

String of Pearls

From
the
Pearls Basket



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A string of pearls from an
old casket

STRING OF PEARLS,

FROM

AN OLD CASKET;

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

REV. RICHARD NEWTON, D. D.,

AUTHOR OF "RILLS FROM THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE,"—

"THE BEST THINGS,"—"THE KING'S HIGH-

WAY,"—"THE GIANTS AND HOW TO

FIGHT THEM," ETC.

Rev. Wm. Secker.

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL BOOK SOCIETY,

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COLLINS, PRINTER.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Author, from whose writings these extracts are made, is the Rev. Wm. Secker. The only work of his which it has been my privilege to meet with, is a volume of Sermons, on the words—“What do ye more than others?” This volume was first published in London, in the year 1660. In accordance with the fondness for quaint titles, then prevailing, it was called “The Non-Such Professor in his meridian splendor; or, The Singular actions of Sanctified Christians laid open.” I have been unable to find any definite, or satisfactory information respecting the author in question. Nothing more than his name occurs in any of the biographical dictionaries that I have been able to consult. I suppose him to have been a Non-Conformist, or Independent mini-

ster, living and laboring about the middle of the seventeenth century. He is spoken of as a preacher of the gospel at Tewksbury, Gloucestershire. But though so little known to fame he was evidently "a workman that needed not to be ashamed;—a good steward of the manifold grace of God,—bringing forth out of his treasures things new and old."

In his own Preface to his work, he says: "The design of this piece is not the ostentation of the author, but the edification of the reader. In this subject you have a breviary of religion; the works enjoined in it are weighty, and the blessings annexed to it are many. Christianity is here dressed in the white linen of purity. As grace begins in God's love to us, so it ends in our love to Him. It makes our comforts greater and our crowns brighter. Those children who are found moving

in the orbits of obedience, shall enjoy the clearest sunshine of their Father's countenance."

"Remember, reader, that we can call no time our own, but the present. How carefully should we shoot, who have but one arrow to direct at the mark! The enjoyment of the world is neither an evidence of the divine favor, nor anger. Judge not yourselves therefore, by the gold in your bags, but by the grace of God in your heart; not by your wealth, but by your works. If religion be your vineyard to labor in, eternity shall be your bed to rest upon. Every grace that is exercised here, shall be glorified there."

Here we have a fair specimen of the author's style, both of thought and expression. This is such as to justify the criticism of one who characterized his volume as—"A beautiful little work, worth its weight in gold."

There are two things which specially characterize these extracts, viz., *eminent spirituality*; and *great concentration of thought*.

They are eminently spiritual. They contain the very marrow of the gospel. The circle in which they move lies directly round the cross. They pertain altogether to "the things which accompany salvation." Christ in his fulness; his grace in its preciousness; and christian experience in the diversified forms of its developments are the topics here referred to. The views of gospel truth presented, are peculiarly clear, and discriminating. The author of these sweet sayings, was "a master in Israel," at whose feet all may sit with profit, and receive instruction.

His thoughts are as remarkable for their *concentration*, as for their spirituality. He throws out the pure gold of gospel truth in great ingots. His

sentences are often like compressed volumes. You may digest one of them; and then, like Elijah, when he had eaten of the food which the angel brought, you will feel as if you could "go in the strength of it many days."

May it please God to bless this "*String of Pearls*," to the enriching of the souls of all who possess themselves of it, for Christ's sake!

RICHARD NEWTON.

Philadelphia, October, 1860.

NOTE.

This little book of Extracts was prepared for publication a year ago. The Publishers in New York, to whom it was entrusted, were unable, from a pressure of business, to take it in hand till last spring. Then, just as they were about commencing it, an edition of the work from which the extracts are made, was brought out by Sheldon & Co., of N. Y., with a preface by the Rev. Dr. Krauth of this city. This led to the abandonment of the publication of these extracts, at that time. But now, after a fair opportunity has been allowed to the publishers of the volume in question to circulate their work; and knowing that many persons, though possessed of the "Old Casket," from which these *Pearls* have been selected, may prefer to have them ready strung for use, as more convenient, than having to search through the Casket for them, I have concluded to send out "The String of Pearls" for the use of such.

"The Non-Such Professor in his Meridian Splendor;" can now be had at any of the religious book stores.

R. N.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTERISTICS.

Believers are among others, as Saul was among the Israelites, the tallest by the head and shoulders. Their birth is truly low, who are not born from above. What are such earthly shrubs compared with heavenly cedars; or such thorns of the world's brake, to the willows of God's brook? These trees, which have their top branches of hope in heaven, will have their lower boughs of activity on earth. Those who look for a heaven, made ready, will live as though they were already in heaven.

The juice, which distils into a rose, is returned into a sweet perfume, but that which drops upon a nettle is returned in an ill savor. If the mercies of God be not load-stones to draw us to

heaven, they will be mill-stones to sink us to perdition. The blessings we enjoy are not the fruit of our merit, but the fruit of God's mercy.

What are carnal men to Christian men? The power of God appears in the *formation* of one, but the stupendous grace of God shines, illustriously in the *transformation* of the other. In creation, God has given the productions of the earth, for our bodies; but in redemption, he has given himself for our souls. Thus it appears to be a greater favor to be converted, than to be created; yea, it were better for us to have no being, than not to have a new being.

Though there be many professors, who are not true believers, yet there are no true believers, but what are professors. As trees are known by its fruits, so believers are known by their works.

Such as have received Christ's bounty, are unwilling to fight under Satan's banner.

Ah! how intolerable will the punishment of those professors be, who have appeared as burnished gold to men, and are found only base metal in the sight of God! What will it profit, to put off the old manners, and not put off the old man? A snake may change its skin, and yet preserve its sting. The gospel professed, may lift a man *unto* heaven, but it is only the gospel possessed, that brings a man *into* heaven. To possess piety, and yet practice impiety, will be so far from advancing a man's commendation, that it will assuredly heighten his condemnation.

A holy calling will be attended with a holy carriage. Many may be found who can talk of grace; but very few can

be found who taste of grace. It is not every one, who looks like a Christian, that lives like a Christian.

It is unnatural for a Christian's tongue to be larger than his hand. It is lamentable for him to hold a lamp for others, and yet to walk in darkness himself. He that gives proper precepts, and then sets improper examples, resembles that foolish person, who labors hard to kindle a fire, and when he has done it, throws cold water upon it, to quench it. Though such a physician may administer the reviving cordial to some fainting disciple, yet he is in danger himself of dying in a swoon.

Many people are offended with the profession of religion, because all are not religious who make a profession. A little consideration will correct this error. Does the sheep despise its fleece,

because the wolf has worn it? Who blames a crystal river because some melancholy men have drowned themselves in its streams? The best drugs have their adulterates. And will you refuse an opiate, because some have wantonly poisoned themselves with it. Though you have been cozened with false colours, yet you should not disesteem that which is dyed in grain. He is a bad economist who, having a spot in his garments, cuts off the cloth, instead of rubbing off the dirt. God rejects all religion but his own.

As Jesus Christ is the fountain of excellency, to which all must come; so he is the pattern of excellency, to which all must conform. As he is the root on which a saint grows, so he is the rule by which a saint walks. God has made one Son in the image of us all that he might make all his sons, in the image

of that one. Jesus Christ lived to teach us how to live, and died to teach us how to die. Ah! reader, if the life of Christ be not your pattern, the death of Christ will never be your pardon. Though the Lord Jesus was a man of many sorrows, yet he was not a man of the least sin. No man can equal him in holiness; yet every man ought to imitate him in holiness.

A truly religious life is a crystal glass wherein Christ sees his own likeness. In our sacramental participations we show forth the death of Christ; but in our evangelical conversation, we show forth the life of Christ. An excellent Christ calls for excellent Christians. As he was never unemployed, so he was never ill employed; for "he went about doing good." As our happiness lay near his heart, so his honor should lie near our hearts.

All those who are conformed to the image of the Redeemer, are as willing to be ruled by Christ, as they are to be esteemed by Him. He that deems his yoke heavy, will not find his crown easy.

How blessed would it be for us, to have that blessed Scripture fulfilled in us;—"As he was, so are we, in this world." Now, if we are, in this world, as he was, we shall be in heaven, as he is. If there be no likeness between Christ and you, on earth, there can be no friendship between Christ and you in heaven.

If the sun be eclipsed but one day, it attracts more spectators than if it shone a whole year. So, if you commit one sin it will cause you many sorrows, and the world many triumphs. Dr. Whitaker, on reading the 5th of

Matthew, brake out saying, "Either this is not the Gospel, or we are not of the Gospel." The cruelty of the Spaniards to the Indians, made them refuse Christian baptism. "For," said they, "he must be a wicked God, who has such wicked servants." Oh! that God's jewels did but sparkle more, in this benighted world.

As there is no man so vicious, but some relative good may be performed by him to man, so there is no one so religious, but some evil may be committed by him against God. As one swallow does not prove the approach of summer, neither does one good action, prove a man, a believer. There is, in every being, a natural tendency to some centre. God is the centre of the saints, and glory is the centre of grace. Now, where we do not discover that bias, we may deny the being.

There is no ascertaining the quality of a tree, but by its fruits. When the wheels of a clock move within, the hand on the dial will move without. When the heart of a man, is sound in conversion, then the life will be fair in profession. When the conduit is walled in, how shall we judge of the spring, but by the waters, which run through the pipes.

As a sinner will discover the good he wants, so a saint will show the good he enjoys. When the sun dawns upon the earth, it is presently known, and when the Sun of Righteousness arises upon the heart, it cannot be hid. It is said of the Saviour that "he could not be hid." As it is with the head, so it is with the members. "Ye are the light of the world." Let your light, so shine, among men that they may see your good works.

Were the sun to give no more light than a star, you could not believe he was the regent of the day; were he to transmit no more heat than a glow-worm, you would question his being the source of elementary heat. Were God to do no more than a creature, where would his Godhead be? Were man to do no more than a brute, where would his manhood be? Were not the saint to excel the sinner, where would his sanctity be?

If men debase themselves as beasts, the Lord will nominate them, beasts; and if Christians walk as men, God will call them men. There is no passing for current coin in heaven, without the stamp and signature of heaven.

“Hear, oh heavens, and be astonished oh earth.” Why, what is the matter? “The ox knoweth its owner, and the

ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." God doth not call in a jury of angels to condemn them; but he empanels a jury of oxen, and asses, to pass sentence upon them. Alas! that oxen, and asses, should be more religious than men, who profess religion! In their kind, they are more kind. If their owners feed them, they readily own their owners.

Men commonly season the vessel with water, before they trust it with costly wine. Thus God will season the vessel of your heart with his grace, before he pours into it the wine of his glory. It is hard to say whether God discovers more love in preparing heavenly mansions for the soul, than in preparing the soul for heavenly mansions.

The soul of man is the Lord's Casket, and grace the jewel; now, wherever the

jewel is not found, the casket will be thrown away. Though the wheat be for the garner, yet the chaff is for the fire. The Scripture presents you, not only, with an account of what God will do for a christian, but also what a christian will do for God.

Some people say much, and do nothing; but christians do much, and say nothing. To deserve praise, where none is obtained, is better than to obtain it where none is deserved. The old maxim is worthy to be revived—he that desires honor is not worthy of honor.

A saint may be seen doing more works than any, and yet he does not desire to do any of his works, to be seen. An alms, which is seen, is by no means unpleasant to God, provided it be not given with a design to have it seen. Though good ends make not bad actions lawful,

yet, bad ends make good actions sinful. The harp sounds sweetly, yet it hears not its own melody. Moses had more glory by his veil, than by his face. It is truly pleasant to behold those living in the dust of humility, who have raised others, from the dust by their liberality.

