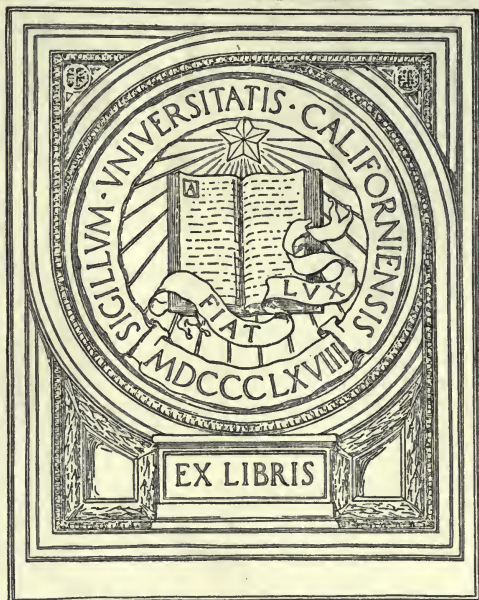


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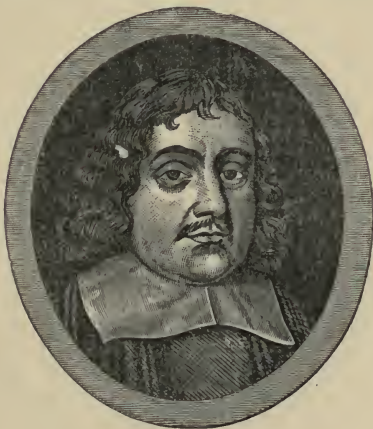
AND

NOTES UPON JONAH.

BY

THOMAS FULLER, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF THE CHURCH HISTORY OF BRITAIN, ETC., ETC.



EDITED BY

WILLIAM NICHOLS.

LONDON: WILLIAM TEGG.

1868.

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Is ft of
Prof. S. R. Hayes.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THIS volume contains Dr. Thomas Fuller's *Comment on Ruth*, and *Notes upon Jonah*. The former, though not published by the author till 1654, was in reality one of his earliest compositions; having been delivered by him in the shape of Lectures, at St. Benet's, Cambridge, as far back as 1630-1, when he was but a stripling, of two or three and twenty. In issuing it in a printed form, Fuller does not seem to have altered its style, or rooted out the frequent allusions to the current topics of twenty years previously. Between the delivery of the Lectures, and their publication as a Comment, the government of England had undergone a radical change; and it is one amongst many proofs of Cromwell's wise moderation, that Fuller could thus openly retain the fervent expressions of his youthful loyalty; as where he recounts amongst special mercies the preservation of Charles on his trip to Spain, &c. There was a certain amount of courage in printing such a passage as the following, which, however palatable to the heads of church and state when originally delivered, might easily have given offence to a powerful party under the Protectorate:—With regard to “some who leap from the

loom to the pulpit,—I must confess, an ass's head was good food in a famine; coarse meat is dainty when no better can be had. But now," &c. That there was in Fuller's day the same difficulty as in ours in dealing with the poor so as to damage neither justice nor charity, is evident from the following aspiration, in which we, of two centuries later, can heartily join: "Would all poor and impotent were well placed in a hospital; all poor and able well disposed in a workhouse; and the common stocks of towns so laid out as they thereby might be employed!" Just below this quotation occurs proof of the antiquity and respectability of a word which is now regarded as close upon the confines of "slang," and as suited chiefly for records of foot and boat races, &c.:—"After a *spurt* in their calling for some few hours, they relapse again to laziness."

Though the *Comment on Ruth* is written with ease, and is full of ingenious thought, we can well suppose that the young clergyman, just entering on his preferment, would, in delivering Lectures in a University town, carefully avoid any approach to punning, and repress that fondness for alliteration which soon afterwards became a special characteristic of his style. But the *Notes upon Jonah*, though published only three years after the *Ruth*, carry on their very face marks of the five and twenty years which had intervened between the composition of the two works. They extend no farther than to verse 7 of the first chapter of Jonah, and have the appearance, here and there,

of being jottings for pulpit use, which (like the *Comment*) Fuller published simply in defence against the pirates who preyed on the renown of the popular divine. But, fragments as these *Notes* are, we can trace everywhere in them the original engraving, the inimitably inwoven water-marks, of the genuine paper of the Fullerian bank of ready wit and sterling piety. How thoroughly autographic is the following!—"Away then with the Anabaptist, who would set all men *at odds* by making them *even*!" And the very next sentence is like unto it:—"For a commonwealth to *want a chief*, it is the *chief of all wants*."

But it is not so much for its wit and humour, or its apt illustrations from every day life, that we commend this volume to the reader: it is chiefly valuable for its even tenor of genuine devotion and of common-sense exposition of Scripture. It will, we feel sure, be hailed by every lover of Fuller, as a fit addition to the series of reprints which are now bringing his scarce and valuable works within the reach of all, and so refurbishing the lustre of his great name. As in former volumes of this series, I have modernized the spelling, and added a few short notes where explanation seemed needful.

WILLIAM NICHOLS.

6, *Stratheden Villas, Hackney*,
1868.

CONTENTS.

A COMMENT ON RUTH.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.....	5
CHAPTER II.....	105

NOTES UPON JONAH.....	179
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A

COMMENT ON RUTH:

BY

T. F., B.D.

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1654.

B

TO

THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL THE LADY
ANNE ARCHER,

IN THE COUNTY OF WARWICK.

THE apostle to the Philippians, chap. iv., verse 15, giveth them this high commendation, "None communicated with me concerning giving and receiving, but ye only." Should I apply the same in relation of myself to your Ladyship, I should be injurious to the bounty of many my worthy benefactors. However, (not *exclusively* of others, but) *eminently* I must acknowledge you a grand encourager of my studies. In public testimony whereof, I present these my endeavours to your Ladyship's patronage.

Indeed, they were preached in an eminent place, when I first entered into the ministry, above twenty years since ; and therefore you will pardon the many faults that may be found therein. Nor were they intended for public view, till, understanding the resolution of some of my auditors to print them (to their profit, but my

prejudice) by their imperfect notes, I adventured on this seasonable prevention.

The Lord make His graces flow plentifully from the head of your family, your religious husband, to the lowest skirts thereof, the last and least of your relations,

Your Ladyship's in all Christian offices,

THOMAS FULLER.

A COMMENT ON RUTH.

CHAPTER I. VERSE 1.

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land.

BEFORE we enter into these words, something must be premised, concerning the name, matter, end, author of this book.

It hath the name from Ruth, the most remarkable person in it, to whom God vouchsafed His grace, not only to write her name in the Book of Life in heaven, but also to prefix her name before a Book of Life in earth.

The matter may be divided into these two parts: the first chapter sheweth, that "many are the troubles of the righteous;" and the three last do show, that "God delivereth them out of all." One of the *ends* is, to show the pedigree of our Saviour; otherwise genealogers had been at a loss, for four or five descents, in the deducing thereof. Another end is, under the conversion

of Ruth the Moabitess, to typify the calling of the Gentiles, that, as He took of the blood of a Gentile into His body, so He should shed the blood out of His body for the Gentiles; that there might be one Shepherd, and one sheepfold.

The author's name (probably Samuel) is concealed, neither is it needful it should be known: for, even as a man that hath a piece of gold that he knows to be weight, and sees it stamped with the king's image, careth not to know the name of that man who minted or coined it; so we, seeing this book to have the superscription of Cæsar, the stamp of the Holy Spirit, need not to be curious to know who was the penman thereof.

And now to the words.

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land.

Observe in the words,—what? A famine:—where? In the land:—when? “In the time that the judges judged;” the time being set down for the better certainty of the history.

QUESTION.

Is this the land whereof it is said, Gen. xlix. 20, “Asher his bread shall be fat, and afford dainties for a king;” which is called, Deut. viii. 7, “a good land of wheat and barley, vineyards and fig-trees, oil, olive, and honey;” which is commended, Ezek. xx. 6, to be “a land flowing with

milk and honey, the glory of all lands?" How cometh it to pass, that thy rivers of oil are now dammed up? thy streams of wine drained dry? that there is no bread found in Bethlehem, "the house of bread?"

ANSWER.

Israel hath sinned. "A fruitful land maketh He barren, for the sin of the people that dwell therein." The people's *hard hearts* were rebellious to God, and the *hard earth* proved unprofitable to them: their flinty eyes would afford no tears to bemoan their sins, and the churlish heavens would afford no moisture to water their earth: man proved unfaithful to God his Maker; the earth proved unfruitful to man her manurer.

OBSERVATION.

Famine is a heavy punishment, wherewith God afflicteth His people for their sins. That it is a heavy punishment appeareth, because David (2 Sam. xxiv. 14) chose the pestilence before it: for even as Zebah and Zalmunna (Judges viii. 21) chose rather to fall by the hand of Gideon than by the hand of Jether his son, because the child's want of strength would cause their abundance of pain; so better it is to be speedily dispatched by a violent disease, than to have one's life in a famine prolonged by a lingering torture. That it is inflicted for their sins is showed, Lev. xxvi. 19; Deut. xxviii. 23; 1 Kings viii. 37: and these sins

most especially procure famine :—First. Idolatry. (1 Kings xvii. 1; 2 Kings iv. 38.) Secondly. Abuse of plenty. The prodigal child, (Luke xv.,) from the keeping of harlots, was brought to the keeping of hogs. It is just with God to make men want that to supply their necessity, which they have misspended in their nicety. Thirdly. Shedding of innocent blood. (2 Sam. xxi. 1.) Fourthly. Oppression of the poor. (Amos iv. 6.) And no wonder, if men, to grind the faces of poor people, make money, to which God gave no natural fruit, to bring forth a monstrous increase, —if God cause the earth, which naturally should be fruitful, to become barren and afford no profit.

USE I.

It may serve to confute such, that when God doth scourge them with famine, (as blind Balaam fell a beating of his dumb beast, when he himself was in fault,) they vent their spite in cursing and railing on the poor creatures; whereas, indeed, were the matter well weighed, they might say of all creatures as Judah did of Tamar his daughter-in-law, “They are ‘more righteous than’ we:” for locusts, mildew, blasting, immoderate drought and moisture, are the means by which—man’s sin is the cause, for which—famine is inflicted. And yet in prosperity we are commonly like hogs feeding on the mast, not minding his hand that shaketh it down; in adversity, like dogs

biting the stone, not marking the hand that threw it.

USE II.

If any desire to prevent or remove a famine, let us prevent and remove the causes thereof.

First. Let us practise that precept, 1 John v. 21 : “ Babes, keep yourselves from idols.”

Secondly. Let us be heartily thankful to God for our plenty, who, by the seasonable weeping of the heavens, hath caused the plentiful laughter of the earth, and hath sent the former rain to perform the part of a midwife, to deliver the infant corn out of the womb of the parched earth ; and the latter rain to do the duty of a nurse, to swell and battle * the grain. Let us not seethe the kid in the mother’s milk : let not our wanton palates spoil wholesome meat, before it cometh to the just maturity : neither let us cast away any good food, but, after our Saviour’s example, let us cause the fragments to be basketted up, that nothing may be lost.

