mind, refines very readily into a gracefulness of mien, more real than any that is acquired in gay assemblies, and to an observant eye much more alluring. Imagine a circle of handsome young women, where one is distinguished above the rest by a flowing yet composed affability; by a meek look, and modest carriage, in which there appears no consciousness of beauty, no return upon herself, no study to become the object of the company, no visible attention to her dress or person, but a recollected air, and steady regard to those about her; what superior pleasure and respect will her presence necessarily inspire!

Suppose her, if you will, entirely silent, from a disposition to give place to others who may seem more desirous of talking; will not her very silence interest? But when, on finding room left her to share in the discourse, she delivers herself with that sweetness of voice which often accompanies mild affections, expressing in gentle unstudied accents such sentiments as are worthy of her character; I leave you to guess the effect on every susceptible by-stander. Alas! my friends, what is all the momentary lustre you are continually labouring to give those lips, compared with the permanent beauties of a lovely mind, breathing from them in agreeable conversation? Let me add, where the grace of meekness has the soul in full possession, it will be often seen beaming in the eyes with a bland sensibility, and sporting on the countenance in placid smiles, more soft than the softest glow of a summer evening; especially, when the mind is at any time exalted into livelier emotions of benignity and joy. Or once more let us suppose, that affliction has given to such a face a cast of solemnity and languor; it will still retain a kind of sober charm that is inexpressibly affecting. In truth, beauty never touches the heart so deeply, as when with a sweet unreluctant surrender it seems ready to faint under the shock of misfortune, or the load of sorrow. But to proceed.

I would take the liberty to observe, that christian meekness will be of particular use to prevent the artful behaviour so frequently complained of in women, and in many instances so justly. The complaint, I confess, comes with an ill grace from those men, whose daily study it is, in one shape or another, to impose on the sex; nor can I doubt but many of the latter would have more sincerity, if

the others had less design. They probably think themselves justified in baffling art by art ; and from the science of defence and resistance, they are too apt to pass to that of stratagem and attack. It is marvellous indeed to what lengths many of them carry it, till they become mere compositions of hypocrisy where each ingenuous feeling is lost, and every word, look, motion, and minute proceeding, is a lye. Whether it be that Nature has given them more subtilty, or that education has taught them more disguise, or that their condition affords them greater leisure to think of such things, or that they are willing to make up in wiles what they want in strength ; whether it be owing to one, or to all of these causes, I know not : but the fact is this, that there are very few men able to contend with a cunning woman in her own way.

Nevertheless, I must inform such dissemblers, that cunning is not true ability ; it is at best but left-handed wisdom ; it carries with it an obliquity, and an impotence, that a noble mind will, and that a capable one ought to despise. I need not say, that it is diametrically opposite to the simplicity of the gospel, which admits our being " wise as serpents," only so far as is consistent with our being " harmless as doves." The maxim of a virtuous prudence are comprehensive ; and she who has learnt, with a humble reliance on heaven's direction, to apply them as occasion requires, will never want the assistance of artifice. In short, artifice is very often a feeble auxiliary, and almost constantly betraying those that trust to it. Fond prepossession, or unsuspecting candour, may no doubt be easily deceived by female disguise ; but it is difficult to act apart long. Dissimulation will sometimes let fall the mask ; and he has not the spirit of a man, who does not

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abhor and scorn the detected impostor. Meanwhile, what a laborious task is hers! How anxious, ignoble, and wretched! From this, my fair disciples, native goodness and christian meekness save you. By being what you ought to appear you will be under no temptation of appearing what you are not. An obliging conversation, and deportment, will proceed from you freely as from a living fountain. Having no bad passions to conceal, your thoughts and manners will be transparent. Truth will be your prompter, while discretion your guard. In you virtue will wear her mild aspect, without constraint and without study. The baseness and barbarity of inviting and encouraging addresses, which you mean not in the end to accept, you will avoid and detest. A proffered heart you will refuse with civility and gratitude, where you cannot return your own; or where you cannot, ought, you will accept with generosity and affection. Let me add upon the whole, that as every mode of dissimulation is equally injudicious and unbecoming, so she will always be the most attractive, while she is the only honourable character, who cultivates genuine worth instead of artificial forms, and prizes undissembled sweetness instead of fictitious courtesy.

Such a one was Isabella, the darling of all who knew her. It is true, she lived where virtue is eclipsed by fortune, and where depravity of manners did not prevent the admiration of excellence. Her mind was very early accomplished; it was that of a woman, when she was yet but a child. It shone in her face with a generous warmth, and the same time a calm intelligence, seldom seen in countenance so young; it produced in her what