It is both meat and drink to a formalist to fast, if others do but see it. It is reported that the nightingale never sings so sweetly, as when others stand by to hear its melody. "Come see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts," when there was no zeal for the Lord of Hosts to be seen. Jehu only made religion a stirrup, to mount upon the saddle of popularity. Sounding souls are seldom souls that are sound. The vote of a Jehu is always linked to the heart of a Judas. Some persons are like hens, which no sooner drop their eggs than they begin to chatter. If such bestow a little money

on a church's repairs, it must be recorded upon glazed windows. Where self is the end of our actions, Satan is the rewarder of them.

Where the river is the deepest, the water glides the smoothest. Empty casks sound most; whereas the well-fraught vessel silences its own sound. As the shadow of the sun is largest when his beams are lowest, so we are always least, when we make ourselves the greatest.

He that traffics in God's service, to fraught himself with man's praises, suffers shipwreck in the haven, and loses his wages, when he comes to receive pay for his works. It is storied of Alexander's footman, that he ran so swift upon the sand, that the print of his footsteps were not seen. Thus should it be with Christians; nothing

is more pleasing unto God, than a hand that is largely opened, and a mouth that is straightly closed.

Saints should resemble a spire steeple, which is smallest where it is highest; or those orient stars, which the higher they are seated, the less they are viewed. Usually, the greatest boasters are the smallest workers.

Without grace there may be seeming knowledge; but, without grace there can be no saving knowledge. Satan may as well put out our eyes, that we should not see the truth; as cut off our feet, that we should not walk in the truth. Naked knowledge may make the head giddy; but it will never make the heart holy.

How many professors are there who have light enough to know what should

be done, but have not love enough to do, what they know! Such people have no advantage from carrying a bright candle in a dark lantern. Give me the professor, who perfectly sees the way he should go, and readily goes the way he sees. That sinner's darkness will be the greatest in hell, whose light was the clearest on earth.

I have read of a painter, who, being warmly reprehended, by a cardinal, for putting too much red into the faces of St. Paul and St. Peter, answered;—"It is to show, how much they blush at the conduct of many who style themselves their successors." Were Abraham, the father of the faithful, now on earth, how would he disclaim all relation to many who call themselves his offspring! Though there was less grace discovered to the saints of old, yet there was more grace discovered *in* them. They knew

little, and did much; we know much, and do little.

“My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.” Poor Job could hold nothing fast, but his integrity; grace kept his heart, when he could not keep his gold. Uprightness is of so fair a complexion as not to be subject to any alteration, from the scorching beams of persecution. The laurel preserves its verdure, amidst the severest blasts of winter. Times of trouble have often been times of triumph to a believer. Suffering seasons have, generally, been sifting seasons, in which the Christian has lost his chaff, and the hypocrite his courage.

Wicked men stumble at every straw, in the way to heaven, but they climb over hills, in the way to destruction. Hang heavy weights on rotten boughs

and they will suddenly break. If sinners take up religion, in a fair day, they will eagerly, lay it down in a foul one. The language of such is, "Lord, we are willing to serve thee, but unwilling to suffer for thee. We will go to sea, with thee, but on condition, we have no storms. We have no objection to enter into the war, but upon this promise, that we have no blows." Such would fain be wafted to the port of felicity, in such vessels as would not be tossed in the sea of calamity. They think too much of wearing a thorn, though it be borrowed from Christ's crown.

A true Christian will lay down his lusts, at the command of Christ, and his life, for the cause of Christ. The more a tree of righteousness is shaken by the wind, the more it is rooted in the ground. What art thou a member of Christ, and afraid to be a martyr for Christ? If

those be blessed, who die *in* Christ, what must they be who die *for* Christ.

“Should such a man as I flee?” saith Nehemiah; a man so much owned and honored of God! It is better to die a conquerer in religion, than to live a coward in religion. Those who are willing to be combatants for God, shall also, be more than conquerors through God. None are so truly courageous, as those who are truly religious.

If a righteous cause bring you *into* sufferings, a righteous God will bring you *out* of sufferings. A Christian is as much indebted to his enemies, as to friends. The malicious crucifixion of Christ wrought out the glorious exaltation of Christ. The worst that men can do *against* believers, is the best that they can do *for* believers. The worst they can do *to* them, is to send them *out* of

the earth; and the best they can do *for* them is to send them *into* heaven. That was a Christian expression, of one of the martyrs to his persecutors;—"You take a life from me, that I cannot keep, and bestow a life upon me that I cannot lose; which is as if you should rob me of counters, and furnish me with gold." He that is assured of a life, that has no end, need not care how soon this life shall end.

"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." For saints to set their *hearts* upon that, whereon beasts set their *feet*, is as if a king should abdicate his throne, to follow the plough; or, as if a man should desert a golden mine, to dig in a pit of gravel. Where we search ourselves it denotes that we are virtuous; but when we seek ourselves it denotes that we are covetous.

There is a proverb, but none of Solomon's;—"Every man for himself, and God for us all." But where every man is for himself the devil will have all. Whosoever is a seeker of himself is not found of God. Though he may find himself in this life, he will lose himself in death.

Though the eagle be the queen of birds, as the lion is the king of beasts, yet she was not offered up, in sacrifice, because she lived upon the spoils of others. Grace teaches a Christian not only to act like a man to God, but also like a God to man.

Our Lord Jesus Christ pleased not himself, that thereby he might eternally profit us. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; that though he was rich, yet for our sakes, he became poor; that ye through his poverty might

become rich." A drop of his blood, is worth more than a sea of ours; and yet he died our death that we might live his life; and suffered our hell, to bring us to his heaven. He lay in the feeble arms of his mother, that we might lie in the tender bosom of his Father. His love began in his eternal purpose of grace, and ends in our eternal possession of glory.

Every gracious spirit is public; but every public spirit is not gracious. God may use the midwifery of the Egyptians to bring forth the children of Israel. An iron key may open a golden treasury; and leaden pipes convey pleasant waters. Though earthly blessings may be communicated to a spiritual man, yet spiritual blessings will not be communicated to a carnal man

Such was the public spirit of Moses,

that when the Lord proposed to him to destroy Israel, and to make a great nation of him, he became intercessor for them ; yea, even when they were ready to stone him. His affection as a ruler was stronger, than his affection as a father. Thus Joshua, his honorable successor, so far imitated him that he first divided Canaan, into several allotments and portions, for the tribes of Israel, before he made any provision for his own family. Give me such carvers, as lay not all the meat upon their own dishes.

A religious man, in the company of wicked men, is like a green branch, among dry and burning brands; they can sooner kindle him, than he can quench them.

S I N .

Above every evil, we should consider sin as the greatest evil. Sin is the only butt, at which all the arrows of divine vengeance are shot. Sinners are those spiders, which weave their own webs, and are, afterwards, entangled in them. Our own destruction is but the fruit of our own transgression.

To see a saint and sinner maintaining familiar intercourse with each other, is to behold the living and the dead keeping house together. The godly are more frequently corrupted by the evil deportment of the worldling, than the worldling is refined by the chaste conversation of the godly. You may observe that in the oven, the fine bread frequently hangs upon the coarse, but the coarse very seldom adheres to the fine. If you mix an equal proportion

of sour vinegar, and sweet wine together, you will find that the vinegar will sooner sour the wine, than the wine sweeten the vinegar. The Lord's people, by keeping evil company, are like persons, who are much exposed to the sun, insensibly tanned.

The wicked prefer the greatest sins, to the least suffering. This is to leap out of the burning pan, into the consuming flame. By seeking to shun an external calamity, they rush into eternal misery. This is, as if a man should lose his head, to preserve his hat; or, as if the mariner should sink the sailing vessel, to avoid the rising storm.

Sin has every evil subjoined to it. When man have no evil *within* him, he had no evil *upon* him. He began to be *sorrowful* when he began to be *sinful*. When the soul shall be fully re-

leased from the guilt of iniquity, the body shall be wholly delivered from the burden of infirmity. Sorrow shall never be a visitant, where sin is not an inhabitant. The former would be a foreigner, if the latter was not a sojourner.

God is as far from beating his children *for* nothing, as he is from beating them *to* nothing. A hole in the ship will sink it to the bottom. A small bite from a serpent, will affect the whole body. If the root be killed, the branches will soon be withered. If the spring be diminished, there is no doubt, but the streams will soon fail. Where the fuel of corruption is removed, there the fire of affliction is extinguished.

The water *without* the ship may toss it, but it is the water *within* the ship, which sinks it.

A certain person, on seeing a Christian woman go cheerfully to prison, said to her, "Ah you have not yet tasted of the bitterness of death." She cheerfully answered, "No, nor ever shall; for Christ hath promised that those who keep his sayings, shall never *see* death." A believer may feel the *stroke* of death, but he shall never feel the *sting* of death.

LIBERALITY.

The rich man's superfluity was ordained, to relieve the poor man's necessity. A lady on giving sixpence to a beggar, accosted him thus;—"I have now given you more than ever God gave me." To whom he replied, "No madam, God hath given you, all your abundance." "That is your mistake," said she, "for he hath but lent it to me, that I might bestow it on such as you."

He is not a covetous man, who lays up something providentially, but he is a covetous man, who gives out nothing willingly. He is as prudent a man who sometimes distributes discreetly, as he who accumulates hastily. Men, frequently, discover more wisdom in laying *out*, than in laying *up*.

Seneca, the heathen, inculcates a principle worthy of the credence of every christian: "I believe I truly enjoy no more of the world's affluence than what I willingly distribute to the necessitous."

Some observe that the most barren grounds, are nearest to the richest mines. It is too often true, in a spiritual sense, that those whom God hath made the most fruitful in estates, are most barren in good works. It is too generally true, that the rich spend their substance wantonly, while the poor give their alms

willingly. A penny comes with more difficulty out of a bag that is pressing full, than a shilling out of a purse that is half empty. Wherefore doth the Lord make your cup run over, but that other men's lips might taste the liquor? The showers that fall upon the highest mountains should glide in the lowest valleys. "Give, and it shall be given you," is a maxim little believed.

God, who might have made all men wealthy, has made most men poor, that the poor might have Christ for an example of patience, and the rich for an example of goodness. Cruelty is one of the highest scandals to piety. God looks, not so much on the merits of the beggar, as upon the mercy of the giver.

It is reported of one of the dukes of Savoy, that being asked by certain ambassadors at his court, what hounds he

kept, he conducted them into a large room, where there were a number of poor people sitting at table. "These," said he, "are all the hounds I have upon earth, and with whom I am in pursuit of the kingdom of heaven." It is counted an honor to *live* like princes, but it is a greater honor to *give* like princes.

I know no better way to preserve your meal, than by parting with your cake. Large springs should send forth their waters without pumping. Your benevolence should seek the poor, before the poor seek your benevolence. "Put on therefore, (as the elect of God,) bowels of mercy." He that hath put off the bowels of compassion, hath put off the badge of election. Many can love at their tongue's end, but the godly love at their finger's ends. If a man be naked, it is easy for the miser to bid him to be clothed; or if he be empty he can

easily bid him be filled ; as if poor Christians, were like chameleons, able to live upon the air. Liberality does not consist in good wishes, but in good works. The doubtful are to be relieved by our counsel, but the necessitous are to be relieved by our morsels. “ Hospitality is seed, and the husbandman does not become wealthy by saving, but by sowing of his seed.”

HUMILITY.

Our first fall was by rising against God, but our best rise, is by falling down before him. The acknowledgment of our own impotence is the only stock upon which the Lord ingrafts divine assistance. He is the most lovely professor, who is the most lowly professor. As incense smells the sweetest, when it is beaten smallest, so saints look fairest, when they lie lowest. Arro-

gance in the soul resembles the spleen in the body, which grows most while other parts are decaying. God will not suffer such a weed to grow in his garden, without taking some course to root it up. A believer is like a vessel cast into the sea, the more it fills, the more it sinks. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit, before a fall." The flowing river quickly turns to an ebbing water. It is not all the world that can pull an humble man down, because God will exalt him; nor is it all the world that can keep a proud man up, because God will debase him.