Thirdly. Let us pray with David, (Psalm li. 14,) “ Deliver us from bloodguiltiness, O Lord : ” and let us seek that the hoary hairs may not go down to the grave in peace of such as have shed innocent blood ; (lest the personal offence of a private man, remaining unpunished, become the national sin of a kingdom ;) but upon the king, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne shall be peace for ever from the Lord.

* [“ Fatten,” or “ fill out.”—ED.]

Lastly. Let us be pitiful, and liberal to relieve the distresses of the poor; for why should our dead tables groan under the weight of needless feast upon them, whilst God's living temples groan under the want of necessary food within them? The Athenian women had a custom to make a picture of Famine every year, and to drive it out of their city with these words: "Out, Famine; in, Food! Out, Penury; in, Plenty!" But let us say in word, and second it in deed, "Out, Sin; in, Sanctity! Out, Profaneness; in, Piety:" and then we shall see, that as long as our King reigneth, there shall be no famine in our land.

But however God shall dispose of us for outward blessings, I pray God keep us from that soul famine, mentioned Amos viii. 12, that we living under the northern heavens should wander to the east, and "run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord," and should "not find it;" but may the light of the Gospel remain with us on earth as long as the faithful witness endureth in heaven.

And a certain man of Bethlehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab.

These words contain a journey or removal; wherein observe: Who went? "A certain man." Whence? From Bethlehem-Judah. Whither? "To sojourn in Moab." We shall have a fitter occasion to speak of the party removing hereafter.

I begin with the place from whence he went, Bethlehem-Judah.

This was the place nigh to which Rachel, as she was travelling, fell into travail, and ended her journey to heaven in the midst of her journey on earth. There was another of the same name in Zebulun; (Josh. xix. 15;) and therefore “Judah” is added for difference and distinction.

OBSERVATION.

The Holy Spirit descends to our capacity, and in Scripture doth multiply words to make the matter the plainer. Let this teach the sons of Levi, when they deliver one doubtful and ambiguous doctrine, which may admit of several constructions, so that there is danger lest that people may mistake their meaning, to demur a while on such a point, and not to be niggardly of their words, till they have blotted all doubt and difficulty out of it. Herein they shall follow God for their pattern, who, lest Bethlehem in my text should be confounded with Bethlehem in Zebulun, addeth for distinction “Bethlehem-Judah.”

Went to sojourn in Moab.

The prodigal child complained, “How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and I die for hunger!” (Luke xv. 17.) So here we see that the uncircumcised Moabites, God’s slaves and vassals, had store of plenty, whilst Israel, God’s children, (but His prodigal children,

which by their sins had displeased their Heavenly Father,) were pinched with penury.

OBSERVATION.

Hence we gather, God oftentimes denieth outward blessings to His children, whenas He vouchsafeth them to the wicked. The wicked man's eyes start out with fatness; David's bones scarce cleave to his flesh: Ahab hath an ivory house; the godly wander in "dens and caves of the earth:" the rich glutton fareth deliciously every day; whilst the godly (Psalm cvii. 5) were "hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them:" he was clothed in purple and fine linen; whilst the godly wander up and down "in sheep-skins;" and well may they wear their skins without them, that carry their innocency within them. And the reason thereof is, because judgment begins at the house of the Lord, whilst the wicked have their portion in this world.

USE.

Let us "not judge according to outward appearance, but judge righteous judgment," lest otherwise we condemn the generation of God's children, if we account outward blessings the signs of God's favour, or calamities the arguments of His displeasure. Neither let the afflicted Christian faint under God's heavy hand; but let him know to his comfort, God therefore is angry in this world, that He may not be angry in the world to come; and

mercifully inflicteth temporal punishment, that He may not justly confound with eternal torment.

But here ariseth a question, Whether Elimelech did well to go from Bethlehem-Judah into the land of Moab? For the better satisfaction whereof, we will suppose a plain and honest neighbour thus dissuading him from his departure.

DISSUASION.

“ Give me leave, neighbour Elimelech, to say unto thee, as the angel did to Hagar, ‘ Whence comest thou? and whither goest thou? ’ Wilt thou leave that place where God’s worship is truly professed, and go into an idolatrous country? Woe is thee, that must dwell in Moab, and be an inhabitant amongst the worshippers of Melchom! Indeed, our father Abraham came out of Ur of the Chaldees, an idolatrous country, to come into the land of Canaan; but why shouldst thou go out of the land of Canaan into an idolatrous country, where thou shalt have neither priest, nor prophet, nor passover? Yea, what most is to be feared, your frequent conversing with the people of the country will at length bring you into a love and liking of their superstitions, and so draw God’s anger against you. Wherefore, reverse your intent of removing, lest, while thou seekest to store thy body, thou starvest thy soul: rather venture the breaking of the casket than the losing of the jewel; and go not from Bethlehem-Judah unto the land of Moab.”

ANSWER.

To this Elimelech might answer: "Your dissuasion doth somewhat move me, but not remove my resolution. I do not forsake my country, but am forced from it. God hath withholden the wine and the winepress; and if I stay, I am likely to starve. I conceive it therefore to be my bounden duty to provide the best means for my family; and following the examples of Isaac's going into Gerah, and Jacob's going down into Egypt in the time of famine, I intend to remove to Moab. And though I shall be divided from the visible congregation of Israel, yet shall I with my family still remain the lively members of God's true church. For, first, I intend to carry with me the five books of Moses, (they will be no great burden, being comprised in so small a volume,) and, according to my poor ability, out of them will I instruct my family; whilst my dear wife Naomi, and dutiful children, Mahlon and Chilion, will be diligent to hear and practise what I propound unto them. I confess, we shall have no outward sacrifices, (because I am not of the tribe of Levi,) yet may we offer unto God prayers and praises, which God no doubt will as graciously accept as of a bullock that hath horns and hoofs. Thus hope I to have a little church in mine own house; and I know, where two or three are met together in the name of God, there He 'will be in the midst of them.' Whereas you

object I should be in danger of being defiled with their idolatry, I will be by God's grace so much the more wary, watchful, and vigilant over my ways. We see the flesh of fishes remaineth fresh, though they always swim in the brackish waters; and I hope that the same God who preserved righteous Lot in the wicked city of Sodom, who protected faithful Joseph in the vicious court of Pharaoh, will also keep me unspotted in the midst of Moab, whither I intend speedily to go, not to live, but to lodge; not to dwell, but to sojourn; not to make it my habitation for ever, but my harbour for a season, till God shall visit His people with plenty, when I purpose to return with the speediest conveniency."

Thus we see Elimelech putting the dangers of his removal in one scale, the benefits thereof in another: the beam of his judgment is justly weighed down to go from Bethlehem-Judah into the land of Moab.

OBSERVATION.

It is lawful for men to leave their native soil, and to travel into a foreign country; as,

1. For merchants; provided always that, while they seek to make gainful adventures for their estates, they make not "shipwreck of a good conscience."

2. For ambassadors, that are sent to see the practices and negociations in foreign courts.

3. For private persons, that travel with an in-

tent to accomplish themselves with a better sufficiency to serve their king and country.

But unlawful it is for such to travel, which, Dinah like, go only to see the customs of several countries, and make themselves the lackeys to their own humorous curiosity. Hence cometh it to pass, when they return, it is justly questionable, whether their clothes be disguised with more foolish fashions, or bodies disabled with more loathsome diseases, or souls defiled with more notorious vices; having learned jealousy from the Italian, pride from the Spaniard, lasciviousness from the French, drunkenness from the Dutch. And yet what need they go so far to learn so bad a lesson, when (God knows) we have too many schools where it is taught here at home?

Now if any do demand of me my opinion concerning our brethren which of late left this kingdom to advance a plantation in New England; surely I think, as St. Paul said concerning virgins, he had "received no commandment from the Lord;" so I cannot find any just warrant to encourage men to undertake this removal; but think rather the counsel best that king Joash prescribed to Amaziah, "Tarry at home." Yet as for those that are already gone, far be it from us to conceive them to be such to whom we may not say, "God speed," as it is in 2 John verse 10: but let us pity them, and pray for them; for sure they

have no need of our mocks, which I am afraid have too much of their own miseries. I conclude therefore of the two Englands, what our Saviour saith of the two wines, Luke v. 39: "No man having tasted of the old presently desireth the new: for he saith, The old is better."

He, and his wife, and his two sons.

VERSE 2.

And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-Judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

These words contain, First, The principal party that undertook the journey. Secondly, His company, described by their relations,—his wife and children; and by their names,—Naomi, Mahlon, and Chilion. Thirdly, The success of his journey. When he came into the land of Moab, he "continued there."

Now whereas Elimelech took his wife and children along with him, from his practice we gather this observation.

OBSERVATION.

It is the part of a kind husband, and of a careful father, not only to provide for himself, but also for his whole family. Gen. ii. 24: "A man shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

Eph. v. 25 : "Husbands, love your wives ;...for no man as yet hated his own flesh." 1 Tim. v. 8: "If any one provideth not for his own family, he denieth the faith, and is worse than an infidel." This made Abraham to take with him at his removal his meek Sarah ; Isaac, his wise Rebecca ; Jacob, his fair Rachel and fruitful Leah ; and Joseph (Matt. ii.) took with him Mary, his espoused wife, and our Saviour, his supposed son. And when Pharaoh (Exod. x. 10, 11) offered Moses with all the men of Israel to go out of Egypt, but on condition they should leave their wives and children behind them, Moses refused the proffer : he would either have them all go out, or else he would not go out at all.

USE.

It confuteth such cruel husbands and careless parents, who, if so be, with Job's messengers, they only can escape alone, they care not though they leave their wives and children to shift for themselves ; like the ostrich, (Job xxxix. 14,) "who leaveth her eggs in the sand," and so forsakes them. Surely the two kine which drew the ark of God out of the land of the Philistines to Beth-shemesh, (1 Sam. vi. 12,) shall rise up at the day of judgment and condemn such cruel parents : for it is said of them, that, as they "went along the highway," they did pitifully "low," by that querulous

ditty, as nature afforded them utterance, witnessing and expressing their affection to their calves shut up at home. O, that there should be such humanity (as I may term it) in beasts, and such beastliness in many men! Remember this, you that sit drinking and bezzling* wine abroad, whilst your family are glad of water at home; and think thus with yourselves: "To what end is this needless waste? Might it not have been sold for many a penny, and have been bestowed on my poor wife and children?"

OBSERVATION.

Secondly. Whereas we find Naomi and her sons going with Elimelech, we gather it is the duty of a dear wife, and of dutiful children, to go along with their husbands and parents, when on just cause they remove into a foreign country. It was an unmanly and cowardly speech of Barak to Deborah, (Judges iv. 8,) "If thou wilt go with me, then will I go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then will I not go:" but it would be a gracious resolution of a grave matron and her children, "Husband, if you be pleased to depart, I will be ready to accompany you. Father, if you be minded to remove, I will attend upon you. But if you be disposed to stay, I will not stir from the place

* ["Drinking wastefully and riotously." A twin word to *guzzling*. —ED.]

where you abide." Otherwise, if the wife refuseth to go along with her husband, what Abraham said to the servant in another case, (Gen. xxiv.8,) is true in this respect: "But if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from thine oath." If the wife be so peevish and perverse that she will not go along with her husband, who propoundeth lawful means unto her to relieve her wants; then is he acquitted from the oath he made her in marriage, when he plighted his troth unto her, in sickness and in health, to maintain her.