deportment a mixture of softness and dignity, which she alone did not perceive. In company, the merits of others, not her own, engaged all her attention. She was never pert. Her diffidence kept her too frequently silent: when she spoke, it was with sweet simplicity and smiling respect. Her voice was melody itself, without that frivolous whine which is often occasioned by dissembling, and often by affectation. Among her intimate companions she was sprightly and playful: for them she felt the enthusiasm of friendship. Her pen flowed in a stream of sentiment alike tender and exalted; it was the interpreter of her heart. Every duty becoming her station, and consistent with her years, she fulfilled from instinct sanctified by piety; a piety, in which meekness still presided. Heaven beheld so gentle a spirit with complacency, and took her away from the evil to come; took her to itself, in all the purity of untainted virtue. She was seized on a sudden: I then saw her: she was no way alarmed. Young and beautiful, admired and happy, she surrendered her soul with a placid resignation; she smiled in her last moments; the smile remained on her clay-cold visage for some time after the informing mind was fled. She was lovely and pleasant in her life, and in her death an object of universal and affectionate lamentation. Her little story furnishes a proof, that sentiment and meekness conjoined, are superior to all other allurements; and that dispositions at once mild and virtuous require neither disguise nor heightening.

I presume you know, that the language of inspiration represents the internal character under the notion of a person or living form, which it styles the old or the new man, according as the principles of sin or of holiness have the ascendant. By the

same figure of speech, the inward graces and decorations of a christian are here termed "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible;" to contrast them with that corporeal beauty, and those external embellishments which are immediately palpable to the senses, and like them subject to decay and corruption. Thus it is that St. Peter would call off your too anxious attention from inferior, outside, and short-lived attractions, whether original or assumed, to such as are of supreme value, being in their nature spiritual and immortal. Nor does he simply rest there, but farther recommends the latter as highly acceptable to your Maker, "even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

Such a spirit, indeed, bears a near resemblance to his own most merciful and blessed attributes, to his well beloved Son and our divinely benevolent Saviour, to those good and happy creatures that constitute the angelic world, and to all the excellent ones of human kind, both on earth and in heaven, that belong to the same great family of love. Such a spirit proceeds directly from the common parent, and cannot but be pleasing to its author. What says St. James? "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits." Such is the temper of christianity, and such are its effects.

To cherish them in yourselves let all the preceding considerations incite you; but above them all, be engaged by the divine ambition of being approved by the sovereign judge and rewarder of excellence. What can be added to such an argument; or what can we offer upon it, that will be any way answerable to its dignity? To appear beautiful

in the eye of God ; to be beloved by the monarch of the universe ; to be admitted, if I may use the phrase, as so many fair and shining pillars into his temple below ; while he contemplates each with a pleasing aspect, and purposes to remove them in due time to his sanctuary on high, where they shall remain his everlasting delight, as well as the never ceasing admiration of surrounding cherubim—Great Creator ! what can equal such exaltation and felicity ? And can any of you, my hearers, be so destitute of every nobler sentiment as not to aspire after privileges like these ? Unmoved by such ideas, can you turn away with impatience, and run to scenes of dress and show with the same little inglorious passions as before ; preferring to the approbation of the Eternal the slightest regards from the silliest mortals ? Go, thou senseless creature, and boast of being admired by the butterflies of a day : See what they will do for thee, when he whose favour thou neglectest, and for such things, shall cause thy “ beauty to consume like a moth,” and thy heart to sink within thee like a stone. Imagination shudders at the thought of that day, when thou shalt enter, trembling, forsaken and forlorn, those dismal regions which the voice of adulation cannot reach, where nothing shall be heard but sounds of reproach, and blasphemy, and wo ; where, stript of every ornament that now decks thy body, and stript of that body itself, thy mind must appear without shelter or covering, all deformed and ghastly, mangled with the wounds of despairing guilt, and distorted by the violence of envenomed passions, while demons shall mock at thy misery. Save us, almighty Redeemer, save these young people from a doom so dreadful !

Would you concur to prevent it ? Begin with restraining the love of ornament ; or rather, turn

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that dangerous affection into a higher channel, let it flow : it will then become safe, useful, no Here you will have scope for the largest fancy. the adorning of your character we wish you to no bounds. In dressing the soul for the company of saints, of angels, of God himself, you can employ too much time or thought. In study and cultivating "the hidden man of the heart" you will every day discover new charms, that improve with age, bloom in sickness, live in death, survive the desolation of the grave, ascend triumphant to the world of perfect beauty, continue to brighten under the smile of heaven for ever. In a word, all the best beings in creation, together with the Creator himself, concur in loving and honouring a beautiful mind.

Nor is this a distinction, for which you need contend with too many competitors. Carry the passion for dress almost ever so high, you will have the mortification to find some one or other outshine you in taste, or in magnificence ; but the palm of wisdom you may bear away from the greatest part unenvied, if you will only allow them the superiority of fashion. Oh ! that I knew how to awaken on this subject the spirit of ambition in those who are so prone to indulge it on a thousand others. Happy preacher, couldst thou behold hearers filled with emulation to excel one another in all the modest graces and mild accomplishments that can adorn their sex ! Happy Britain, in this the æra in which religion, with her whole train of virtues, might rise into repute amongst thy children ; in which thy sons might be "as plants grown up in their youth," and thy "daughters as precious stones and polished after the similitude of a palace !"

CONCLUSION.