The first Adam was for self-advancement, but the second Adam is for self-abasement; the former was for having self deified, the latter is for having self crucified.

God resisteth the proud, but giveth

grace unto the humble. Give me the homely vessel of humility, which God shall preserve and fill with the wine of his grace, rather than the varnished cup of pride, which he will dash in pieces like a potter's vessel. Where humility is the corner-stone, there glory shall be the top-stone.

Though repentance be the act of man, yet it is the gift of God; it requires the same power to *melt* the heart as to *make* it. Though repentance be not a pardon's obtainer, yet it is a pardon's fore-runner. There is no coming to the fair haven of glory, without sailing through the narrow straits of repentance. Christ Jesus rejoiceth over those as blessed, who mourn over themselves as cursed. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Out of the saltiest water, God can brew the sweetest liquor. The skilful bee gathers the best

honey, from the bitterest herbs. When the cloud has been dissolved into a shower, there presently follows a glorious sunshine. The more a stone is wounded by the hand of the engraver, the greater beauty is superinduced thereon. By groans unutterable, the Lord ushers in, joys unspeakable.

There are two things in our sins, the devilishness of them, and the dangerousness of them. Now take a saint and a sinner; the first says,—“What have I done?” the last says,—“What must I suffer?” One mourns for the active evil, the other for the passive evil. The former grieves because his soul is defiled; the latter because his soul is condemned. Water may gush from a rock, when it is smitten with a rod, but all such streams are lost, for they neither quench the flames of hell, nor fill God’s bottles in heaven.

Sinful arrogance usually attends creature confidence. Worldly wealthiness is a quill to swell the bladder of high-mindedness; for when men's estates are lifted up, it is but too common for men's hearts to be puffed up. Ah! how fond is thin dust of thick clay. Pride breeds in great estates, as worms do in in sweet fruits.

Remember Christian, if you be poor in world, you should be rich in faith; and if you be rich in this world, you should be poor in spirit. The way to ascend is to descend; the deeper a tree roots, the wider do its branches spread. The sun of prosperity shines the clearest in the sphere of humility. The true nobility of the mind consists in the humbleness of the mind. Consider that as none have so little, but they have great cause to bless God, so

none have so much, as to have the least cause to boast before God.

Shall the theatrical vagrant be proud of his borrowed robes, or the mud wall swell because the beams of a beautiful sun shine upon it? Gold in your bags, may make you great, but it is grace in your hearts, which makes you good. Goodness without greatness, shall be esteemed, when greatness without goodness, shall be confounded. Proud sinners are the fittest companions for proud devils. The more prosperity man enjoys, the more humility God enjoins. Nature teaches us that those trees bend the most freely, which bear the most fully. As a proud heart loves none but itself, so it is beloved by none but itself.

It is a difficult matter to be grand in the estimation of others, and base in our

own. The face of no mere man ever shone so illustriously, as that of the ancient Jewish lawgiver's, and, yet it is affirmed that no man's heart was ever so meek; but most men resemble chameleons, which no sooner take in the air, than they begin to swell.

Under the Levitical law, the lamb and dove were offered in sacrifice, when the lion and the eagle were rejected.

A proud person thinks every thing too much, that is done *by* him, and every thing too little, that is done *for* him. God is as far from pleasing him with his gifts, as he is from pleasing God with his works. I will not say a good man is never proud, but I will say, a proud man is never good.

HYPOCRISY.

A hypocrite may be both the fairest and the foulest creature in the world;

he may be fairest, outwardly, in the sight of men, and foulest, inwardly, in the sight of God. The dial of our faces, does not infallibly show the time of day in our hearts. Unclean spirits may inhabit the chamber, when they look not out of the window. Hypocrites resemble looking-glasses, which present the faces, that are not in them. None are so black in the eyes of the Deity, as those who paint for spiritual beauty.

Some persons are better in show than in substance, but not so with true Christians; they are not like painted tombs which enclose decayed bones. "The king's daughter is all glorious within." She is all glorious within, though within is not all her glory.

A false friend is worse than an open enemy. A painted harlot is less dangerous, than a painted hypocrite. A treacherous Judas, is more abhorred of

God than a bloody Pilate. The blazing lamps of foolish virgins may light them to the bridegroom's gate, but not into his chamber. Either get the nature of Christ within you, or take not the honours of Christians upon you.

F O R G I V E N E S S .

“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil.” He that carries passions to bed with him, will find the devil creep between the sheets; and why should we give place to him, who crowds in, so fast himself.

How many are there, who profess to forgive, but cannot forget an injury! Such are like persons who sweep the chamber, but leave the dust behind the door. Whenever we grant our offending brethren a discharge, our hearts

also should set their hands to the acquittance. We should not only break the teeth of malice by forgiveness, but pluck out its sting by forgetfulness. To store our memories with a sense of injuries, is to fill that chest with rusty iron, which was made for refined gold.

To do evil for good, is human corruption; to do good for good, is civil retribution; but to do good for evil, is Christian perfection. Though this be not the grace of nature, yet it is the nature of grace.

REPROOF.

There is much discretion to be observed in reprehension; a word will do more with some, than a blow with others. A Venice glass is not to be rubbed so hard as a brazen kettle. Dashing storms do but destroy the seed, while gentle showers nourish it. In repre-

hension we should always beware of carrying our teeth in our tongues, and of biting while we are speaking. We should do with others' sins as we do with our own sores; which if a gentle scar will produce a sufficient discharge, we avoid cutlery and slashing. If ravenous birds can be frayed away by a look, we need not expend powder and shot.

Flatterers may be termed the devil's upholsterers, who no sooner see men troubled at their lusts, than they are for laying pillows under their elbows; but let such know, that their want of the fire of zeal, will be punished with the fire of hell.

DUTIES.

When the purest duties have been performed, the purest mercies should

be implored. Many have passed the rocks of gross sins, who have suffered shipwreck upon the sands of self-righteousness. Some people live more upon their customs, than they do upon Christ; more upon the prayers they make to God, than upon the God to whom they make their prayers. This is for the redeemed captive to reverence the sword instead of the hand, which wrought his rescue.

Duties are like dry pits, though never so curiously wrought, till Christ fill them. If you be found in your own righteousness, you will be lost by your own righteousness. *The garment, which was worn to shreds on Adam's back will never make a complete covering for mine.*

Duties may be good crutches to go upon, but they are bad Christs to lean

upon. It is the greatest disparagement that Christians can offer to Christ to put *their services* in equipage with *his sufferings*. The beggarly rags of the first Adam must never be put on with the princely robe of the second Adam.

To undertake every duty, and yet to overlook every duty, is a lesson none can learn but Christ's scholars. Our obedience at best, is like good wine which relishes of a bad cask. The law of God will not take ninety-nine for a hundred. It will not accept the coin of our obedience, either short in quantity, or base in quality. The duty it exacts is as impossible to be performed in this, our fallen state, as the penalty it inflicts, is intolerable to be endured in our eternal state.

We do not sail to glory in the salt sea of our own tears, but in the red sea

of a Redeemer's blood. The cross of Christ is the key of Paradise. We owe the life of our souls, to the death of our Saviour. It was his going into the furnace, which keeps us from the flames. Man lives by death; his natural life is preserved, by the death of the creature, his spiritual life by the death of the Redeemer.

As God has none the less, for the mercy he gives, so he has none the more, for the duty he receives. Man is such a debtor to God that he can never pay his due to God; yea, the more we pay him, the more we owe him, for our payments. It is Christ only, who is the righteousness of God to man, and man to God. We are so far from paying the utmost farthing, that at the utmost we have not a farthing to pay. That man will be a miserable spectacle of vanity,

who stands upon the lame feet of his own ability.

As many do the things which God dislikes, so they dislike the things which God does. If the children of Israel obtain no meat for their lusts, then they are weary of their lives. They are delighted with their burning corruptions, but are enraged with their trying conditions; which is nothing less than to be in love with their malady, and out of love with their remedy. They studied more how to gratify their humours, than to satisfy their hunger. They complained of the shoe, but the disease lay in the foot.

It is hard to carry a full cup without shedding, or to stand under a heavy load without bowing. It is difficult to walk in the clear day of prosperity without wandering, or in the dark night of ad-

versity, without stumbling; but, from whatsoever point the wind blows, the skilful mariner knows how to meet it with his sails.

PROSPERITY.

Outward prosperity cannot create inward tranquillity. Hearts-ease is a flower that never grew in the world's garden. The ground of a wicked man's trouble is not because he has not enough of the creature, but because he cannot find enough *in* the creature. Some are *satisfied* under the hand of God, because they are not *sensible of* the hand of God. They never *fret*, because they never *feel*.

Believers should be like sheep, which change their pastures at the will of the shepherd; or like vessels in a house, which stand to be filled or emptied, at

the pleasure of the owner. He that sails upon the sea of this world, on his own bottom, will sink at last into a bottomless ocean. Never were any their own carvers, but they were sure to cut their own fingers.

A covetous man is fretful, because he has not so much as he desires,—but a gracious man is thankful, because he has more than he deserves. It is true, I have not the *sauce*, but then I merit not the *meat*. I have not the *lace*, but then I deserve not the *coat*. I want that which may support my dignity, but I have that which supplies my necessity.

There is no gathering a rose without a thorn, till we come to Immanuel's land. If there was nothing but showers, we should conclude the world would be drowned; if nothing but sunshine, we should fear the earth would be burned.

Our worldly comforts would be a sea to drown us, if our crosses were not a plank to save us.

C O N T E N T M E N T .

A contented heart is an even sea in the midst of all storms. It is like a tree in autumn, which secures its life when it has lost its leaves. Contentment is the best food to preserve a sound man, and the best medicine to restore a sick man. He is not a poor man that hath but little, but he is a poor man that wants much. In this sense, the poorest are often the richest, and the richest the poorest. Though every godly man may not always be contented, yet every truly contented man is godly.

As Seneca said to Polybius;—"Never complain of thy hard fortune, so long as Cæsar is thy friend," so say I to thee.

“Never complain of thy hard fortune, Christian, so long as Jesus is thy friend. Let your condition be never so flourishing, it is a hell without him; let it be never so fluctuating, it is a heaven with him. Can that man want any thing who enjoys Christ? or can he be said to enjoy any thing who is without Christ? Why should Hagar lament the loss of the water in her bottle, while there is a well so near?”

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

“Censorious men commonly take up magnifying glasses to look at other people’s imperfections, and diminishing glasses to look at their own enormities.”
“They are fittest to find fault, in whom there is no fault to be found. There is no removing blots from the paper, by laying upon them a blurred finger.
“Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam

out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Reader, what do you get by throwing stones at your enemies' windows, while your own children look out at the casements? He that blows into a heap of dust, is in danger of putting out his own eyes.

Reader, are there not the same lusts lodging in your heart, that are reigning in other men's lives? The reason why there is so little self-condemnation, is because there is so little self-examination. For want of this, many persons are like travellers, skilled in other countries, but ignorant of their own. As it is an evidence, that those tradesmen are embarrassed in their estates, who are afraid to look into their books, so it is plain that there is something wrong within, among all those who are afraid to look within. The trial of ourselves,

is the ready road to the knowledge of ourselves. He that buys a jewel in a case, deserves to be cozened with a Bristol stone."