QUESTION.

But methinks I hear the widows and orphans crying unto me, as the soldiers to John Baptist, "But what shall we do?" (Luke iii. 14.) "It is true," saith the widow, "that kind husbands are to provide for their wives; but, alas! we have no Elimelechs to carry us into a foreign country in the time of famine." "Indeed," saith the orphan, "it is the father's duty to provide for his children; but my parents are dead long ago; I have not, as Samuel had, a mother Hannah every year to bring me a new coat. What shall we do in this our distress?"

ANSWER.

Use the best means you can; and, for the rest, rely on God's providence, who is said, Psalm x. 20, to "help the fatherless and poor to their right;"

Psalm lxviii. 5, to be “a Father to the fatherless, and to defend the cause of the widow; even God in His holy habitation;” who will deal with thee as he did with David: “When my mother and father forsook me, the Lord cared for me.”

So much for Elimelech’s company described by their relations. We should come now to speak of their names; where we might take occasion to speak of the antiquity and use of names, but that hereafter we shall have better conveniency to treat thereof, in those words, “Call me not Naomi, but call me Marah.” We come therefore to the success of Elimelech’s journey.

And they came into the country of Moab, and they continued there.

The meaning is, that the Moabites afforded them harbour without any molestation.

OBSERVATION.

From whence the observation is this: We ought to be hospital [hospitable] and courteous to receive strangers. First. Because God in several places of Scripture enjoineth it. (Exod. xxiii. 9; Levit. xix. 33.) Secondly. Because God apprehendeth all courtesy done to a stranger as bestowed on Himself: “He that receiveth you receiveth Me,” &c. “I was a stranger, and ye harboured Me.” (Matt. xxv.) And then if we entertain strangers, it may be said of

us, not only as it is of Lot and Abraham, Heb. xiii. 2, that we “entertained angels,” but that we entertained God Himself “unawares.” Thirdly. Because, if spiritually considered, we ourselves are strangers : with the patriarchs, (Heb. xi.) we have here no abiding city, but seek one from above, “whose Builder and Maker is God.” “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims.” (1 Peter ii. 11.) Lastly. Because of the uncertainty of our own estates ; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth : it may be, we that now relieve strangers, hereafter ourselves, being strangers, may be relieved by others.

USE.

Let us not therefore abuse strangers, and make a prey of them, making an advantage of their unskilfulness in the language, and being unacquainted with the fashions of the land ; like Laban, that deceived his nephew Jacob in placing Leah for Rachel, and, to cloak his cheating, pleaded it was the custom of the country. Wherefore rather let us be courteous unto them, lest the barbarians condemn us, who so courteously entreated St. Paul, with his shipwrecked companions ; and the Moabites in my text, who suffered Elimelech, when he came into the land, to continue there.

VERSES 3, 4, 5.

*And Elimelech Naomi's husband died ; and she
was left, and her two sons, &c.*

In these words we have two marriages ushered and followed by funerals. I will begin there, where one day all must make an end,—at death.

And Elimelech Naomi's husband died.

I have seldom seen a tree thrive that hath been transplanted when it was old. The same may be seen in Elimelech : his aged body brooks not the foreign air ; though he could avoid the arrows of Famine in Israel, yet he could not shun the darts of Death in Moab : he that lived in a place of penury, must die in a land of plenty. Let none condemn Elimelech's removal as unlawful, because of his sudden death ; for those actions are not ungodly which are unsuccessful, nor those pious which are prosperous ; seeing the lawfulness of an action is not to be gathered from the joyfulness of the event, but from the justness of the cause, for which it is undertaken.

OBSERVATION I.

Hence we observe, that God can easily frustrate our fairest hopes, and defeat our most probable projects, in making those places most dangerous which we account most safe and secure ; causing

death to meet us there, where we think furthest to fly from it.

OBSERVATION II.

We see that no outward plenty can privilege us from death: the sand of our life runneth as fast, though the hour-glass be set in the sunshine of prosperity, as in the gloomy shade of affliction.

And she was left, and her two sons.

Here we see how mercifully God dealt with Naomi, in that He quenched not all the sparks of her comfort at once; but though He took away the stock, He left her the stems; though He deprived her as it were of the use of her own legs, by taking away her husband, yet He left her a staff in each of her hands, her two sons to support her. Indeed, afterwards He took them away; but first He provided her a gracious daughter-in-law. Whence we learn, God poureth not all His afflictions at once, but ever leaveth a little comfort; otherwise we should not only be pressed down, but crushed to powder, under the weight of His heavy hand.

And they took them wives of the women of Moab, &c.

Here we see the fashion of the world. Mankind had long ago decayed, if those breaches which are daily made by death, were not daily

made up by marriage. But here ariseth a question,—Whether these matches were lawful? for answer whereof, we will suppose Naomi dissuading her sons on this manner.

DISSUASION.

“What, my sons? and what, the sons of my womb? and what, the sons of my desire? Give not your strength to strange women, and your ways to that that destroyed men. It is not for you, O Mahlon and Chilion, it is not for you to marry Moabites; nor for the sons of an Israelite to marry the daughters of the uncircumcised. Remember, my sons, what God saith by the mouth of Moses: (Deut. vii. 3:) ‘Thou shalt not make marriages with them; thy daughter shalt thou not give to his son, nor take his daughter to thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following Me, to serve strange gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against thee, to destroy thee suddenly.’ Take heed therefore lest, long looking on these women, you at length be made blind; lest they suck out your souls with kisses, and, snake-like, sting you with embraces. Curb your affections until you come into Canaan, where you shall find a variety of wives, who, as they come not short of these for the beauties of their bodies, so they far go beyond them for the sanctity of their souls.”

ANSWER.

To this dissuasion thus might her children answer: "We thank you, dear mother, for your carefulness over our good; but we must entreat you not to interpret it undutifulness, if upon good reason we dissent from your judgment herein. In the place by you cited, marriages are forbidden with such strange women as are of a stubborn, obstinate, and refractory nature, such as are likely to seduce their husbands; whereas you see the mild, towardly, and tractable disposition of these women we mean to make our wives. We hope to plant these wild branches in God's vineyard, to bring these straggling sheep to His fold, to make them proselytes to our religion. Besides, this marriage will be advantageous for us: thereby we shall endear ourselves into the Moabites' affections; they will use us the more courteously, when we have married one of their own kindred."

But methinks my tongue refuseth to be any longer the advocate of an unlawful deed, and my mouth denieth to be the orator of an unjust action. When I have said what I can for the defence of their marriage, I shall make but a plaster too narrow for the sore: the breach is so broad, I cannot stop it, though I may dam it up with untempered mortar. Nothing can be brought for the defence of these matches; something may be said for the excuse of them, but that fetched

not from piety, but from policy; not certain, but conjectural. Yet here may we see the power and providence of God, who made so good use of these men's defaults, as hereby to bring Ruth, first to be a retainer to the family of Faith, and afterwards a joyful mother in Israel. This is that good Chymic that can distil good out of evil, light out of darkness, order out of confusion, and make the crooked actions of men tend to His own glory in a straight line, and His children's good.

I speak not this to defend any man's folly in doing of evil, but to admire God's wisdom, who can bring good out of evil: and surely He that will turn evil to good, will turn good to the best.

And they dwelled there about ten years.

Here we have the term of Naomi's living in Moab, and the family's lasting in Israel,—“ten years.” We read of a famine for three years, 2 Sam. xxi.; of three years and a half, 1 Kings xvii.; of seven years, Gen. xlii., as also 2 Kings viii.: but this ten years' famine longer than any. Seven years which Jacob served for Rachel, seemed to him but a short time; but surely those ten years seemed to the afflicted Israelites, and to the banished Naomi, as so many millions of years.

OBSERVATION.

God doth not presently remove His rod from the back of His children, but sometimes scourgeth them with long-lasting afflictions. The reason is, because we go on and persist so long in our sins. And yet herein even Mercy exalteth herself against judgment: for if God should suffer the fire of His fury to burn so long as the fuel of our sins doth last, “Lord, who were able to abide?” Were the days of our suffering apportioned to the days of our living, no flesh would be saved; but “for the elect’s sake those days” are “shortened.”

USE.

Bear with patience light afflictions, when God afflicteth His children with long-lasting punishments. Mutter not for a burning fever of a fortnight. What is this to the woman that had a running issue for twelve years? Murmur not for a twelvemonth’s quartan ague: ’tis nothing to the woman that was bowed for eighteen years; nor seven years’ consumption, to the man that lay thirty-eight years lame at the pool of Bethesda.

And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them.

It was but even now that old Elimelech was gone to bed: see, his sons would not sit long up after

the father. Only here is the difference: he, like ripe fruit, fell down of his own accord; they, like green apples, were cudgelled off the tree.

OBSERVATION.

Even young men in the prime of their age are subject to death. The sons of Jacob, when they came to the table of Joseph, sat down, the eldest according to his age, and the youngest according to his youth: but Death observes not this method; she takes not men in seniority, but sometimes sends them first to the burial that came last from the birth, and those that came last from the womb, first to their winding-sheet. There were as many lambs and kids sacrificed in the Old Testament, as goats and old sheep; but surely more there be that die in infancy and in youth, than of those that attain to old age.

USE.

“Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” You whose joints are knit with sturdy sinews, whose veins are full of blood, whose arteries are flushed with spirits, whose bones are fraught with marrow; Obadiah-like, serve God from your youth; put not the day of death far from you; think not your strength to be armour of proof against the darts of Death, when you see the corslet of Mahlon and Chilion shot through in the left. So “Mahlon and Chilion died both of them.”

And the woman was left of her two sons and of her husband.

Before, we had the particular losses of Naomi; now, we have them all reckoned up in the total sum. "A threefold cable," saith Solomon, "is not easily broken;" and yet we see Naomi's threefold cable of comfort, twisted of her husband and her two sons, broken by death. Of the two sexes the woman is the weaker; of women, old women are most feeble; of old women, widows most woful; of widows, those that are poor, their plight most pitiful; of poor widows, those that want children, their case most doleful; of widows that want children, those that once had them and after lost them, their estate most desolate; of widows that have had children, those that are strangers in a foreign country, their condition most comfortless. Yet all these met together in Naomi, as in the centre of sorrow, to make the measure of her misery "pressed down, shaken together, running over." I conclude therefore, many men have had affliction,—none like Job; many women have had tribulation,—none like Naomi.

VERSE 6.

Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she

had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread.

These words contain two general parts.

1. God's visiting His people with plenty.

2. Naomi's visiting of her people with her person.

I begin with the first in the order of the words.

Then she arose with her daughters in law, &c.

OBSERVATION.

We must tarry no longer in an idolatrous land, when God offereth us an occasion to return into our own country: for so long as we tarry in an idolatrous land on a just cause, so long we are in our vocation and in God's protection: but when God openeth us a gap to return, and we will not through it, we are neither in our calling nor God's keeping, but must stand on our own adventures; and who knows not how slenderly we shall be kept, when we are left to our own custody? Let not therefore Joseph, with his wife and son, tarry any longer in the land of Egypt, when he is dead that sought the life of the child.