THE preacher can readily suppose, that many things advanced on the subject of Women, in the course of these Sermons, will be deemed by the generality of his own sex too soothing, while by the majority of yours many will be judged too severe; such is the force of prejudice on both sides. That he himself is quite impartial, it is impossible for him to be certain. He can only say, that he has honestly endeavoured, according to the best of his capacity, to hold the balance even. Throughout the whole, he had but one single point to study; which was, to advance what he believed to be true, and what he hoped at the same time might be useful. He knew, and considered, that he is accountable at a higher tribunal than any upon earth. If he has wished to please, it was from a solicitude "for your good to edification." If he has happened to offend, it was without malignity or design. He should be sorry to be counted your enemy, for telling you the truth. But his concern in that case would be for you, not for himself; he is ambitious of your approbation, but he is much more so of his own.

His happiest days having been chiefly past in the conversation of women of worth and understanding, it is certain, that for such he has ever entertained a peculiar esteem. He pretends not indeed, that even amongst them he has found any jewel without a flaw. But notwithstanding their imperfections, justice exacts from him this testimony, that, when they have

in any tolerable degree approached to the standard of what we have so often styled female excellence, they have appeared to him, with a few exceptions in favour of the other sex, by far the devoutest worshippers, the warmest friends, and the most sentimental as well as entertaining companions. What he has principally to lament is his meeting with so small a number, who have had elevation enough to practise an entire simplicity of manners, sense enough wholly to forget their persons in the company of men, and meekness enough to be quite content when not the objects of immediate attention.

If the preacher has endeavoured, upon the principles of candour, to account for some passions in the sex that seem at first sight less innocent, or less excusable; it was under the sanction and impression of that great evangelical law, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." If he has addressed those young persons who formed his audience, in a style of peculiar tenderness, the reason, in plain terms, was because he felt it; nor does he think, that either as a man, or as a preacher, he ought to suppress, if he could, an affection which nature has implanted, and which, kept within proper bounds, religion does not prohibit.

If he has attempted to insinuate instruction under the smiles of complacence, or to enforce admonition with the fervours of friendship; say, ye censors of the age, is he really to blame? Is an austere countenance the proper face of zeal, or a distant formality the genuine mark of holiness? To disgust by rudeness, or to discourage by rigour—is that the way to win souls? Was it the way of the Apostles, or of their Master? Merciful Saviour! what words

can paint thy benignity, into whose lips grace was poured, who didst "not break the bruised reed, "nor quench the smoking flax," whose character was like that of thy Father, love! I touched before on the spirit that breathed in his teaching: let me just add here, that his parables, which made so great a part of it, were pointed to the imagination no less than to the heart; presenting the strongest pictures of life and nature, at the same time that by these very means they impressed the noblest lessons of piety and truth. To speak in general, will any one say, that the severity of censure must never be softened, nor the awfulness of solemnity tempered; not even when the preacher has the youthful and the gay for his hearers? Those surely are strangers to true wisdom, who suppose her monitions incompatible with cheerful images or joyful ideas; surely those are unacquainted with the human mind, who hope to reform its errors, without conciliating its affections, or think that the tutoring of terror alone will produce the love of goodness.

In some sentiments which I have offered to your consideration, I should not be surprised if I have been taxed with idle refinement. We live in an age when whatever is held by the few most solid and valuable, is by the many derided as visionary, or decried as insignificant. In the present age an accomplished female is apt to be shunned under the notion of a learned lady; and the virtuous woman of the Proverbs would be in danger of being ridiculed as a composition of affectation. In this age the subject of dress and ornament, I am ready to acknowledge, is better understood than formerly; but in these how often are modesty, frugality, and simple elegance, given up to levity or fashion, to vain competition or mistaken appearance! In this

age the strictness of female decorum, and the retrappings of female reserve, must expect to be construed into ignorance of the world, if not into hypocritical airs of female sanctity. In this polite age. I had almost asked, where is the man that believes any woman to be modest at heart; and where is the woman that dares to be superior to the follies of her sex? A passion exalted by generosity, and refined by sentiment, in which the man, not the equipage, was regarded, in which the highest gratifications of sense were the lowest objects of affection—such a passion is now considered by the generality as romance. Such lovers might exist in the days of old, or possibly may be yet found in the obscurity of retreat; but in the gay world, where all is tainted with sensuality, and sacrificed to show, they would appear too ungenteel to be respectable, and too insipid to be happy. Here, alas, how few have the fortitude to live to their own hearts, the worth to cultivate the joys of friendship, or the soul to seek conjugal felicity in conjugal esteem! Amidst the hurry and dissipation of diversions, the profligacy or insignificance of play, the futility or frivolousness of formal visiting; what regard or what room is left for self-possession or mutual confidence, for rational conversation or improving study, for the pleasing cares of a family, or that amiable mixture of minds without which social life is modish disguise or mean indulgence? Is it necessary to add, how scanty a portion of time is now given to private devotion; how little the sabbath is made a day of rest from the toil of pleasure, or the tumult of passion; and to what banter from the licentious of both sexes she is exposed, who would fill up the duties of that day with seriousness, reverence, and constancy? Let me only subjoin,

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