Reader, why will you search another man's wound, while your own is bleeding? Take heed that your own vesture be not full of dust, when you are brushing your neighbours. Complain not of dirty streets, when heaps lie at your own doors. Many people are no longer well, than while they are holding their fingers, upon another person's sores; such are no better in their conduct, than crows which prey only upon carrion. "But let every man prove his own work and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." For want of self-examination, men have their accounts to *cast up*, when they should have them to *deliver up*. They have their evidences of grace to *seek*, when

they should have them to *show*. They lie down, with such hopes, in their beds of rest, with which they dare not lie down in their beds of dust. If you must needs be a judge, then pray sit upon your own bench. I shall ever esteem such to be but religious lepers, who care not for Scripture looking glasses. Self-examination is the beaten path to perfection; it is like fire, which not only *tries* the gold, but *purifies* it also. The sight of *yourself* in *grace*, will bring you to the sight of *God* in *glory*. The plague of the body is not every man's plague, but the plague of the soul is.

YOUTHFUL PIETY.

In the distillation of strong waters, the first drawn is fullest of spirits. "The first, of the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord

thy God." God prizes a Christian in the bud, and delights in the blossoms of youth, above the sheddings of old age. Naturalists inform us that the most orient pearls are generated of the morning dew.

To discover grace in an old sinner is well, but to view it in vigorous youth, is better. All the beasts of sacrifice were offered to God in their prime. Jesus was carried in triumph upon a colt, the foal of an ass. When the snow drops of youth appear in the garden of the church, it evinces that there is a glorious summer approaching.

If youth be *sick* of the *will-nots*, old age is in danger of *dying* of the *shall-nots*. It is hard to cast off the devil's yoke, when we have worn it long upon our necks. "Can a man be born again when he is old?" Grace seldom grafts

upon such withered stocks. An old sinner is nearer to the second death, than he is to the second birth. If God's to-day be too soon for thy repentance, thy to-morrow may be too late for his acceptance. Mercy's clock does not always strike at our back.

PERSEVERANCE.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending; the first and the last. He that is the first and the last, should be served, from the first to the last. For what is *setting* out, without *holding* out. Mutability is, at best, but the badge of infirmity. God hath a crown for the runner, but a curse for the runaway. God accounts not himself served at all, if he be not always served.

The devil would soon put out our candles, if Christ did not carry them in his

lantern. "Be not weary in well doing, for in due time, we shall reap, if we faint not." To see a ship sink in the harbour of profession, is more grievous, than if it had perished in the open sea of profaneness.

Some have beat Jehu's march; they have driven furiously in religion, but within a few years they have knocked off their chariot wheels. After they have lifted up their hands to God, they have lifted up their heels against him. That man's beginning was in hypocrisy, whose ending is in apostasy. Reader, you look for happiness, so long as God hath a being in heaven; and God looks for holiness so long as you have a being on earth. He that *draws back* from his *profession* in earth, shall be *kept back* from his *possession* in heaven.

When once that fire which is laid on

God's altar is kindled, it shall no more be quenched. Grace may be shaken *in* the soul, but it cannot be shaken *out* of the soul. It may be a *bruised* reed, but it shall never be a *broken* reed.

Jesus Christ is never a father to abortive children. Where he gives strength to conceive, he gives strength to bring forth. He turns the bruised reed into a brazen pillar, and the smoking flax into a prevailing flame.

The enemies of the church may toss her as waves; but they shall not split her as rocks. She may be dipped in water as a feather; but shall not sink therein as lead. He that is a well of water within her, to keep her from fainting, will, also, prove a wall of fire about her, to preserve her from falling. *Tried* she may be, but *destroyed* she cannot be. Her foundation is the rock of

ages, and her defence the everlasting arms.

It is dangerous to smite those with our tongues, whom God has smitten with his hand. His right to correct is not ours.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT
POSSESSION AND FUTURE
EXPECTATION.

Some say that a bird in the hand, is worth two in the bush; but surely such a bird in the bush, is worth two in the hand. If others dote upon the streams, let us admire the fountain.

When the Gauls had tasted the wine of Italy, they asked where the grapes grew; and would not be satisfied till they came there. Thus may you cry, "Ah that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest."

A believer is willing to *lose* the *world*, for the *enjoyment* of *grace*; and he is willing to *leave* the world for the *fruition* of glory.

That which makes hell so full of horror, is that it is below all hopes; that which makes heaven so full of splendour, is that it is above all fears. The one is a night without the return of day, the other is a day free from the approach of night.

If there be so much delight in *believing*, ah, how much more is there in *beholding*! What is wooing day to the wedding day! What is the sealing of the conveyance, to the enjoyment of the inheritance, or the foretastes of glory to the fulfilment of glory! The good things of that life, are so great as not to be measured; so many as not to be enumerated; and so precious as not to be

estimated. If the picture of holiness be so comely in its *rough draft*, how lovely a piece will it be in all its *perfections*. Every grace, which is here seen in its minority, shall be seen there in its maturity.

GOD'S COGNIZANCE OF MEN.

A man may hide God from himself, and yet he cannot hide himself from God. When a man wishes God to be like himself, it argues that he is vicious; but when he desires to be like God, it indicates that he is virtuous.

We cannot always see God's will in his works, but he can always discover our works in our will. To him, the most hidden roots are as visible as the uppermost branches. Though the place where we sin, be to men as dark as Egypt, yet to God it is as light as Goshen.

The Lord sees faults, where men see none. Atoms which are invisible in the candle light of reason, are all made to dance naked, in the sunshine of omniscience. Cato was so grave and so good a man, that none would behave unseemly in his presence; whence it grew to be a proverbial caveat;—"Take heed what you do, for Cato sees you." How reproachful is it to us, that the eyes of a man should have more effect upon our manners, than the penetrating eyes of God.

God hath a glazed window in the darkest houses of clay; *He* sees what is done in them when none other can. To God's omnipotence there is nothing impossible; and to God's omniscience there is nothing invisible.

Because sin hath put out our eyes, we vainly imagine that it hath put out

God's. Because we behold not what he does in heaven for us, we think that he sees not, what we do on earth against him.

Thus the rich man dealt with his steward; "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." Man's enjoyment of outward blessings, is not a lordship, but a stewardship. God communicates those good things of life to men, not that they should lay them up for their own vanity, but that they should lay them out for his glory.

This is the day of *God's* long sufferings; but the judgment day, will be the day of the *sinner's* long-suffering. Here the cords of patience do, as it were, tie the hands of vengeance; but our Samson may at last be roused, and break all these cords, and then woe be to all the

Philistines. Sinners may have sparing patience exercised toward them, and yet not have converting grace revealed in them.

In the awful storm of death, if our vessel be wrecked there will be no plank to swim to shore upon. All they who refuse and reject Christ as a *refining* fire, must be obliged to meet and feel him as a *consuming* fire. How can they endure the *wrath* of the Lamb, who have uniformly disregarded the *death* of the Lamb? If the night of death find them *graceless*, the day of judgment will find them *speechless*.

By the words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Though the arrows of idle words may be shot out of sight for a season, yet they will certainly hereafter fall down upon the heads of those who

discharged them. "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing." Than a good tongue there is nothing better; than an evil tongue there is nothing worse. Jesus Christ will in the great day, pass sentence upon every sentence that has passed. There is in the same rose honey for the bee, and poison for the spider.

The same person who shall say "Come ye blessed," will also say, "Go ye cursed." As blessing and cursing proceed out of the mouth of the same man, so they will out of the mouth of Christ. Man's is a curse of wicked execration, Christ's is a curse of righteous execution. As the same wind may send one vessel into the haven, and sink another in the ocean, so shall the same voice of Christ doom the sinner to eternal death, and welcome the saint to eternal life. That gate which is opened for a citizen

to go abroad for recreation, may also be opened for a malefactor to go out to execution.

On the stage of eternity the rich man's bags will be emptied to see how the poor man's box has been filled. Then the charge of the pilgrim's journey will be examined in the steward's accounts. There will not be a sinner in heaven to interrupt the joys of saints, nor a saint in hell to soften or soothe the anguish of sinners. Those who have the ear-mark of election, and those who have the hand-mark of transgression shall be put into separate folds. The black hand must then part with its white glove. That solemn day will be too critical for the hypocritical. All those who now colour for show, will then be shown in their own colours.

HEART-SERVICE.

The God of heaven and earth sues *from heaven to earth*. He who is all in all, to us, calls for that which is all in all, in us. We may commit our estates into the hands of men, but we must not commit our hearts into the hands of any but God. There are none of our spirits so good but he deserves them, or so bad but he can refine them.

Ah, how unwilling is man to give, what he has no right to keep! As God prefers the heart to every thing, such is the wickedness of man that he will give God any thing but the heart. He that regards the heart without any thing, he also will not regard any thing without the heart.

Vain thoughts defile the heart as well as *vile* thoughts. Snails leave their

slime behind them as well as serpents. If the leprosy take hold of a single thread, it will soon spread over the whole piece. Though sinful thoughts will *rise*, yet they should not *reign*. Though these birds may hover over the Christian's heart, yet he cannot wish them to build their nests in it.

A heart that is sanctified, is better than a tongue that is silvered. He that gives only the skin of worship to God, receives only the shell of comfort from God. If God's mercies do not eat out the heart of our sins, our sins will soon eat out the heart of our duties. A work that is heartless, is a work that is fruitless. God cares not for the crazy cabinet, but for the precious jewel.

It is said of Hannibal, the great Carthaginian commander, that he was the first that went into the field of battle,

and the last who came out of it. Thus should it be in all the operations of a Christian; the heart should be the first that comes into the house of God, and the last that goes out of it.

It is observed of the spider, that in the morning before she seeks her prey, she mends her broken web, and in doing this, she always begins in the middle. And shall those who call themselves Christians, rise and pursue the callings and profits of the world, and yet be unconcerned about the broken webs of their lives, and especially of their hearts.

Those who would have the rocks run with wholesome water, should look well to the springs that supply them. The heart is the presence chamber, where the King of glory takes up his residence. That which is the most worthy in us,

should be resigned to him who is most worthy of us.

It is said of the Lacedæmonians, who were a poor and homely people, that they offered lean sacrifices to their gods, and that the Athenians, who were a wise and wealthy people, offered fat and costly sacrifices, and yet in their wars, the former had always the mastery of the latter. Whereupon they went to the oracle, to know the reason, why those should speed worst, who gave most. The oracle returned this answer to them;—"That the Lacedæmonians were a people who gave their hearts to their gods; but that the Athenians only gave their gifts to their gods. Thus a heart without a gift, is better than a gift without a heart."

THE FRUIT OF SIN.

Satan's apples may have a fair skin, yet they certainly have a bitter core.

Sinner, that which is now like a rose flourishing in your bosom, will in a very little time be like a poisoned dagger at your breast. Poor soul, beware of those embraces which are but signals of destruction. While such a Judas kisses, he kills. While the ivy twines round the oak it eats out its sap.

A saint cannot sin so as to destroy his grace, but he may so sin as to disturb his peace. The spider cannot destroy the bee-hive, but it may get in and spoil the honey.

The pleasures of sin are but for a season, but the torments of unpardoned sin, are of an eternal duration. Our first

parents soon ate of the forbidden fruit, but the world to this day feels that it is not freed from the miserable consequence of that sudden banquet.

Death will turn all the waters of pleasure into blood. The serpent of sensual delight always carries a deadly sting in his tail.

There are many who vainly suppose that the fountain of their sin is quite dried up, when alas, the streams are only turned into another channel. A hand taken off from sinful practices, without a heart taken off from sinful principles, is only like a field, which having, for a time, lain fallow, afterwards springs up with greater increase. Or it is like a stream which having been damned for a while, at last runs with greater violence, when the sluices are opened.

CREATURE VANITY.