Examples we have of those which, in the days of Queen Mary, fled beyond the seas; though they were not in a paganish, only in a foreign

country : Mr. Scorey, Cox, Whitehead, Grindal, Horne, Sandys, Elmore, Gwest, Jewel. If fear lent them feet to run when they went away, joy gave them wings to fly when they came home again. Let none therefore pretend in needless excuses to linger in the land of Egypt, when they may return into the honey-flowing land of Canaan.

For she had heard in the country of Moab.

I suppose when any messenger arrived in Moab out of the land of Canaan, Naomi did presently repair unto him, and load him with questions concerning the estate of her country : “How do the Jews my countrymen? How fareth it with the Bethlehemites my neighbours? with Boaz my kinsman? What is the rate of corn? What the price of oil? What the value of wine? If there be no performance for the present, what promise is there for the future? Though things be bad now, what hope is there but they will be better hereafter?” Alas! he answers little; and from his silence and sorrowful looks Naomi gathers a denial. But as Elijah sending his servant towards the sea, to see what signs there were of rain; for six several times together he returned this answer, “There is nothing;” (1 Kings xviii. 43;) but at the seventh time he

brought him the tidings of a cloud rising out of the sea: so, though for nine years Naomi had no news but of want and scarcity, yet the tenth year there came a man (probably he was a good man that brought these good tidings) who brought her word that the valleys began to laugh and sing with plenty. And so, though the hope that was deferred was the fainting of the heart, yet when it came, it was the "tree of life." Perchance because the covetous Jews had made nine parts great for their own profit, and the tenth small to cozen God of His portion, God, quite contrary, gave them nine years of scarcity and want, and at length made the tenth of store and plenty.

OBSERVATION.

The fame of remarkable accidents will fly into foreign countries: for, if it be bad news, the wicked will be sure to tell it in the gates of Gath, and publish it in the streets of Askelon: if it be good, the godly will proclaim it in the courts of Zion, and disperse it within the walls of Jerusalem. Whether good or bad, if it be of moment and importance, it will not be covered nor concealed.

QUESTION.

Is it lawful for us to listen, hearken, and inquire after matters of foreign countries?

ANSWER.

Though I would not have men to be like the Athenians, “to hear or tell some new thing;” yet it is both lawful and laudable for them to inquire after foreign affairs, whereby they express the desire that they have of the welfare of their distant brethren, the members of the same mystical body. Example, Nehemiah i. 2. And yet would I have men, though they lend their ears, not to bestow their belief on every groundless report which is blazed abroad.

1. Because fame is often untrue, relating (2 Sam. xiii. 30) that “all the king’s sons” are killed, when only Amnon is slain.

2. Because many there be which, with the soldiers, Matt. xxviii., do nothing but invent and disperse lies to gull over-credulous people: and as many a benighted traveller hath wandered out of his way, whilst he followed for his lanthorn the meteor of foolish fire; so many a man hath been deceived by embracing of lying relations, instead of true news. Yet in case that Cush and Ahimaaz confirm the same thing, that variety of messengers from divers places, of sundry sides and several factions, all agree in material and substantial points; we ought not to be like unbelieving Thomas, to trust no more than our eyes have seen, but may rely on the truth of such relations;

and ought accordingly to be affected with sorrow if the news be bad, or joy if the tidings tend to the church's good and God's glory.

That God had visited His people.

This was the privilege of the people of the Jews, that they were styled "God's people;" but now Ammi is made Lo-Ammi, and Ruhamah, Lo-Ruhamah; and we, the Gentiles, are placed in their room. Let us therefore remember the words of St. Paul, Rom. i. 20, 21: "Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches of the olive, fear that He will not spare thee also."

O that He would be pleased to cast His eye of pity upon the poor Jews, which for fifteen hundred years and upwards have wandered without law, without lord, without land; and, as once they were, so once again to make them His people!

In giving them bread.

By "bread" is meant all sustenance necessary for the maintaining of our lives, whereof bread is the chiefest. As the temple of Dagon principally leaned on two pillars, and fell to the ground when Samson took them away; so the buildings of our bodies chiefly rely on bread and water for outward sustenance, which being taken away, [they]

cannot but presently decay. Let others therefore wish those dishes which curiosity hath invented, rather to increase than satisfy hunger, which are more delightsome to the eye than pleasing to the palate, yet more pleasing to the palate than wholesome to the stomach; let us pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Bread is a dish in every course: without this can be no feast, with this can be no famine.

OBSERVATION.

God's punishments, though they last sometimes long, yet always they end at last: and yet sometimes, for the manifestation of His power, and trial of His children's patience, He suffers them to be brought into great extremities. Abraham's hand shall be heaved up to slay Isaac, before the angel shall catch hold of it: Lazarus shall be three days dead, before Christ will raise him; the ship ready to sink, before our Saviour will awake: Peter must be drenched in the water, before our Saviour will keep him from drowning: St. Paul must be in the lion's mouth, before he shall be delivered out of it: the famine must last ten years, before God will give them bread.

An example hereof we have in our neighbouring churches of Germany, which long have been afflicted under the tyranny of their oppressors; and now at length a sun is risen out of the north, and after a long night the morning beginneth the

day. And thou, Swethland,* shalt not be counted the meanest amongst the kingdoms of Europe; for out of thee did a prince arise, who hath delivered the distressed Protestants; who at his first landing seemed to his enemies an object fitter of their scorn than opposition.† They thought our youthful David too unequal a match to cope with their general, who had been a man of war from his youth. But as verity consisteth not in the plurality of voices, so victory standeth not in the multitude of soldiers; but God so ordered it, that he that had the best cause had the best success. I dare boldly say, that all the Protestant princes and states of Germany will be ready truly to say of him what Tertullus spake flatteringly of Felix, Acts xxiv. 2: "Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we always accept it, and in all places, most noble prince, with all thankfulness." But let us turn our praises of him into prayers for him, that he who hath conquered his foes may subdue himself, not to be puffed up with his good success. So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let all them that love Thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And as ever I have

* [Sweden.—ED.] † [The reference is to Gustavus Adolphus, who, after landing in Pomerania (in 1630) with only 8,000 soldiers, was gaining a series of brilliant victories over the Imperial troops at the very time when these Lectures on Ruth were probably delivered.—ED.]

earnestly desired, so now do I steadfastly hope to see the day, when our Naomi (our worthy Naomi, more fruitful in miseries than in children, and in virtue than in both) shall arise, to return out of the land of Holland, with her prince and progeny, when she shall hear in the land of Holland that God hath visited the Palatinate, and given them rest.*

VERSES 7, 8.

And she went out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return into the land of Judah. And Naomi said to her daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to her mother.

These words contain the continuation of Naomi's return; wherein we may observe,—

First. The company that went with her,—
“her two daughters-in-law.”

Secondly. The discourse she had with this company; consisting of a precept, in the text, “Go, return each of you to her mother;” and of a prayer, in the words following.

Now, whereas her daughters-in-law did not take their farewell of Naomi at the threshold of their house, but went part of the way with her, we gather,—

* [By “our Naomi” was intended Elizabeth, daughter of James I., Princess Palatine, and Queen of Bohemia, who, at the date of these Lectures, and for many years subsequently, enjoyed a comfortable asylum at the Hague.—ED.]

OBSERVATION.

That all offices of kindnesses and courtesies ought to be betwixt the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law ; I mean, her son's wife. And yet look into the world, and ye shall commonly find enmity betwixt them ; as saith Terence in *Hecyrá*, "*Neque declinatam mulierem reperias ab aliarum ingenio ; ità adeò uno omnes animo socrus oderunt nurus.*" And their fallings out chiefly proceed from these two causes :—

First. They contend which should have the greatest right and interest in the man, who is son to the one, husband to the other. Judah and Israel contested (2 Sam. xix. 43) which should have most part in king David ; the former claiming it because he was bone of their bone ; the latter pleaded they had eleven [ten] parts in him, to Judah's single share. Thus mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws use to fall out. The mother, because her son is flesh of her flesh, and bone of her bone, pleads it is right that he should side and second with her : the daughter-in-law, because he is her husband, and therefore one flesh, challengeth that he should rather take her part : so betwixt them they fill the family with all discord.

Secondly. They fall out about the managing of the matters in the household, after whose mind they should be ordered.

But as St. James said in another case, "Beloved, these things ought not to be so;" both these brawls may be easily ended. The first may be taken up by the wisdom and discretion of the son-in-law, who ought so indifferently to poise his affections betwixt them both, with such dutifulness and respect to the one, such love and kindness to the other, that neither may have just cause to complain. And the second controversy may thus be decided: if the mother hath the state [estate] still in her hands, good reason it is she should rule the affairs, and that the daughter-in-law should wait till her mother-in-law's natural death hath paved the succession to the governing of the family. But if the old woman hath resigned her estate, and confined herself to a yearly pension, then ought she not to intermeddle with those matters from which she had willingly sequestered herself. Were this observed, there would not so many daughters-in-law rejoice, when the day of mourning for their mother-in-law is come; some whereof say, as the wicked said of David, "O, when will she die, and her name perish?"

Now to come to the discourse she had with them:

Go, return, &c.

Where ariseth a question, Whether Naomi did well, in persuading her daughters to go back unto Moab? For the satisfaction whereof, I will set down, First, What may be said against; Secondly, What may be brought for her defence.

ACCUSATION.

“Why, Naomi, why didst thou quench the zeal of thy daughters, which proffered themselves so willingly to go with thee? O, rein them not backward with dissuasions, but rather spur them forward with exhortations; and strive to bring them out of an idolatrous land, to a place where God’s worship is purely professed. Say unto them, ‘Hearken, O daughters, and consider; incline your ears; forget also your country, and your own mother’s house: so shall the Lord your God have pleasure in you. True it is, ye have a mother in Moab; but what of that? Care not for your mother, but care for your Maker: care not for her that conceived you, but care for Him that created you. Tarry not with them, no, not so much as to express your last love in performing their funerals; rather let the dead bury their dead: those that are dead spiritually, let them bury such as die naturally; and come, go ye along with me to the land of Canaan.’ Thus, Naomi, oughtest thou to have said, and then hadst performed the part, done the duty, of a mother. If, whilst thou hadst travelled with them on the way, thou hadst travailed with them till God had been formed in them; then shouldst thou shine as a double sun in heaven for saving of two souls: whereas now thou art in a manner accessory to their ghostly murder, in sending them back to an idolatrous country.”

DEFENCE.

To this accusation Naomi might justly answer, "It is my heart's desire and prayer to God, that I may be an instrument of my daughter-in-laws' conversion; but the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the innocency of the dove, is to be used in all our actions, lest we draw needless danger upon ourselves. True it is, my daughters-in-law proffer to go with me; but here is the question, whether this is done out of courtesy and compliment, or out of singleness and sincerity. Now, should they through my persuasions go into the land of Canaan, and there live in want and penury, they will be ready to rail on me another day: 'We may thank Naomi for all this; we had plentiful provisions in our own country, but she must have us hither; she by her restless importunity must wring a constrained consent from us to come into Canaan; all these miseries are befallen upon us through her default.' Yea, I am afraid that, finding want, they again will return into their own country, to my shame, the scandal of our religion, and the deeper punishment of their own souls. Wherefore without their minds would I do nothing, that their going might not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. To which end I will put them to the touchstone, to see whether their forwardness be faithful or feigned,

sound or seeming, cordial or counterfeit : I will weigh them both in the balance, hoping that neither shall be found too light."