He that knocks at the creature's door for supplies, will find an empty house kept there. "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full." Though all the rising streams of worldly profit may run into the hearts of men, yet they cannot fill up the hearts of men. Were it possible for the eye to see all that is to be seen, yet it would not be satisfied with seeing. If there be not enough in the world to satisfy the *senses* of men, how should there be enough in it to satisfy the *souls* of men. "Those who now rejoice in the world will, before it be long have no world wherein to rejoice." Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted; it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction.

Hearts-ease is a flower that grows not in the world's garden. The faster you

grasp the world in your hands the sooner it slides between your fingers.

Every thing below is too base for the soul's nobility, and too brittle for the soul's stability. Who would set that vessel under the droppings of a cistern, which is able to contain all the waters of the ocean!

The world is too frequently got with anxious cares, kept with alarming fears, and lost with rending groans. We see the outside of the great estate, but not the inside of it. We behold the field of corn, but not the tares that are mixed with it. We do not always see the worldling's cloud and dark nights, but his clear day and sunshine. The riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, are like spreading but poisonous trees, and the devil shows us the fair leaves, and offers us the pleasant fruits,

but conceals from us their deadly nature.

By how much higher the morning larks are in their flight, by so much the sweeter are their notes. The higher a Christian is raised above the things of the earth, the more he is ravished with the joys of heaven. The least portion of grace is preferable to a mountain of gold. One ray of mercy is better than a sun of pleasure. One whisper of love from Christ's voice, is worth more than all the symphony of nature. Give me that friend who lives for ever, and that wealth which lasts for ever. May I make choice of those blessings which come freely, satisfy fully, and continue eternally.

The world is big in our hopes, but little in our hands. It is like Sodom's apples, beautiful to the eye at a distance,

but when they are touched, they crumble into ashes. Pleasures are but a shield of melting wax against a sword of power; they can no more keep an evil conscience from tormenting, than a velvet sleeve can keep a broken arm from aching.

GOOD WORKS.

Good works may be our Jacob's staff to walk with on earth, yet they cannot be our Jacob's ladder to climb to heaven with. To lay the salve of our services upon the wound of our sins, is as if a man who is stung by a wasp, should wipe his face with a nettle, or as if a person should busy himself in supporting a tottering fabric with a burning fire band. In proof of sanctification, good works cannot be sufficiently magnified; but in point of justification, good works cannot be sufficiently nullified.

The lamp of duty can only shine clearly as it is trimmed with the oil of mercy.

It was not the tempered clay that cured the blind man, but Christ's anointing his eyes therewith. That was more likely without him to make a seeing man blind, than a blind man see. Thus though we may receive our spiritual sight in the ordinances, yet it is not the ordinances which give the sight. "It was not the troubling of the pool in Bethesda that made it healing, but the coming down of the angel into it. That man must famish at last, who always feeds upon the dish instead of the meat."

"Blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life." To look upon a promise without a precept, is the high road to presumption; to look upon a precept without a promise, is the high

road to desperation. One is like the cork in the net to preserve it from sinking, and the other is like lead in the net to keep it from floating.

“Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself.” Empty and yet fruitful; fruitful and yet empty. Thus that fertility which springs up, from the bitter roots of self, has nothing but vanity in the sight of God.

That tradesman is poor and needy, who must have ready money for all he sells. In all the good a carnal man doth for God, he seeks himself more than God. The clock of his heart will stand still, unless its wheels of profit be oiled.

Worldlings instead of looking upon godliness as their greatest gain, will look upon gain, as their greatest godliness. They love religion, not for the beauty

existing in it, but for the dowry annexed to it. They are like the fox, who follows the lion, for the prey that is falling from him. If there be no honey in the pot, such wasps will hover no longer about it.

The less emphasis *you* lay upon your own works, the more will *God* lay upon them. Those who are most righteous in themselves, are least righteous to God. God has three sorts of servants in the world; some are slaves and serve him from a principle of fear; others are hirelings, and serve him for the sake of wages; and the last are sons, and serve him under the influence of love. Now a hireling will be a changeling. He that will not serve God, except something be given him, would serve the devil, if he would give him more. Any one shall have his works, if he will but augment his wages.

“Doth Job, serve God for naught?”
Yes, for Job served God when he had naught. He was as religious in his poverty, as in his plenty. In this sense, that man, who will not serve God for nothing, he is nothing in his services.

Whenever Christ takes the burden of guilt from a sinner's shoulders, he then lays a yoke of obedience upon his neck. That soul was never *related* to Christ, who was never *devoted* to Christ.

God works with, and without means; with, that man should not be indolent, and without, that he should not be self-confident. Jacob makes his prayers to an heavenly Father, and yet presents his gifts to an angry brother. David went out against Goliah in the name of the God of Israel, and yet repaired to the brook for his smooth stones. The sword of Joshua must go with the

prayers of Moses, and the prayers of Moses accompany the sword of Joshua. Had they fought and not prayed, they would have obtained no victory, because God will not be neglected; had they prayed and not fought, they would have obtained no victory, because he will not be tempted.

Wheresoever the death of Christ clears a soul from guilt, the spirit of Christ cleanses that soul from filth. A man may be justified without immediate glorification, but not without concomitant sanctification. The law by which God rules us is as dear to him as the gospel by which he saves us. Many would use faith as an eye to see with, but not as a foot to walk with. They look for a crown of victory, but are unwilling to fight the good fight of faith. That faith which sets men to oppose their internal enemies, sets God also

to oppose their external adversaries. Prayer is the midwife of the promises. The promises are wells of comfort to the church, and believing prayer is the vessel to draw the water out of the wells.

SIN WHEN HATEFUL NOT
HURTFUL.

In playing over a tune on an instrument, a single string may jar and slip, and yet the main be musical. It would be folly indeed to think our fields had no corn in them, because there is chaff about the wheat, or that the ore had no gold in it, because there is dross among it. In heaven there is service alone, without any sin; in hell there is sin alone without service; but on earth there is sin and service in the same man as there is light and shade in the same picture. Christian reader to condemn your evil is good, but to condemn your

good, is evil. . Here believers are like the Israelites, who in their darkest night had a pillar of fire, and in their clearest day a pillar of a cloud. Above us there is light without any darkness; below us there is darkness without any light, but in this world it is neither day nor night; but in the evening time it shall be light. "Though the lowest believer be above the power of sin; yet the highest believer is not above the presence of sin." It is in a living Christian that lust is to be mortified, but it is only in a dying Christian that it is to be destroyed.

Sin never *ruins* but where it *reigns*. It is not *destroying* where it is *disturbing*. The more evil it receives from us, the less evil it does to us. It is only a murderer where it is a governor. The rose is a fragrant flower, though it be surrounded with piercing thorns. The

passover was a feast, though the Israelites ate it with bitter herbs.

There is always too much of the wild olive, in those who are ingrafted into the true olive. Our graces are our best jewels, but they do not yield their brightest lustre in this world. The moon when she shines brightest has her spots; and the fire when it burns the brightest, hath its smoke.

Sin is an enemy at the Christian's back, but not a friend in his bosom. Although believers should be mournful because they have infirmities, yet they should be thankful because they are but infirmities. It is true they have sin *in* them, and that should make them sorrowful; but it is true that they have a Saviour *for* them, and that should make them joyful. It is not the interposition of a

cloud, but the departure of a sun which constitutes a night.

The Saviour looks over that which is his own, and overlooks that, which is his people's. Where there is no sin allowed *by* them, there shall be grains of allowance *to* them. He will not throw away his pearls, for every speck of dirt which may be on them.

The conduct of a Christian may sometimes be spotted with infirmity, when the heart is sound in the love of sanctity. Jacob halted, and yet was blessed. As his blessing did not take away his halting, so his halting did not keep away his blessing.

WATCHFULNESS.

As faith is a grace which feeds all the rest, so fear is a grace which guards all

the rest. That man who is the most watchful, is the least sinful. He may quickly be cast down by a sinful temptation, who is already prepared for it by a sinful occasion. Who will pity that man whose house is blown up with powder, if he keep the barrels in a chimney corner.

The fowler spreads his net, but the wings of the bird carry her into it. Do you murmur for want of liberty, yet surrender yourself to slavery? If you would not gather the forbidden fruit, then beware how you look in the tree, where it grows.

To pray against temptations, and yet to rush into occasions, is to thrust your fingers into the fire, and then pray that they might not be burnt. The fable saith that the butterfly enquired of the owl how she should do with the candle

which had singed her wings. The owl counselled her not so much as to behold its smoke. If you hold the stirrup, no wonder if Satan get into the saddle.

A careless eye is an index to a graceless heart. Remember the whole world died by a wound in the eye. The eyes of a Christian should be like sunflowers which are opened to no blaze but that of the sun.

To keep the eyes, and not regard the ears, is, as if a man should shut the casements of his house, and leave the doors open to the thief. The ear is an instrument that the devil loves to play upon. As your ears are joined to your head on earth, so they should be fastened to your head in heaven.

A soul without its watch, is like a city without its wall, exposed to the in-

road of all its enemies. Those who would not fall into the river, should beware how they approach too near its banks. He who would not drink of the wine of wrath, let him not touch the cup of pleasure. A person who carries gunpowder about him, can never stand too far from the fire. If we accompany sin one mile, it will compel us to go twain. You will quickly lose your standing, if you are fearless of falling. He that abstains from no lawful thing, may soon be brought to commit something that is sinful. Many a man has been thrown out of the saddle of profession by riding with too slack a rein of circumspection. If Achan handle the golden wedge, his next work will be to steal it. If Ruth lie at the feet of Boaz her next remove may be into his bed. If you take the devil's cup into your hand, it is to be feared that you will quickly lift it to your head.

The devil may *flatter* us, but he cannot *force* us; he may *tempt* us to sin, but he cannot *compel* us to sin. He could never come off a conqueror, were he not joined by our forces. The *fire* is his but the *tinder* is ours. He could never enter our houses if we did not set open our doors.

The body hath two eyes, but the soul must have but one, and that so firmly fixed upon Christ, as never once to glance beside him. A single eye is fittest for a single object.

THE RIGHT USE OF MERCIES.

All that a believer receives is from the hand of divine bounty, and employed to the end of the divine glory. Others make an earthly use of heavenly things, but he makes a heavenly use of earthly things. God can put a golden bias, into

a leaden bowl that it may run true to him who made it. The more he oils our wheels on earth the swifter our chariots move to heaven.

Whatever mill a saint has going in the world, he will spread the sails of it for the wind of divine approbation that it may move round for God's glory. When God sets him above the world, then he holds up God to the world. It is unequal to be hot in our prayers and cold in our praises. Many will cry aloud, "Give us this day our daily bread," and whisper out, "Hallowed be thy name." This is like opening our windows to admit the light, and then shutting them closely to keep out the sun.

Take a wicked man, and you will not find him led to God by that which comes from God. The more a dung-hill has the

sunbeams upon it, the more noisome is the effluvia arising from it.

God tries the vessel with water, that he may fill it with generous wine. Every stream leads an observant believer to the fountain head. The more God's hand is enlarged in blessing him, the more his heart is enlivened in blessing God. Where the sun of mercy shines hottest, there the fruits of grace grow fastest. In the book of nature we may read the God of nature. The creature is like a tuned instrument, and the Christian's hand can strike it to the Redeemer's praise. Man was formed the last of the creation, that he might contemplate upon God through every creature.

THE DESIGN OF AFFLICTION.

That is a choice artist who can play well upon a broken instrument. To be impatient with our affliction, and patient with our corruption, is to be angry with the medicine which heals us, and in love with the poison that kills us. Too many think that God is cutting down the tree, when he is only lopping off the luxuriant branches. They imagine that he is demolishing the superstructure, when he is only laying a right foundation.

It is in mercy to us that God removes outward blessings from us. He is not nipping the flowers, but plucking up the weeds; he is not laying your land fallow, but ploughing the field; he is not putting out the light, but snuffing the candle. Providence hath a beautiful face under a black mask. God has the fairest ends in the foulest ways. The

sheep may be dipped in the water to wash it, when there is no design in the good shepherd to drown it. God doth but take that out of your hands, which would thrust him out of your heart.

He that mingles his passions with his afflictions is like a foolish patient, who chews the pills he should swallow whole. He that carnally disturbs his soul for the loss of his substance, casts away the kernel because God has taken the shell. If the tree yield us good fruit, it will be no very great loss, though the wind blow away the leaves. To bless God for mercies is the way to increase them. To bless God for miseries is the way to remove them. No good lives so long as that which is thankfully improved; no evil dies so soon as that which is patiently sustained.

When Christians have their candles put out, they may fetch their light from the sun; and when they have their streams cut off, they may drink at the spring-head. The birds of paradise make the swiftest flights, when they have the smallest feathers. These nightingales warble the most sweetly when they set their breasts against the thorns. The creature often interrupts the respect which we owe to our Creator; and then no wonder if he break the cistern to bring us unto the fountain. Those who are found blessing God *under* all their losses, will find God blessing them *after* all their losses.

NO ARGUING A MAN'S SPIRITUAL STATE FROM HIS TEMPORAL EXPERIENCE.

No man can know love or hatred by any thing that is before him. You cannot read the wrath of God in the black lines of adversity, or the love of God in the white lines of prosperity.

Riches have made many good men worse, but they never made any bad man better. Thus if we discern but a spark of grace in a nobleman, we cry it up as a blazing comet, and speak of it in the superlative degree.

Though a Christian be made happy *in* the world, he is not made happy *by* the world. Give me those judgments which give birth to mercy, rather than those outward mercies which give birth to judgments.

God's jewels may here be trodden under foot, but hereafter they will be fixed in the royal diadem. Those stones which are designed for the building are frequently wounded by the chisel, while those which are neglected lie in ruinous heaps. A saint is glorious in his misery, but a sinner is miserable amidst all his glory. We must not, therefore, think evil of religion, though we should behold a Joseph in the prison, while a Pharaoh is in a palace; or a Job on the ground, while a Julian is on a throne. The most curious pearls are often inclosed in the most rugged shells.

Luther's expression was not the less true, because it was homely. "The whole Turkish empire was but a crust which God threw to the dogs." One said, "I would rather have Paul's coat, with his heavenly graces, than the purple robe of princes with all their kingdoms.

Lest riches should be accounted evil in themselves, God sometimes gives them to the righteous, and lest they should be considered as the chief good he frequently bestows them on the wicked. But they are more generally the portion of his enemies than his friends.

God and all that he has made, is not more than God without any thing that he has made. He can never want treasure who has such a golden mine. He is enough without the creature; but the creature is not any thing without him. It is therefore better to enjoy him without any thing else, than to enjoy every thing else without him. It is better to be a wooden vessel filled with wine, than a golden one filled with water.

The last wine that Christ draws, is the best wine that Christians drink. When the waters cover the earth, whither

should dove-like spirits fly, but to the ark of Christ? He who left heaven to make them righteous, will come from heaven to make them glorious.

Christian you must never look for an end to your sorrows till you see an end to your sins. As the former came not a day before the latter, so they stay not a day behind them. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." Well may you bear the rod, when infinite love makes it up and lays it on. When you lie under his afflicting hand, you then lie near his affected heart. Rake a dung-hill, and its effluvia will be offensive, but heat perfume, and its scent will be grateful.

P R A Y E R.

Our daily bread calls for our daily prayers, because one want is created, while another is supplied. Are we called *by* the name of Christ, and shall we not call *upon* the name of Christ? Take away spiritual breath, and you take away spiritual life. There never was one *new-born* who was *still-born*.

Who would not stretch out a beggar's hand to receive a jewel of infinite value? With what boldness should those appear at court who are sure of the king's ear.

Believing prayer is a traffic for those commodities, which are only locked up in heaven's store-house. Why should we be dumb, seeing God is not deaf? By fasting the body learns to obey the soul; by praying the soul learns to command the body.

No Christian has so little from Christ, but there is ground for praise; and no Christian has so much, but he has need of prayer. Every day we find it is a great work to accomplish a little work. Every new act of obedience requires fresh assistance.

The *gift* of prayer may have praise from men, but it is the *grace* of prayer which has power with God. Christians can never want a praying time if they possess a praying frame. In the morning this is a golden key to open the heart for God's service, and in the evening it is an iron lock to guard the heart against sin.

The covenant of grace without us, turns precepts into promises, but the spirit of grace within us, turns promises into prayers.

L O V E .

There is no sin so sweet, but the love of Christ restrains men from it. There is no service so great, but the love of Christ constrains men to it. If once this affection takes fire, the room becomes too hot for any sin to stay in. The Christian's love advances by equal paces with the Christian's faith, as the heat of the day with the shining of the sun; faith, like Mary sits at the feet of Christ to hear his sermons; and love, like Martha, compasses him about with services. Faith is the great receiver, and love is the great disburser.

It should be among Christians, as among lute strings, when one is touched the others tremble. Believers should neither be proud flesh, nor dead flesh. Fellow members, should ever have fellow-feelings. Other men's woes are

our warnings; their desolation should be our information.

He makes a good market of bad commodities, who, with kindnesses overcomes injuries. For a man to conquer another's person, and be captivated by his own passions is but to lose the palace of a prince, to gain the cottage of a peasant. A spark of fire falling in the ocean, expires immediately, but dropping upon combustibles burns furiously. God has bound every believer in gospel cords to his good behaviour.

Love trades not for home returns; it amply pays itself in serving its beloved. It is reported of one, who being asked for whom he laboured most, he answered, "For my Friends." And being asked, for whom he laboured least, he answered, "For my Friends." Love doth most, and yet thinks least of what it does.

Were it possible to put those things asunder which God himself hath joined together, a Christian would rather be holy without any happiness, than happy without any holiness. Luther had this expression;—"I had rather be in hell with Christ, than in heaven without Christ." Indeed hell itself would be a heaven if God were in it, and heaven would be a hell, if God were from it. These are hard sayings to an uncircumcised ear, but the real choice of every renewed heart. A gracious man makes this request for his soul. "Lord let me rather have a gracious heart than a great estate, let me rather be pious without prosperity, than prosperous without piety." Though he may love many things beside religion, yet he would not love any thing above religion. The earth is our work-house, but heaven is our storehouse. This is a place to *run* in, and that is a place to *rest* in.

MISCELLANEOUS.

If we were left to ourselves but for a moment, we should destroy ourselves in that moment. We are like glasses without a bottom, which are no sooner loosed than they fall. "Without me ye can do nothing." The pen may as soon write without the hand which holds it, as our hearts work except the Spirit move them. Not only the enjoyment of our talents is from God, but the improvement of them is from him. "Lord thy pound hath gained ten pounds." It is not my pains but thy pound, which hath done it. The children of God are like a clock which soon stands still if it be not wound up.

Waters may rise as high as they fall. Whatsoever action hath God for its author, hath God for its centre. A circular line makes its ending where it had its beginning.

Whatsoever ointment is poured out upon Christ's head, will run down to the skirt of his garment. What a saint gives to Christ in copper, shall be returned to him in silver. The only way to keep our crowns on our heads is to cast them down at his feet.

He that freely opens the upper, will never wholly close the nether springs. There will be no silver lacking in Benjamin's sack, while Joseph has it to throw in. Grace is not such a beggarly visitant as will not pay its own way. When the best of Beings is adored, the best of blessings are enjoyed. "For the Lord is a sun and shield, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Why needs a saint fear darkness when he has such a sun to guide him? or dread danger, when he has such a shield to guard him? Though every rich man be not truly

godly, yet every godly man is truly rich.

The sun can as easily diffuse its beams over the whole world, as upon a single field. What God receives from men, makes him no richer, and what man receives from God makes him none the poorer. His goodness may be imparted, but cannot be impaired.

Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Who knows, how many rich productions there are in the pleasure garden of religion. There is mellow fruit in it for every day in the year.

In earthly services the master enjoys the profit, but in religious services the servant enjoys it. "And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed

Edom the Gittite, three months, and the Lord blessed Obed Edom, and all his household." The ark was not blessed for the sake of his household, but his household was blessed for the sake of the ark. The ark of God always pays for its entertainment wheresoever it dwells.

The nearer the relation, the stronger are the ties of obligation. In this view, believers on earth are superior to angels in heaven, God has made you studs for his crown while others are stools for his feet. A drop of praise is an unsuitable acknowledgment for an ocean of mercy.

There are no still-born children in the family of grace. God is the living Father, and therefore all his children live by him; he is also the everlasting Father, and therefore he will have due honor paid him.

Alexander, who is reported to be an exceeding swift runner, was once solicited to run in the Olympic games. He answered, "I will, if *Kings* are mine antagonists." Give me such a saint, who will pursue nothing on earth, which may be unsuitable to his birth from heaven.

There are many who profess to know God, but in works deny him; "being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate." Man is not what he says, but what he does. For a man to say what he does, and not to do what he says, is to resemble those trees, which are full of leaves but void of fruit, or those barns, wherein there is much chaff, but no grain. "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" As if he had said, "Either keep my words

more, or else call me Lord no more; either take me into your lives or cast me out of your lips." As princes disdain to have their images on base counterfeits, so the Lord Jesus cannot delight to see his name on rotten hypocrites. Therefore he saith, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity." If godliness be evil, why is it so much *professed*? if it be good, why is it so little practised?

As the sun is the glory of creation, so is Christ the glory of redemption. The summit of moral religion consists in imitating God. Without this your religion will be found a "*Tekel*;" when it is weighed in the balance, it will be wanting. It would be well, if there were, as great a similarity between the life of Christ and the lives of Christians, as there is between a just copy and the original. What he was by nature, that

we should be by grace. As face answereth to face in water, so should life answer to life in Scripture. He that was a way to others, never went out of the way himself.

Men are merciless in their censure of Christians; they have no sympathy for their infirmity; while God weighs them in more equal scales, and says, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." While the saint is a dove in the eyes of God, he is only a raven in the estimation of sinners.

Consider Christian that an unholy conversation, strips off the rich ornamental jewels, from the neck of the bride, the Lamb's wife. Sin indulged, in a believer, is like a rent in a rich embroidered garment, or like a crack in a silver bell. A foul spot is soonest discerned in the fairest cloth. The world

will sooner make an excuse for its own enormities, than for your infirmities. The malice of sinners is such, that they will reproach the rectitude of the law, for the obliquity of their lives, who swerve from it. Ah, that your pure life, did but hang a padlock upon their impure lips.

Reader, you must not look to toil for the prince of darkness all the long day of your life, and then sup with the prince of light at the evening of death. There is no going from Delilah's lap to Abraham's bosom. There is no gaining admittance into the King of heaven's privy chamber of felicity, without passing through the straight gate of purity. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." A dusty glass will not distinctly represent the face.

Holiness and happiness are so wisely

joined together, that God will never suffer them to be put asunder. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Though holiness be that which a sinner scorns, yet it is that which a Saviour crowns.

If you be not fruit-bearing plants, you must be burning brands. There is no making out your salvation, where there is no working out your salvation. Men are condemned not only for their profaneness, but also for their slothfulness. Men may perish for being unprofitable servants as well as for being abominable sinners.

The Lord hangs the bait of duty upon the hook of mercy. He sits the promises of the gospel in the galleries of his ordinances. The hardy soldier will undergo a bloody seed time, to enjoy a happy

harvest. He has nothing more than earthly mammon in his pursuit; but the saint has nothing less than heavenly mansions in his pursuit.

Divine knowledge is not as the light of the moon to sleep by; but as the light of the sun to work by. It is not a loiterer in the market-place, but a labourer in the vineyard.