Upon these grounds learned men have acquitted Naomi from any fault in managing this matter, she doing it only with an intent to try them.

Whence we may observe, that Pagans that profess themselves to become converts, are not without proof presently to be received into the church.

And here we may take occasion to digress a little, to show how Christians ought to behave themselves in the converting of infidels.

First. They must strive, in their mutual conversing with them, to season them with a good opinion of their honesty and upright dealing : otherwise their doctrine will never be embraced, whose manners are justly disliked.

Secondly. Having possessed them with his good esteem, they ought, as occasion is offered, to instruct them in the rudiments of Christian religion ; and to begin with such as are plain and evident by the light of nature, and so in due time to proceed to matters of greater difficulty.

Lastly. They are to pray to God to give His increase to their planting and watering : for, as Athanasius saith, " It is a Divine work to persuade men's souls to believe."

But as for the using of tortures and of torments, thereby to force them, we have no such

custom, nor as yet the churches of God: for, though none come to Christ but such as His Father draws by the violence of His effectual grace, yet ought not men to drive or drag any to the profession of the faith. Yet notwithstanding, if after long patience and forbearing with them, and long instructing them in the points of religion; if still these Pagans continue refractory and obstinate, then surely the civil magistrate, who hath the lawful dominion over them, may severely, though not cruelly, with Josiah, compel them to come to church, and to perform the outward formalities of God's worship.

Go then, ye bloody Jesuits, boast of those many millions of Americans whom you have converted, who were not converted by the sword of the mouth, gained by hearing the Gospel, but compelled by the mouth of the sword, forced by feeling your cruelty. Witness those seventy thousand, which, without any catechizing in the points of religion, were at once driven to the font, like so many horses to a watering trough. Indeed, I find my Saviour (John ii. 15) driving the merchants out of the temple with a whip of cords; but never before did I read of any which against their wills drave or instructed * Pagans to the font to be baptized.

* [Evidently a misprint,—perhaps instead of *dragged*.—ED.]

Each to her mother's house.

Here we see, widows, if poor, are to be maintained by their parents, if they be able. These widows (1 Tim. v. 16) were not to be burdensome to the church, but to be relieved by their own country.* Let parents therefore take heed how they bestow their daughters in marriage: for if they match them to unthrifths and prodigals, will it not be bitterness in the end? The burden will fall heavy on their backs, when their poor daughters with their children must be sent again to their fathers to maintain them.

House.

Widows are to contain themselves within the "house"; not like the harlot, Prov. vii. 12, always "in the streets;" but like meek Sarah in the tent: whereby they shall sooner gain the love and esteem of others. For let base and beggarly fellows buy that rascal ware which is hung out at the doors and windows of shops and stalls, whilst men of quality and fashion will go into the shop, to cheapen the worth of those merchandise as are therein kept secret and concealed. And so surely all discreet and grave men will have the highest esteem, and bear the best affection to such women

* [Probably a slip of the pen for *kindred*.—ED.]

which do not gad abroad to be seen, but, with Ruth and Orpah, being widows, keep themselves in their mother's house.

VERSES 8, 9.

The Lord show favour unto you, as ye have done with the dead, and with me.

The Lord grant you that you may find rest, either of you in the house of her husband.

Naomi being ready to take her leave of her daughters, fain she would leave them something, for which they might be the better after her departure. But gold and silver she had none, yet such as she had she freely gave unto them,—heartly prayers. Whence we learn, it is the best expression of a grateful mind, to pray to God for the welfare of those at whose hands we have received greater courtesies than we can requite.

As ye have done.

Hence we learn, God, in the rewarding of the good deeds of His servants, dealeth with them accordingly as they have done with others. Yet far be it from us to suppose, that in our stained and imperfect works there is any meritorious virtue, which deserveth that God should proportion a reward unto them: but this freely proceed-

eth from God's favour; who, to encourage us in well-doing, will not suffer a cup of cold water to pass without its reward. Do we desire, then, to have dutiful children and faithful servants hereafter? Let us be dutiful to our parents, faithful to our masters. On the other side, hath God afflicted us with Zibahs to our servants, and with Absaloms to our sons? Let us reflect our eyes on that which is past, and call ourselves to account, whether we formerly have not been unfaithful to our masters, undutiful to our parents: no doubt, we may then take up the confession of Adoni-bezek: "As I have dealt with others, so the Lord hath done to me."

With the dead.

QUESTION.

Here ariseth a question, How can one show favour to the dead, who, being past sense, are not capable of kindness or cruelty?

ANSWER.

The Papists (who leave the souls of most men departing from hence, like Absalom's body, hanging betwixt heaven and hell) expound it, that these women did fast and pray for the souls of their deceased husbands, that they might be delivered from torments, and in due time brought to

happiness in heaven. For the confutation of which erroneous exposition, I need say no more than that the Scripture makes no mention of any such middle place, wherein the souls of the godly should be detained before they go into heaven ; and in matters of faith every Christian may safely say, “ Except I see in the Bible the print thereof, or can feel it deduced out of it by undeniable consequence, I will not believe it.”

It is strange to see what impertinent places are produced by Bellarmine, to prove praying for the dead ; as James v. 16 : “ Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Then he endeavoureth to prove, that the dead pray for the living, from the parable of Dives, Luke xvi. 27 : “ I pray thee therefore, father,” &c. : where Dives was charitably solicitous for the good of his surviving brethren. But let the first place in St. James be perused by impartial judgments, and it obligeth mutually the dead saints to confess to us, as well as we to them ; which being impossible, directeth us to confine the words only to reciprocal confessing and praying to and for the living.

Some will say, Bellarmine having sufficiently proved purgatory before, (which necessarily inferreth prayers for the dead,) he might be the briefer in that subject. It is confessed, many arguments

are alleged by him to that intent, though to small purpose ; as Psalm lxvi. 12 : “ We went through fire and through water : but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.” We answer : First. The living there speak *de præterito*, “ We went ;” not *de futuro*, “ We shall go.” Secondly. It was literally meant of the children of Israel : they went “ through the fire,” when envassalled to work in the Egyptian brick-kilns ; and “ through water,” when miraculously they passed through the Red Sea. Again, they went through fire, when, preserved from the stinging of the fiery, they beheld the brazen, serpent. Thirdly. If from “ fire” in this text any can kindle a purgatory, others will quench it from the word “ water,” seeing no Papists ever fancied a watered purgatory.

They urge the place, Matth. v. 26 : “ Thou shalt by no means come out from thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing ;” importing, say they, a possibility on satisfaction to be freed thence, that is, from hell fire.

Answer : “ Until ” there is not taken terminatively, but extensively ; equivalent to “ never ” or “ not at all ;” paralleled to that place, Psalm lvii. 1 : “ In the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be over-past.” What, would David depart from God, after his deliverance ? Would he use Him as travellers a bush,—come under it in a storm, and leave it in

fair weather? No, surely; David would trust in God until that time, and at that time, and in that time, and after that time, and at all times. Parallel also to that place of Matthew i. 25: "And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son:" it being the constant tradition of antiquity, according to the proportion of faith, and embraced by the Papists themselves, that Christ's mother lived and died a spotless virgin.

Much stress he layeth on that passage of the apostle, 1 Corinth. iii. 15: "He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." This place, saith Bellarmine, is *locus utilissimus et difficillimus*, "most profitable and most hard."

We answer, First, in general. Seeing by the Jesuit's confession it is so hard a place, it is utterly improbable that purgatory (being of so high concernment to every soul as Papists would persuade us) can be therein intended: for all matters necessary for men to know and believe, wherein the safety of every single soul is interested, (such as purgatory is pretended to be,) is by the confession of all divines expressed in plain and pregnant texts of Scripture; for want whereof, Bellarmine is fain to shroud and shelter himself under the most obscure places, alleging a text most dark and difficult, by his own confession.

Secondly. That "fire" there meant by St. Paul, is affliction in this life. As for such fathers who

expounded it *de igne conflagrationis*, of that "fire" which should burn up all things at the end of the world; it makes nothing for the patronizing of purgatory, in the Popish notion thereof.

Come we now to find an office, and make an inquiry, how many things a dying godly man leaves behind him in this world. His soul is sent before him; and "from henceforth blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." (Rev. xiv. 13.) He leaveth behind him,

First, his *body*; to which we must be kind, by burial and lamentation.

Secondly, his *estate*; to which we must be kind, by careful and faithful administration.

Thirdly, his *children, friends, or kindred*; to whom we must be kind, by love and affection.

Fourthly, his *faults and failings*; to which we must be kind, by silence and suppression.*

Fifthly, his *memory and virtues*; to which we must be kind, by congratulation, commemoration, and imitation.*

Of these in order: for, although these words, "Ye have been kind to the dead," are capable of this sound sense, "You have been kind to your husbands, who now are dead, whilst they were living;"

* [Prior might almost have had these passages in his eye when he wrote:

"Be to her virtues very *kind*;
Be to her faults a little blind."—ED.]

yet, because more seemeth imported therein, we will prosecute the aforesaid particulars.

I say, First, his *body*; to which there is due burial and lamentation.

Burial; and that according to the quality and condition wherein he lived. We read of king Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 33, "They buried him in the chiefest" (in the Hebrew, "in the highest") ["of the] sepulchres of the sons of David." It must be allowed, that the sepulchre of David his father was higher than his; and next David, Hezekiah's. O that height might be but measured by true holiness! There was an officer amongst the Greeks, whose place it was to measure monuments according to the standard of the men's merits therein interred. Such officers, if used in England, would pare off great parcels from some tombs, more proportioned to the party's wealth than virtues. But nothing could be abated of Hezekiah's monument, all the dimensions whereof were due to his devotion.

And *lamentation*. Surely, of all the godly that ever departed this life, God's servants had the least cause to bewail the death of St. Stephen. For, first, whereas there is a threefold degree of certainty of salvation; first, that of hope, which, as the least and lowest, scarce deserveth to be styled certainty; secondly, that of evidence, whereby the person clearly in his soul apprehendeth

God's favour; thirdly, that of vision, peculiar to this Stephen alone, antedating his happiness with his bodily eyes, being in heaven before he was in heaven; so that, as many gates in his wounded body stood open to let out his soul, he beheld alive the heavens opened to receive it.

And yet we read, Acts viii. 2, "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." Observe, it was not said they made great lamentation *for* him, but "*over* him." They knew him [to be] in a happy condition: it was themselves they bemoaned in his death, the sight of his corpse sharpening their sorrow, that the infant church had lost one of her best swaddling-clothes.

Secondly, his *estate*; to which we must be kind, by careful and faithful administration. Heb. ix. 17: "For a testament is of force after men are dead." Gal. iii. 15: "Though it be but a man's covenant," or "testament," "yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto." *No man*: he must either be less than man in knowledge,—a mere beast; or more than man in malice,—a mere devil. By "testament" I understand not only the very words thereof, but also what appeareth to be the testator's will to the conscience of the executor. How many in this kind are cruel to the dead! so that some of the legacies bequeathed by them have had a thumb or a toe, yea, some an arm or a leg, cut off from

them. Many legacies which came sound forth from the testator, before they could get through the executors, have been more lame and maimed than the cripples in the hospital to whom they have been bequeathed.