A man may be a great scholar, and yet a great sinner. Judas the traitor, was Judas the preacher. The toad that has a pearl in its head, has poison in its bowels. The tree of knowledge has often been planted and flourished, where the tree of life never grew. A man may be acquainted with the grace of truth, and yet not know the truth of grace. Parts, and even all gifts, without grace and holiness are but like Uriah's letters,

which were the death-warrants of him, who carried them.

Naked knowledge will be as unserviceable to the soul in a dying day, as a painted fire would be to the frozen body in a cold day. As some articles are tanned by the same sun, in which others are whitened, so are some professors, hardened under the same gospel by which others are softened.

As it is lost labour to smite the flint if it propagate no sparks, so it is fruitless toil to furnish our heads with light if it refine not our hearts. The sins of ignorance are most numerous, but the sins of knowledge are most dangerous.

There are many who set a crown of glory upon the head of Christ, by a good profession, and yet plat a crown of thorns upon his head by an evil conversation.

By the words of our mouth, we may affect to adore religion, but it is by the works of our lives that we adorn religion.

There are some who would sacrifice a stout heart to a stubborn will, and would rather die martyrs for sin than servants to truth. How shall those stand *for* Christ, who never stood *in* Christ. True believers are more studious how to *adorn* the cross, than how to *avoid* the cross. They deem it better to be saved in troubled water, than to be drowned in a calm ocean.

God can strike straight strokes with crooked sticks and make Satan's dross, burnish his choice vessels. "If Dives be tormented because he refuse to impart his own, what shall their torment be, who avidiously take that which is another. If those fingers be cut off

which so closely clasp their own property, what will become of those hands, which are always open to grasp at other men's.

Christ is not only the vessel in which the waters of life are contained, but he is also the pipes through which they are conveyed.

A self seeker, lives unrespected and dies unlamented. When once a man becomes a *god to himself*, he then becomes a *dev'l to others*. Such an one cares not who sinks, so he does but arrive safe at the shore.

Every Christian is a light *in* the world, though he be not the light *of* the world. "Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." Ah, that Christians were more like the

light, which abides pure, though the air be corrupted, in which it dwells! Men may defile themselves in the light, but they cannot defile the light itself. The sun shines throughout an impure world yet knows no impurity. Ah! how many resemble swine in the fairest meadow, which would break every mound to find the mire! They remind me of impious Judas, who instead of being a disciple among devils, was a devil among disciples. Poor man, he was all precept and no example. He could attempt to reprove one who was innocence itself, and encourage one, who was sin itself.

Every one loves to be admired, and is too apt to take pleasure in none but those who take pleasure in him. It is no honourable appearance, when we cease to be exemplary Christians that others may think us good companions.

It is impossible to be conformed to the world in our outward man, and transformed to God in our inward man. There is no such thing as being an outward heathen and an inward Christian.

It is ill breathing an infectious air. Satan's progeny love not to go to hell without society. It is better to be with a Philpot in a coal-house, than with a Bonner in a palace. A man may pass through Ethiopia, and yet be unchanged, but he cannot take up his residence there without being discoloured.

"The wages of sin is death." As the works of sin are dishonourable, so the wages of sin are mortal. The corruption of nature is the cause of the dissolution of nature. The candle of our lives, is blown out by the wind of our lusts. Sin is that noxious weed, which overtops the choicest corn, that offensive

smoke which depresses the rising flame ; and that dismal cloud, which overshadows the beaming sun. Sin has brought many a believer into suffering, and suffering has instrumentally, kept many a believer out of sin. It is better to be preserved in brine, than to rot in honey. The bitterest medicine is to be preferred, by all men, before the sweetest poison. In the same fire, wherein the dross is consumed, the precious gold is refined.

Those who launch out into any undertaking should, always, previously, look well to their tackling lest a destructive storm should overtake them in their voyage. A bad conscience imbitters the sweetest comforts, but a good conscience sweetens the bitterest crosses. How great a wound do vices make in the conscience, yea, even in our infant years. Though the hardened sinner be not afraid to *do* evil, yet he will be afraid

to *suffer* evil. What need those fear a cross on the back, who feel a Christ in their heart?

That crop, which is sown in mercy shall be reaped in glory. In heaven there are riches enough, but no poor to receive them. In hell there are poor enough, but no rich to relieve them. How many of the most wealthy are deaf to the most importunate requests for mercy! They will do no good in the world, with the goods of the world. They, too much, resemble sponges which, greedily, suck up the waters, but will not yield a return of them again, till they are well squeezed.

Mercy is so good a servant, that it will never suffer its master to die a beggar. Those who have drained their own wells dry, in order to fill a poor man's cistern, shall never perish for want

of water to quench their thirst. Those who have blessed others shall be blessed themselves. God looks not so much on the merits of the beggar as upon the mercy of the giver.

In the highest heavens, the beams of majesty are displayed, but to the lowest hearts, the bowels of mercy are discovered. "Be ye clothed with humility." Pride is a sinner's torment, but humility is a saint's ornament. The cloth of humility should always be worn on the back of Christianity.

Though there may be something *left* by self-denial, yet there can be nothing *lost* by self-denial; nay, a man can never *enjoy* himself till he be brought to *deny* himself. We live, by dying to ourselves, and die, by living to ourselves. There is no proud man but what is foolish, and scarcely any foolish man

but what is proud. It is the night owl of ignorance which broods and hatches the peacock of pride.

It is impossible to have true thoughts of ourselves, while we entertain high thoughts of ourselves. "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." Poor Peter, he was the most impotent when he was most arrogant. He has no doubt of standing when others were falling; but it proved, at last, that he fell while others stood. That was an excellent saying of one:—"Where a gracious person would sit below me, I will acknowledge his dignity; but where a proud person would move above me, I will abhor his vanity." An humble heart may meet with opposition from man, but it shall meet with approbation from God. As humility is a grace very excellent in itself, so it is very pleasing to God. He who is a subject of the

former, shall hereafter be an inheritor with the latter.

Remember that when Christ draws the likeness of the new creature, his first pencil is dipped in water. "Except ye repent, ye shall all, likewise perish." Is it not better to repent without perishing, than to perish without repenting. Godly sorrow is such a grace, as without it, not a soul shall be saved, and with it, not a soul shall be lost. Is it not, therefore, better to swim in the water-works of repentance, than to burn in the fire-works of vengeance.

A tender heart is like melting wax; ah, what choice impressions are made upon such dispositions.

Sin in the soul, is like Jonah in the ship; it turns the smoothest water into a troubled ocean.

We must mourn for sin on earth, or burn for sin in hell. It is the coldness of our hearts, which kindles the fire of God's anger. "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced and mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born." Christians, the nails that pierced his hands, should now pierce your heart; you should now be deeply wounded with godly sorrow, for having so deeply wounded him, with your deadly sins. It should grieve your spirits to remember how much you have grieved his spirit.

Man must be convinced of sin, before he can truly repent of sin; unbelief in the heart, is like the worm in Jonah's gourd an unseen adversary; it is least visible but most hurtful. Infidelity is the worst of robbers; it both plunders

and wounds the soul. Christ may dwell in the heart where it lurks, but not where it reigns. If Christ destroy its armour, it becomes weak as other men. Its chief strength wherein it trusteth is ignorance.

Pharaoh more lamented the hard strokes that were upon him, than the hard heart which was within him. Esau mourned, not because he sold the birth-right, which was his sin, but because he lost the blessing which was his punishment. This is like weeping with an onion—the eye sheds tears because it smarts. A mariner casts overboard, that cargo in a tempest, which he courts the return of when the winds are silenced. Many complain more of the sorrows to which they are born, than of the sins with which they are born; they tremble more at the vengeance of

sin, than the venom of sin ; one delights them, the other affrights them.

Where misery passes, undiscerned, there mercy passes, undesired. Christ may knock long at such doors before he gains admittance. He only enters into those, who enter into themselves. "Behold I stand at the door and knock." Christ oftener comes to the door than he enters the house. As we knock at his door for audience so he does, at ours, for entrance. If his person be shut out, our prayers will be shut out. Why should God show him mercy, who never acknowledged himself guilty? A saint's tears are better than a sinner's triumphs. Bernard saith, "The tears of penitents are the wine of angels." When a sinner repents the angels rejoice; and give me such a mourning on earth, as creates music in heaven. Many are battered as lead by the hammer who are never

bettered as gold by the fire. Sometimes that repentance which begins in the fears of hell, ends in the flames of hell.

It has been observed by those who are experienced in the sport of angling, that the smallest fishes bite the fastest. Ah, how few great men, do we find so much as nibbling at the gospel hook. The tree of life is not often planted in a terrestrial paradise.

The shining diamond of a great estate may frequently be found, upon an unsound and idolatrous heart. Prosperity is not to be deemed the greatest security. The lofty, unbending cedar is more exposed to the injurious blast, than the lowly shrub. The little pinnace rides safely along the shore, while the gallant ship advancing, is wrecked. Those sheep which have the most wool, are, generally, the soonest fleeced. Poverty

is its own defence against robbery. A fawning world is worse than a frowning world. Who would shake those trees, upon which there is no fruit?

Ah, what vanity it is to lop off the boughs, and leave the roots, which can soon send forth more; or to empty the cistern, and leave the fountain running, which can soon fill it again! Such may swim in the water of the visible Church, but when the net is drawn to shore they must be thrown away as bad fishes. Though the tares and the wheat may grow in the field together, yet they will not be housed in the granery together.

A man's conversation may be civilized, when his heart is not evangelized. There is as much difference between nature restrained, and nature renewed, as between the glimmering of a glow-worm, and the splendour of the noon-day sun.

A bad man is certainly worst, when he is, seemingly, best. We must not account every one a soldier who swaggers with a sword. A rusty scimitar may frequently be found in a highly trimmed scabbard. What is it to have our hands as white as snow, if our hearts be as black as the bottomless pit? Such professors resemble curious bubbles, smooth and clear without, yet only filled with air.

It is only such fabrics as are bottomed upon the sand, that are overthrown by the wind. The adversaries of God's people will push at them, as far as their horns will go, but when they have scoured them by persecution, as tarnished vessels, then God will throw such whisps into the fire.

He that takes up fire to throw at his adversaries, is in great danger of burn-

ing his own fingers. A gun ill charged, instead of hitting the mark, does but recoil on him that discharges it. He who glories in wounding others, will, finally, wound himself. If injuries be our enemies' weapons, forgiveness should be ours. There is a twofold frenzy; that of the head, which deprives men of their prudence; and that of the heart, which deprives them of their patience. To forget an injury is more than nature can promise, but to forgive it, is what grace can perform. Patience affords us a shield to defend ourselves; but innocence denies us a sword to offend others. If ever you hope that your charity should live after you then let resentment die before you.

It was a saying of a heathen, though no heathenish saying, that he who would be good, must either have a faithful friend to instruct him, or a watchful

enemy to correct him. Should we murder a physician because he comes to cure us, or like him worse, because he would make us better? Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth? Truth is not always relished, where sin is nourished. Light is pleasant, yet it may be offensive to sore eyes. Honey is sweet though it cause the wound to smart; but we must not neglect the actions of friends for fear of drawing upon ourselves, the suspicion of being enemies. It is better to lose the *smiles* of men, than the *souls* of men. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother, in thy heart. nor suffer sin to lie upon him." He who loves a garment, hates the moths which fret it.

Reproof slides from a scorner's breast, as water from an oiled post. Instead of loving a man amidst all his injuries, he will hate him for all his civilities.

Most people are like restive horses, which no sooner feel the rowel, than they strike with their heels, or like bees which no sooner are angered, than they put out their stings.

The tender reed is more easily bowed than the sturdy oak. Christ's warfare requires no carnal weapons. Chariots too furiously driven may be overturned by their own violence. How many are there, who check passion with passion, and are very angry in reprovng anger. Thus to lay one devil, they raise another, and leave more work to be undone, than they found to be done. Such a reproof of vice, is a vice to be reprovcd.

Reprehension should tread upon the heels of transgression. The plaster should be applied as soon as the wound is received. It is easier to extinguish a flaming torch, than a burning house.

Gentle medicine will serve for a recent distemper, but chronical diseases require powerful receipts.

The name of God with a sling and stone, will do more than Goliath with all his armour. Reader, I would neither have you be idle in the means, nor make an idol of the means. Though it be the mariner's duty to weigh his anchor and spread his sails, yet he cannot make his voyage until the winds blow. The pipes will yield no conveyance, unless the springs yield their concurrence.

He that has no better righteousness than what is of his own providing shall meet with no higher happiness, than what is of his own deserving. If such people rest not *from* duty, then they rest *in* duty. They are determined to sail in their own bottom, though they sink in the ocean. I would that all

such did but know, that though good works are not destroyed by Christ, yet they must be denied for Christ.

Thousands of professors prize the wages of religion above its works, but a Christian will prize its work above its wages. Give me that singular preacher who prefers his labour to his lucre, and the flock he attends, to the fleece he obtains.

“Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.” *Christ* was the *object* of their actions, but *self* was the *end* of their actions. They came to Christ to serve their own turns, and when their turns were served, then they turned away their service. They were cupboard disciples; more than men at their meat,—but less than women at

their work. When the loaves were gone, the disciples were gone.

Could many men find the mercies of God, they would never seek the God of mercies. Could they tell how to be well without him, they would never desire to come to him. God hath but little of their society except when they can find no other company. The want of pardon is the only spring of a servile man's duty; he plies his prayers, as sailors do their pumps, only in a storm or when fearful of sinking.

Conversion begins in consideration. The hasty shower falls fastest, but the soft snow sinks the deepest. As that mariner who is inattentive to his helm is in danger of wrecking his vessel, so he who knows not himself, is likely to lose himself. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith." If your

heart be not the cabinet of such a jewel, your head will never be graced with a diadem in glory.

Though Christians be not kept *altogether from falling*, yet they are kept *from falling altogether*. They may show an indifference toward Christ for a time, but they shall not depart from Christ forever. The trees of righteousness may have their autumn, but they shall, also, have their spring. There is never so low an ebb, but there is also, as high a tide. Christians are like crocodiles, which grow till they die, or like the moon which increases in her beauty till she is at the full.

We can defile ourselves, but we cannot cleanse ourselves. The sheep can go astray alone, but can never return to the fold, without the assistance of the shepherd. Till we taste the bitterness

of our own misery, we shall never relish the sweetness of God's mercy. Till we see how foul our sins have made us, we shall never pay our tribute of praise to Christ for washing us.

As the worst on this side of eternity compared with hell is misery, so the best on this side of eternity, compared with heaven is misery. There is no more comparison to be made between heaven and earth, than there is between a piece of rusty iron and refined gold.

Good words without the heart, are but flattery, and good works without the heart, are but hypocrisy. Though God pities stumbling Israelites, yet he punishes halting hypocrites.

Religion is a sacrifice, but the heart is the altar on which it must be offered. As the body is at the command of the

head who rules it, so should the soul be at the command of God, who gives it. For a man to take his body to the service of God and leave his soul behind him, is as if a person should send his garments stuffed with straw instead of making a personal appearance.

Every being produces its own likeness. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" The grapes of tranquillity cannot grow upon the thorns of impiety. Inward peace can only be espoused to inward purity. A good way to have conscience untormented, is to have it undefiled. He who made you clean within, will keep you calm within.

In wisdom's right hand are length of days, and in her left hand riches and honour. Look to which hand you will and you will find it full.

The wicked make their end their God, but we make God our end. The firmament is made more glorious by one sun than by all the stars that stud the heavens. Thus Jesus Christ hath more glory given to him from one saint than from all the world beside. He takes more pleasure in their prayers, and is more honoured by their praise.

“Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” From the lowest act of nature to the highest act of grace, there is no argument for the pride of man, but every consideration for the praise of God. If he make our nature gracious, we should make his name glorious. He that would be fingering the honor of God is not worthy to receive the honor of man. Cæsar once said to his opponent, “Either I will be Cæsar or nobody.” So the Lord saith, Either I will be a great God

or no God. That man disparages the beauty of the sun who sets it upon a level with the twinkling stars.

As there is no time in which God is not blessing his children, there should be no time in which his people are not blessing him. As he designs our happiness in all he does, it is but reasonable that we should seek his honor in all we do. We have no way to turn the streams unto God, the ocean of all bounty, but through the pipes of gratitude.

“Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” It is very meet that he should be magnified by us, when he makes us meet to be glorified with him. The whisperings of the voice are echoed back in an exact concave.

The body of a man can stoop for a pin as well as for a pound. As the best of means should make us fruitful, so the least of mercies should make us thankful.

There is no need of blotting out the characters of our affections, but of writing them on fairer paper. There is no necessity for drying up these running waters, but for diverting them into their proper channels. Why should we wholly destroy these valuable plants, when they might thrive so well in a better soil? He who looks upon heaven with desire will look upon earth with disdain. Our affections were made for the things which are *above* us, and not for the things which are *about* us.

What is an earthly manor compared to a heavenly mansion? As carnal things seem small to a spiritual man, so

spiritual things appear small to a carnal man. There is no moving after things beyond the sphere of our own knowledge. Heaven is to the worldling as a mine of gold covered with earth and rubbish, or as a bed of pearl inclosed in a heap of sand. But if he had the eyes of an eagle to see it, he would wish for the wings of an eagle to soar unto it.

He that takes possession *of* us on earth takes possession *for* us in heaven. As we are not long here without Him, so he will not be long there without us. Here all the earth is not enough for one carnal man, but there one heaven shall be enough for all Christian men. In this life there are showers of tears from the saint's eyes, but in that life there shall be a sunshine of glory in the saint's heart.

Reader, you cannot set down your

lusts in such characters but what the eyes of God can read them. As he can save in the greatest extremity, so he can see in the deepest obscurity.

Plato saith of the king of Lydia that he had a ring, with which, when he turned the head to the palm of his hand, he could see every person, and yet he himself remain invisible. Though we cannot see God while we live, yet he can see how we live,

Those who freight their minds with carnal pleasures will one day be condemned for carrying contraband commodities. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine own heart and in the sight of thine own eyes." This were brave, indeed, if it could but be secured forever; but alas, after the flash of

lightning then comes the dreadful clap of thunder, "But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." This is just as if God had said, "Well poor sinner, run down the hill as fast as you please; but know that you will be sure to break your neck at last."

Sin is like a serpent in the bosom, which stings you, or like a thief in your closet, who plunders you. It resembles poison in the stomach, or a sword in the bowels, both of which tend to death. Like St. John's book, it may be sweet in your mouth, but it will be bitter in your belly. However fair iniquity might appear to some, it will only be found like a blear-eyed Leah to God.

The greatest glory of this world is like a rotten post, which never shows its brightness but in the dark. How

few are there who have resolved to ascend the pinnacle of honor, but what have left a good conscience at the bottom of the ladder! Believers themselves would be surfeited with the world's sweet meat, if a gracious God were not to call them away from the banquet.

Creature comforts are like the soft morning dews, which while they water the branches of the tree, leave the roots dry. Why should the professors of Christianity be found eagerly pursuing those trifles which even heathens have been found flying from? The world is rather a sharp brier to wound us than a sweet flower to delight us.

The earth is big in our hopes, but little in our hands. It is like Sodom's apples, beautiful to the eye at a distance but when they are touched they crumble into ashes. "Riches avail not in the

day of wrath." Not in the day of man's wrath to preserve him from plundering, nor in the day of God's wrath to keep him from punishment.

Reader, though good works may be our Jacob's staff to walk with on earth, yet they cannot be our Jacob's ladder to climb to heaven with. To lay the salve of our services upon the wound of our sins, is as if a man who is stung by a wasp should wipe his face with a nettle; or as if a person should busy himself in supporting a tottering fabric with a burning fire-brand.

It was not the tempered clay that cured the blind man but Christ's anointing his eyes therewith. That was more likely, without him, to make a seeing man blind than a blind man see. Thus though we may receive our spir-

itual sight in the ordinances, yet it is not the ordinances which give us sight.

It was not the troubling of the pool in Bethesda that made it healing, but the coming down of the angel into it. That man must famish at last who always feeds upon the dish instead of the meat. There is no instruction to be got from the sun-dial of duty, except the Sun of righteousness shine upon it.

Reader, it is dangerous for you to take shelter in your righteousness; for the lightning of divine vengeance, which flashes before you, and the curses of the law, which thunder around you, may suddenly shake your house about you. As fast as you lay on your own plasters a convinced and spiritual conscience will rub them off again. Nothing but the grace of the gospel can perfectly heal the wounds which a broken law has

made. Though at the command of Christ you may let down the net, yet it is only by the blessing of Christ that you can enclose a profitable draught.

He is a rotten professor who says in his heart, "Why may not I be drunk as well as Noah, and commit adultery as well as David?" Did you ever hear of any who put out their eyes because others were smitten with blindness; or of any who cut off their legs because others went on crutches?

Jehu, who only served God in hypocrisy, had an external kingdom; and shall those who serve him from a principle of inward purity be put off without a heavenly kingdom? If God valued counterfeit coin so much, how highly will he esteem the true gold! If he drop so much into a vessel of wrath what will he do into a vessel of mercy!

If he give so much to a bond-slave of hell, what will he do for a free-born child of heaven! "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness?" God was not a wilderness to them when they were in the wilderness. When they wanted bread, he gave them manna; when they wanted water, he opened a rock; and though they had no new apparel yet their old garments wore not out, but as their bodies grew, so their souls grew. Thus they were never better off than when they were ready to give up all as lost.

O how good is a believer's God, who not only shortens his pilgrimage for him, but also sweetens it to him! Had Christians too much of temporal things they might care too little for spiritual things. Daniel appeared better with his homely pulse than the Babylonians with all their royal diet. Some have

rowed safely in a narrow river and been drowned afterward in a large sea. A little is sufficient to him who with it enjoys God's all sufficiency.

Some are afraid of religion, because they suppose they shall lose all their earthly mammon while they are seeking heavenly manna. They think that piety is the greatest enemy to prosperity. Could they but reap profit by praying, they would be found more at prayer. Ignorant worldlings look upon gain as their greatest godliness, and not on godliness as their greatest gain. But a golden plaster is a poor application for a wounded conscience. When the worm of carnality is gnawing at the root of religious performances, all the formalist's blooming hopes will fade and die away at last.

Many will side with religion while they can live upon it, and desert it when it must live upon them. But that saying is yet true: "Godliness with contentment is great gain." It is only the Christian man who is the truly contented man; and what are our enjoyments without contentment? What is a great possession if wedded to great vexation? Wicked men make this world their treasure, and God makes it their torment. When they want estates they are troubled for them; when they have estates they are troubled with them; and when they would drink of the river God disturbs the water.

When men feel sickness arresting them, then they fear death is approaching. But we begin to die as soon as ever we begin to live. Every man's passing-bell hangs in his own steeple. Take him in his four elements, of earth

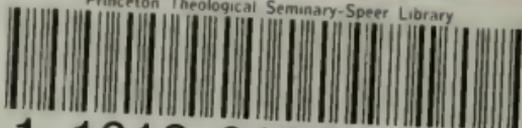
air, fire, and water. In the earth he is as fleeting dust; in the air he is as a disappearing vapor; in the water he is a breaking bubble; and in the fire he is as consuming smoke. Many think not of living any holier till they can live no longer: but one to-day is worth two to-morrow.

THE END.





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