Thirdly, his *children*, or (because Mahlon and Chilion had none of them) his *kindred or friends*; to whom the living must be kind, with love and affection. Remember the character of the good wife, Proverbs xxxi. 12 : “ She will do her husband good, and not evil, all the days of her life.” We have many wives only negatively good, pleasing and praising themselves in this, that they do their husbands no hurt. This will not do the deed; they must be positively profitable. Nor is it said, “all the days of his life,” but, “all the days of her life.” What if he dieth? her obligation to him is not cassated or nulled, (as many wives generally conceive,) but still continueth “all the days of her life.” True it is, she is set free so far, as she may marry again in a competent time, without the least shadow of sin; yet so as still obliged to do good all her lifetime to the friends, to the children (if any) of her dead husband; and he, if surviving her, reciprocally engaged to do the like.

Fourthly, the best men leave *faults and failings* behind them; to these the living must be kind, by silence and suppression.

First: of those of whom thou canst say no good, say nothing.

Secondly: of those of whom thou canst say some good, say no bad.

David is a most excellent instance hereof, 2 Sam. i. 24. Who could more, or more justly, have inveighed against Saul than David? "O ye daughters of Israel, rejoice for the death of so great a tyrant, who killed Ahimelech the high priest, and fourscore more of God's priests, whose souls were as clear from treason as the white linen ephods they wore were from spots. Twice I had him at my mercy, once in the cave, once when asleep; yet he (notwithstanding all his fair promises to the contrary) was the more cruel to me for my kindness to him." No such matter; David conceals what was bad, remembereth what was good in Saul, at leastwise what would make his memory acceptable with the weaker sex; namely, his making of gallantry fashionable amongst them: "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel."

Fifthly, *memory* of his *virtues*: to which three things are due, to make thee kind thereunto.

First, *congratulation*. I will touch this string but tenderly; not so much because fearing mine own fingers, (as if the lesson should be false I play thereon,) but expecting other men's ears as

ill-disposed with prejudice. It is no Popery, nor superstition, to praise God for the happy condition of His servants departed ; the ancient patriarchs, the inspired prophets, the holy apostles, the patient martyrs, the religious confessors. When the tribe of Reuben, Gad, and half Manasses, erected the altar *Ed* at the passage over Jordan, it startled all the rest of the tribes, as if under it they had hatched some superstitious design ; whereas indeed the altar was not intended for sacrifice, but was merely an altar of memorial, to evidence to posterity that these two tribes and a half, though divided from the rest by the river of Jordan, were conjoined with them in the worship of the same God. In like manner, when some ministers thank God for the departure of His servants, some people are so weak, and some so wilful, to condemn such for passages of Popery, as if superstitious prayers were made for their departure : whereas, indeed, such congratulation, on the contrary, speaks our confidence on their present bliss and happiness, and continueth the church militant with the church triumphant, as the completing one entire catholic church of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, *commemoration* is due to the memories of the deceased. Hence the ancient custom of funeral orations, continued in our modern practice, both to the honour of the dead, and profit of the living.

Thirdly, *imitation* of their virtues. It hath been a great question amongst such who desire to express themselves thankful to their dead ancestors, of what metal or matter to make their monuments, so as they may be most lasting and permanent. Wise men have generally decried silver and brass; not so much because too costly, (such may be the worth and wealth of the executors and party deceased,) but too tempting to sacrilege to demolish them. Brass is generally subject to the same mischief, and marble touch* and alabaster are generally used for that purpose; but the monument less subject to casualty is, to imitate the virtues of our dead friends: in other tombs the dead are preserved; in these they may be said to remain alive.

When we see a child very like to the father and mother thereof, we use to say, “Thy father will never be dead as long as thou livest.” Thus it is the best remembrance of our dead progenitors to follow their virtues. St. Paul cannot look upon Timothy, but presently calls to mind his mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois, though the latter no doubt [was] long since departed.

*The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you
in the house of her husband.*

Here we may observe, first, that it is the part of

* [An inferior kind of black marble.—Ev.]

pious parents to pray to God for the good success of their children, especially in the matter of their marriage: example in Abraham, Gen. xxiv. 7. Secondly, hence we may gather, that the life of married persons meeting together in the fear of God, is “rest.”

OBJECTION.

How then cometh it to pass that many men and women may take up the words of Rebecca, “Seeing it is so, why am I thus?” (Gen. xxv. 22.) If the married life be “rest,” how cometh it to prove my purgatory, my hell, my cause of restless torment? Men and women were joined in marriage (Gen. ii.) to the end to be a mutual help one to the other; but many prove such helpers as the king of Ashur [Assyria] did to Ahaz, of whom it is said, He “distressed him, but helped him not.” (2 Chron. xxviii. 20.)

ANSWER.

Who can hinder it, if men of their girdles and garters make halters to hang themselves? If those things which should be for their strength and ornament, be through their own default turned to their utter undoing; the estate of marriage is not herein to be blamed, but the folly of such who out of some sinister ends undertake it. Happily [haply] some choose their wives like as our grand-

mother Eve did the apple, because they are pleasant to the eyes to be looked upon : others, out of a love of their wealth, saying of their wives what the Shechemites did of the sons of Jacob, " Shall not all their herds and cattle be ours ? " Whereas, if grace and piety were principally respected in their choice, (other outward accommodations in their due distance not neglected,) they would find the truth of our observation, that a married life is " rest." For, though some petty brawls may happen amongst the most sanctified couple, which may move their anger, yet shall it not remove their love, if one with Christian discretion beareth with the infirmities of the other. Joab made this compact with his brother Abishai, 2 Sam. x. 11 : " If the Aramite be stronger than I, thou shalt help me : but if the Ammonites be too strong for thee, I will come and succour thee." Thus ought man and wife to make a bargain, with their best counsel to, and prayers for, each other, to assist themselves mutually against their sundry weaknesses and infirmities, which otherwise would turn their " rest " of their life into unquietness.

VERSES 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

*And when she kissed them, they lifted up their voices,
and wept.*

*And they said unto her, Surely we will return with
thee unto thy people.*

But Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: for what cause will you go with me? Are there any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope; and if I had a husband this night; yea, if I had born sons;

Would you tarry for them while they were of age? Would you be deferred for them from taking of husbands? Nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.

And when she kissed them.

Kisses was the ordinary salutation of the Jews at the meeting of acquaintance, men with men, women with women, men with women; provided that then they were of near kindred, to avoid all suspicion of unchastity.

And they lifted up their voices, and wept.

The observation here may be the same which the Jews collected; (John xi.;) which, when they saw our Saviour weep for Lazarus, they said, "Behold how He loved him!" So these tears in this place were the expression of their affection. Sorrow, like the river of Jordan, (1 Chron. xii. 15,)

in the first month did overflow the banks, and streamed water down their cheeks.

But Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters, &c.

In these words, she dissuadeth her daughters-in-law from returning with her. The strength of her reason, contained in three verses, may thus be set down, as if she had said: "Happily, [haply,] daughters, you have heard that it is the custom in the land of Canaan for childless widows to marry their deceased husbands' brothers. But if your return be grounded hereon, know that you build your hopes on a false foundation, it being impossible for me, by the course of nature, to have any more sons. Who will look that water should flow from a dry fountain, grapes grow on a withered vine, fruit flourish on a dead fig-tree? Though Sarah at ninety was made a mother; though Aaron's rod did bud and blossom when it was dry; I myself should be a miracle, if I should expect such a miracle: and therefore know, that there are no more sons in my womb."

DOCTRINE.

Now whereas Naomi dealeth thus plainly with her daughters, not feeding them with false hopes, it teacheth us this: We ought not to gull our friends with the promises of those things that neither will nor can come to pass. Otherwise we

shall both wrong our friends, who, the higher they are mounted upon the hill of seeming hopes, at length the deeper they will be cast into the dale of real despair: and also we shall wrong ourselves; when Time, the mother of Truth, shall unmask us, we shall prove ourselves to be no better than liars and cheaters.

USE.

Let us labour to be Nathanaels, true Israelites, "in whom there is no guile:" and as John Baptist, when as the Pharisees asked him whether he was the Christ or no, he "confessed, and denied not," and said plainly, "I am not the Christ;" (John i. 20;) so if we neither mean to do, nor know that such things can be done which our friends request of us, let us confess, deny not, and say plainly, that their suits cannot, shall not be granted; and by such downright dealing we shall at last get more favour from them than they who flatter them with their tongue. Let not the physician, when he reads in the urinal those dismal symptoms which are the ushers of death, still promise life and health unto his patient; but plainly tell him that there is *mors in ollâ*; that so he may fly unto the Physician of the Soul, for a better life, when this shall fade. Let not the lawyer, when he knows the case is desperate, feed his

client with false hopes to recover it, that so from him he may be fed with money ; but rather let him advise him to “agree with his adversary, while he is in the way ;” that, though he cannot get the conquest, yet he may have the easier composition.

For I am too old to have a husband.

Here ariseth a question.

QUESTION.

Is there any age so old, wherein a man or woman may not marry ?

ANSWER.

Naomi's meaning was not simply and absolutely that she was too old to marry, but she was too old to have a husband, and by a husband to have children, and that those children should grow up, and make fit husbands for Orpah and Ruth. Yet, by the way, I would advise such who are stricken in years, especially if impotency be added unto age, and that it may stand with their convenience, to refrain from all thoughts of a second marriage, and to expect that happy day when death shall solemnize the nuptial betwixt their soul and their Saviour. For when Barzillai hath counted eighty years, he hath even had enough of the pleasure and vanity of the world ; let him retire himself to a private life, and not envy his

son Chimham to succeed to those delights, of which his age hath made his father incapable. Yet if any ancient persons, for their mutual comfort and society, (which is not the least end for which marriage was ordained,) are disposed to match themselves herein, they are blameless; especially if they have a care to observe a correspondence of age with those to whom they link themselves. Otherwise, as our Saviour noteth, when the old cloth was joined to the new, it made no good medley, but the rent was made the worse; so when the spring of youth is wedded to the winter of age, no true comfort can arise from such unequal yokes, but much jealousy and suspicion are caused from the same.

Would ye tarry for them?

That is, “You would not tarry for them; or if you should tarry for them, you should wrong yourselves, and do unadvisedly; because in the mean time, refraining from the using of God’s ordinance, you expose yourselves to the devil, to tempt you to incontinency.” Therefore St. Paul’s counsel is good which he prescribes in 1 Tim. v. 14: “I will therefore that the younger women,” &c.

While they were of age.

Note from hence, that children are not to be married in their non-age, before they are arrived

at years of discretion : Tamar (Gen. xxxviii.) is to wait till Shelah be grown up. Those persons are therefore to be blamed, who out of by-respects match their children in their infancy. Whence it cometh to pass that as their age doth increase, their mind doth alter : so what formerly they did like, afterwards they do loathe, such marriages proving commonly most insuccessful.

*Nay, my daughters ; for it grieveth me much for
your sakes.*

As if she had said, “ It grieveth me much that you are already plunged into poverty ; but it would add more to my sorrow, if you should increase your calamities by returning home with me. For mine own part, my misery troubleth me not so much, because the sun of my life is ready to set, and it mattereth not though the ship be scanted of victuals, when it is hard by the harbour. All my care is for you, who are young women, and stand upon your own preferment : it grieveth me much for your sakes.”

DOCTRINE.

See here, such is the ingenuous nature of God's children, that they sorrow more for others that are inwrapped with them in a common calamity, than for themselves. Example in Elias, 1 Kings xvii. 20. But then it goeth nearest to their heart,

when others are not only afflicted with them, but also for them; when they themselves are the principal malefactors, for whose defaults others are punished, as in David. (2 Sam. xxiv. 17.)

USES.

It may confute the devilish nature of such who, being in trouble, care not though they pawn their dearest friends in their stead, so be it they themselves may escape. And it may also serve to comfort those that are in distress, when God only layeth His punishments on them alone, and doth not involve others together with them. Art thou afflicted with poverty? Comfort thyself, that though thou beest poor, yet thou hast undone none by suretiship for thee. Art thou in sickness? Be glad that thy disease is not infectious, and that thou hast not derived the contagion to others. Doth God punish thee for thy sin with a personal punishment? Be glad that thou bearest the weight of thine own offence, and that thou art not the Jonah, for whose private sin a whole ship of passengers is endangered to be cast away; for then their case would grieve thee more than thine own calamity.

That the hand of the Lord.

Naomi here taketh especial notice, that her losses proceeded from no other by-causes, but

from the hand of God. As David therefore asked the widow of Tekoah, (2 Sam. xiv. 19,) "Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?" so, when any affliction befalleth us, let us presently have recourse unto God, and say, "Is not the hand of the Lord the principal cause hereof?"—and not with the priests of the Philistines say, "It was a chance that happened us."

Is gone out against me.

OBSERVATION.

Hence we may observe, every saint of God, in a common calamity, is to think that God aimed at his punishment, and intended his reformation in particular. "The hand of the Lord" was gone out also against Orpah and Ruth, in taking away their husbands; yet Naomi appropriateth the stroke to herself,—"*is gone out against me.*"

How contrary is this to the practice of the world! Men in a public and a general affliction, each shifteth it off from themselves; and no one man will be brought to confess that his sins are punished or his amendment intended in particular, if the scourge be universal. As the Philistines (1 Sam. v.) posted the ark of God from Ashdod to Ekron, from one place to another, and none would receive it; so, in a common calamity, none will acknowledge that he himself is especially inter-

ested in it, but plead, "What is that to us? Let others look unto it." "O," saith the people, "God hath justly sent this plague for the corruption of the magistrates." "It is justly inflicted," saith the magistrate, "for the disobedience of the people." "Herein," saith the poor man, "God hath met with the oppression and extortion of the rich." "Herein," saith the rich man, "God hath paid home the muttering and the repining of the poor." "Now," saith the prodigal, "God punisheth the covetousness of old men." "Now," saith the old man, "He scourgeth the prodigality of such as be young." Far otherwise Naomi, who, though the arrows of God did glance and rebound, to the wounding of Orpah and Ruth, yet she thought she herself was the mark at whom God did level His shafts: "The hand of the Lord is gone out against me."

VERSE 14.

*And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law ; but Ruth
clave unto her.*

These words contain two general parts.

First. A blazing meteor falling down out of the air: "And Orpah," &c.

Secondly. A fixed star fairly shining in the heaven: "But Ruth," &c.

And Orpah kissed her mother.

Is this she which even now was so promising in her words, and so passionate in her weeping? See how soon a forward professor may turn to a fearful apostate. Though she standeth or falleth to her own Master, yet, as the Psalmist saith, "I am horribly afraid for those that forsake Thy law," so have we just cause to suspect the fearful final estate of Orpah.

Kissed her mother.

That is, gave her this last salutation of her departure. Here we see, that those who want grace and true sanctity may notwithstanding have manners and good civility. Now, had Orpah changed the corporal kiss she gave to her mother, into a spiritual kiss to her Saviour,— "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry," (Psalm ii. 12,)—her case had been as happy as now it may seem to be hopeless. But, leaving her, we come to ourselves, and gather this doctrine.

DOCTRINE.

Those who at the first were forward in religion, may afterward altogether fall away. (1 Tim. i. 20; Heb. vi. 4; Matth. xiii. 20.) It may therefore serve to abate the proud carriage of such, who, as if it were not enough to be sure, will also be presumptuous of their salvation, and thereby take

leave and liberty to themselves to live more licentiously.

OBJECTION.

But as once one of the children of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "O man of God, there is death in the pot;" so may the weak Christian complain against this doctrine: "O, it is a deadly and dangerous one, containing much matter of despair, too bitter for the palate of a poor Christian to taste, or his stomach to digest. It quencheth all the sparks of my comfort, and hacketh asunder all the sinews of my hope. I fear lest, Orpah-like, I also should fall away. What shall I do, that I may be saved?"

ANSWER.

Let not the "smoking flax" be dismayed, which in time may be a blazing flame; nor the "bruised reed" be discouraged, which may prove a brazen pillar in the temple of God. That therefore thou mayest finally persevere, observe these four rules.

RULE I.

First: Utterly renounce all sufficiency in thyself. Who but a madman will now-a-days warrant the paper shields of his own strength, that knows that Adam's complete armor of

original integrity was shot through in Paradise?

RULE II.

Secondly: Place all thy confidence on the undeserved mercy of God. Perseverance cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor as yet from the south; but God suffereth one to fall, and holdeth up another. The temple of Solomon had two pillars; one called *Jachin*, sounding in Hebrew, "The Lord will stablish;" the other, *Boaz*, signified, "In Him is strength." So every Christian ("the temple of the Holy Ghost") is principally holden up by these two pillars,—God's power, and will, to support him. Wherefore in every distress let us cry out to God, as the disciples did to our Saviour in the midst of a tempest, "Help, Master, or else we perish."

RULE III.

Thirdly: Use all those means which God hath chalked out for the increase of grace in thee; as prayer, meditation, reverent receiving the sacraments, accompanying with God's children, reading, hearing the word, &c.

RULE IV.

Fourthly: Always preserve in thyself an awful fear, lest thou shouldst fall away from God.

Fear to fall, and Assurance to stand, are two sisters; and though Cain said he was not his "brother's keeper," sure I am that this Fear doth watch and guard her sister Assurance. *Tantus est gradus certitudinis, quantus sollicitudinis*: they that have much of this fear, have much certainty; they that have little, little certainty; they that have none, have none at all. It is said in building, that those chimneys which shake most, and give way to the wind, will stand the longest: the moral in divinity is true: those Christians that shiver for fear by sins to fall away, may be observed most courageous to persist in piety.

COMFORT.

To those that diligently practise these rules, I will add this comfort: Encourage thyself, that God will keep thee from apostasy unto the end, because already hitherto He hath preserved thee. For God's former favours are pawns and pledges of His future love. David's killing of a lion and a bear were the earnest of his victory over Goliath. Thus St. Paul reasoneth, 2 Cor. i. 10: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." When Rachel bare her first son, (Gen. xxx.) she called him Joseph, and said, "The Lord shall add to me another son." So,

when God hath already blessed us and supported us for the time past, let us say with Rachel, “‘Joseph,—the Lord will add:’ He will not stay, or stint, or stop here; but as He hath kept me from my mother’s womb, and ever since I was born, so I trust He will not forsake me when I am aged, and full of grey hairs.”

But, to return to her which returned again to Moab. We read in 2 Sam. xx. that the people which passed by the corpse of murdered Amasa, being moved with such a hideous and uncouth spectacle, they “stood still:” but when we read this Book of Ruth, and come to Orpah’s apostasy, there let us a while pause and demur, to read in her fall a lecture of our own infirmity. For if we stand, it is not because we have more might in ourselves, but because God hath more mercy on us. Let us therefore “work out our salvation with fear and trembling:” ever trembling, lest we should be cast to hell; ever triumphing, that we shall come to heaven: ever fearful, lest we should fall; ever certain, that we shall stand: ever careful, lest we should be damned; ever cheerful, that we shall be saved. Concerning Ruth’s perseverance we intend to treat hereafter.

VERSE 15.

And Naomi said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law.

In these words Naomi seeks to persuade Ruth to return; alleging the example of Orpah, who, she saith, was “gone back to her people, and to her gods.”

OBSERVATION.

Where, first, we find that all the heathen, and the Moabites amongst the rest, did not acknowledge one true God, but were the worshippers of many gods; for they made every attribute of God to be a distinct deity. Thus, instead of that attribute, the wisdom of God, they feigned Apollo the god of wisdom; instead of the power of God, they made Mars the god of power; instead of that admirable beauty of God, they had Venus the goddess of beauty. But no one attribute was so much abused as God’s providence: for the heathen supposing that the whole world, and all the creatures therein, was too great a diocese to be daily visited by one and the same Deity, they therefore assigned sundry gods to several creatures. Thus God’s providence in ruling the raging of the seas was counted Neptune; in

stilling the roaring winds, Æolus ; in commanding the powers of hell, Pluto : yea, sheep had their Pan, and gardens their Pomona ; the heathens then being as fruitful in feigning of gods, as the Papists since in making of saints.

DOCTRINE.

Now, because Naomi used the example of Orpah as a motive to work upon Ruth to return, we gather from thence, examples of others set before our eyes are very potent and prevalent arguments to make us follow and imitate them : whether they be good examples,—so the forwardness of the Corinthians to relieve the Jews provoked many,—or whether they be bad,—so the dissembling of Peter at Antioch drew Barnabas and others into the same fault. But those examples, of all others, are most forcible with us, which are set by such who are near to us by kindred, or gracious with us in friendship, or great over us in power.

USE 1.

Let men in eminent places, as magistrates, ministers, fathers, masters, and the like, (seeing that others love to dance after their pipe, to sing after their tune, to tread after their track,) endeavour to propound themselves patterns of pity and religion to those that be under them.

USE II.

When we see any good example propounded unto us, let us strive with all possible speed to imitate it. What a deal of stir is there in the world for civil precedence and priority! Every one desires to march in the forefront, and thinks it a shame to come lagging in the rearward. O that there were such a holy ambition and heavenly emulation in our hearts, that, as Peter and John ran a race, which should come first to the grave of our Saviour, so men would contend, who should first attain to true mortification! And when we see a good example set before us, let us imitate it, though it be in one who in outward respects is far our inferior. Shall not the master be ashamed to see that his man, whose place on earth is to come behind him, in piety towards heaven goes before him? Shall not the husband blush to see his wife, which is the weaker vessel in nature, to be the stronger vessel in grace? Shall not the elder brother dye his cheeks with the colour of virtue, to see his younger brother, who was last born, first re-born by faith and the Holy Ghost? Yet let him not therefore envy his brother, as Cain did Abel; let him not be angry with his brother, because he is better than himself; but let him be angry with himself, because he is worse than his brother; let him turn all his

malice into imitation, all his fretting at him into following of him. Say unto him, as Gehazi did of Naaman, "As the Lord liveth, I will run after him:" and though thou canst not over-run him, nor as yet over-take him, yet give not over to run with him; follow him, though not as Asahel did Abner, hard at the heels; yet as Peter did our Saviour, "afar off;" that, though the more slowly, yet as surely thou mayest come to heaven; and though thou wert short of him whilst he lived, in the race, yet thou shalt be even with him when thou art dead, at the mark.

USE III.

When any bad example is presented unto us, let us decline and detest it, though the men be never so many, or so dear unto us. Imitate Micaiah, (1 Kings xxii.) to whom when the messengers sent to fetch him said, "Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one mouth: let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like to one of them;" Micaiah answered, "As the Lord liveth, whatsoever the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." If they be never so dear unto us, we must not follow their bad practice. So must the son please him that begat him, that he do not displease Him that created him: so must the wife follow him that married her, that she doth not offend Him that made her. Wherefore,

as Samson, though bound with new cords, snapped them asunder as tow when it feeleth the fire ; so, rather than we should be led by the lewd examples of those which be near and dear unto us, let us break in pieces all ties, engagements, relations whatsoever.

QUESTION.

Yea, but one may say, “ What if I find in the Scripture an action recorded, whose doer is known to have been a godly and gracious man ? may I not, without any further doubt or scruple, follow the same ? ”

ANSWER.

For the better satisfying hereof, I will rank the actions of godly men, registered in the Scriptures, into nine several ranks, and will show how far forth we may safely proceed in the imitation of them.

1. We find some actions set down which are extraordinary, the doers whereof had peculiar strength and dispensation from God to do them. Thus Samson slew himself and the Philistines in the temple of Dagon ; Elias caused fire to descend on the two captains and their fifties ; Elisha cursed the children of Bethel. Now these are recorded rather for our instruction than imitation : for when the “ sons of thunder ” would have been the sons of lightning, and have had

fire from heaven to burn the Samaritans, which refused to receive our Saviour, after the example of Elias, Christ checked their ill-tempered zeal, and told them, "You know not what spirit you are of."

2. Some examples are set down which are founded in the ceremonial law; as, the eating of the paschal lamb; the circumcising of their children the eighth day. Now the date of these did expire at the death of Christ: the substance being come, the shadows are fled; and therefore they may in no wise still be observed.

3. Such examples as are founded in the judicial law, which was only calculated for the elevation of the Jewish commonwealth; as, to put men to death for adultery. Now these examples tie us no farther to imitate them, than they agree with the moral law, or with those statutes by which every particular country is governed.

4. Some there be founded in no law at all, but only in an ancient custom by God tolerated and connived at; as, polygamy in the patriarchs, divorces in the Jews upon every slight occasion. From these also we must in these days abstain, as which were never liked or allowed by God, though permitted in some persons and ages, for some special reasons.

5. Doubtful examples; which may so be termed, because it is difficult to decide whether the actors

of them therein did offend or no ; so that, should a jury of learned writers be empaneled to pass their verdict upon them, they would be puzzled whether to condemn or acquit them, and at length be forced to find it an *Ignoramus* ; as, whether David did well to dissemble himself frantic, thereby to escape the cruelty of Achish, king of Gath. Now our most advised way herein is altogether to abstain from the imitation of them, because there is a deal of difficulty and danger, and our judgments may easily be deceived.

6. Mixed examples ; which contain in them a double action, the one good, the other bad, both so closely couched together that it is a very hard thing to sever them. Thus, in the unjust steward, there was his wisdom to provide for himself, and his wickedness to purloin from his master : the first God did commend, we may imitate ; the latter He could not but loathe, we may not but shun. In the Israelitish midwives, Exod. i., there was *fides mentis, et fallacia mentientis*, “ the faith of their ” love, “ and the falseness of their lying : ” the first God rewarded, and we may follow ; the latter He could not but dislike, and we must detest. Behold, here is wisdom, and let the man that hath understanding discreetly divide betwixt the dross and the gold, the chaff and the wheat, in these mixed examples ; that so he may practise the one, eschew and avoid the other.

7. Those which be absolutely bad, that no charitable comment can be fastened upon them; as, the drunkenness of Noah, the incest of Lot, the lying of Abraham, the swearing of Joseph, the adultery of David, the denial of Peter. Now God forbid we should imitate these: far be it from us, with king Ahaz, to take a pattern from the idolatrous altar of Damascus. The Holy Spirit hath not set these sins down with an intent they should be followed; but first to show the frailty of His dearest saints, when He leaves them to themselves; as also to comfort us when we fall into grievous sins, when we see that as heinous offences of God's servants stand upon the record in the Scripture.

8. Actions which are only good as they are qualified with such a circumstance, as David's eating of the show-bread, provided for the priests, in a case of absolute necessity. These we may follow; but then we must have a special eye and care that the same qualifying circumstance be in us; for otherwise the deed will be impious and damnable.

9. Examples absolutely good; as, the faithfulness of Abraham, the peaceableness of Isaac, the painfulness of Jacob, the chastity of Joseph, the patience of Moses, the valour of Joshua, the sincerity of David. These it is lawful and laudable with our best endeavours to imitate. Follow not the adultery of David, but follow the chastity of

Joseph; follow not the dissembling of Peter, but follow the sincerity of Nathanael; follow not the testiness of Jonah, but follow the meekness [of] Moses; follow not the apostasy of Orpah, but follow the perseverance of Ruth, which comes in the next text to be treated of.

VERSES 16, 17.

And Ruth answered, Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to depart from thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou dwellest, I will dwell: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

Here we have the resolution of Ruth portrayed in lively colours: so that if we consider her sex,—a woman; her nation,—a Moabite; one may boldly pronounce of her what our Saviour did of the centurion, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

Entreat me not to leave thee.

Some read it, “Be not thou against me,” as it is in the margin of the new translation. Where we see, that those are to be accounted our adversaries, and against us, who dissuade us from our

voyage to Canaan, from going to God's true religion. They may be our fathers, they cannot be our friends. Though they promise us all outward profits and pleasures, yet in very deed they are not with us, but against us, and so must be accounted of.

Where thou lodgest, I will lodge.

A good companion, saith the Latin proverb, is *pro viatico*,*—I may add also, *pro diversorio*.† Ruth, so be it she may enjoy Naomi's gracious company, will be content with any lodging, though happily it may be no better than Jacob had. (Gen. xxviii.) And yet we see how some have been discouraged even from the company of our Saviour, for fear of hard lodging. Witness the scribe, to whom when our Saviour said, "The foxes have their holes, and the fowls of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head;" this cold comfort presently quenched his forward zeal, and he never appeared afterward; whereas he ought to have said to our Saviour, as Ruth to Naomi, "Where Thou lodgest, will I lodge."

Thy people shall be my people.

Haman, being offended with Mordecai, as if it

* [Serves "instead of baggage, provender, and all the necessities of travelling."—Ed.]

† ["Instead of an inn or lodging."—Ed.]

had been but lean and weak revenge to spit his spite upon one person, hated all the Jews for Mordecai's sake. The mad bear, stung with one bee, would needs throw down the whole hive. But clean contrary, Naomi had so graciously demeaned herself that Ruth for her sake is fallen in love with all the Jews. Farewell, Melchom; farewell, Chemosh; farewell, Moab! Welcome, Israel; welcome, Canaan; welcome, Bethlehem! All of a sudden she will turn convert, she will turn proselyte.

OBSERVATION.

The godly carriage of one particular person may beget a love of that country and people whereof he is, even in a stranger and foreigner. Do we then desire to gain credit to our country, praise to our people, honour to our nation, repute to our religion? Let us deport and behave ourselves graciously, if we live amongst strangers. On the other side, the base and debauched manners of some one man are able to make his country stink in the nostrils of those foreigners amongst whom he lives. *Ex uno discite omnes*: in one faithless Sinon one may read the treachery of all the Grecians.

Thy God shall be my God.

Jehoshaphat, when he joined with Ahab, (1

Kings xxii.,) said unto him, "My people is as thy people, and my horses are as thy horses;" that is, he would comply with him in a politic league: but Ruth goes further, to an unity in religion, "Thy God shall be my God." Yea, but one may say, "How came Ruth to know who was the God of Naomi?" I answer, As God said of Abraham, "I know that Abraham will instruct his children;" so may one confidently say of Naomi,—I know that Naomi had catechized and instructed her daughter-in-law, and often taught her that the God of the Israelites was the only true God, who made heaven and earth, and that all others were but idols, the works of men's hands. Yet, as the Samaritans believed our Saviour first upon the relation of the woman that came from the well, but afterwards said unto her, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world;" (John iv. 42;) so happily Ruth was induced first to the liking of the God of Israel upon the credit of Naomi's words; but afterwards her love of Him proceeded from a more certain ground, the motions of God's Holy Spirit in her heart.

Where thou diest, will I die.

Here Ruth supposeth two things. First, that she and her mother-in-law should both die: "It

is appointed for all once to die.” Secondly, that Naomi, as the eldest, should die first; for, according to the ordinary custom of nature, it is most probable and likely that those that are most stricken in years should first depart this life. Yet I know not whether the rule or the exceptions be more general; and therefore let both young and old prepare for death: the first may die soon, but the second cannot live long.

And there will I be buried.

Where she supposeth two things more. First, that those that survived her would do her the favour to bury her; which is a common courtesy, not to be denied to any. It was an epitaph written upon the grave of a beggar,—

*Nudus eram vivus; mortuus, ecce, tegor.**

Secondly, she supposeth that they would bury her, according to her instructions, near to her mother Naomi.

OBSERVATION.

As it is good to enjoy the company of the godly while they are living, so it is not amiss, if it will stand with conveniency, to be buried with them

* [“Naked on the earth I hover’d:

Now, stone dead, behold, I’m cover’d.”—*Ed.*]

after death. The old prophet's bones escaped a burning by being buried with the other prophets; and the man who was tumbled into the grave of Elisha was revived by the virtue of his bones. And we read in the "Acts and Monuments," that the body of Peter Martyr's wife was buried in a dunghill; but afterward, being taken up in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, it was honourably buried in Oxford, in the grave of one Frideswick, a Popish she-saint; to this end, that if Popery—which God forbid!—should overspread our kingdom again, and if the Papists should go about to untomb Peter Martyr's wife's bones, they should be puzzled to distinguish betwixt this woman's body and the relics of their saint. So, good it is sometimes to be buried with those whom some do account pious, though perchance in very deed they be not so.

The Lord do so to me, and more also.

To ascertain Naomi of the seriousness of her intentions herein, Ruth backs what formerly she had said with an oath, lined with an execration.

OBSERVATION.

Whence we may gather, it is lawful for us to swear upon a just cause: but then these three rules must be warily observed.

First: That we know that the thing whereto

we swear be true, if the oath be assertory ; and if it be promissory, that we be sure that it is in our intent, and in our power, God blessing us, to perform that which we promise.

Secondly : That the occasion whereupon we use it be of moment and consequence, not trifling and trivial.

Thirdly : That we swear by God alone, and not by any creature. Swear then neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by Jerusalem, nor by the temple, nor by the gold of the temple, nor by the altar, nor by the sacrifice on the altar, but by God alone : for He only is able to reward thee, if that thou affirmest be true ; He only is able to punish thee, if that thou avouchest be false. Yet this doth no ways favour the practice of many now-a-days, who make oaths their language. Our Saviour said to the Jews, “ Many good works have I showed you from the Father : for which of them go you about to stone Me ? ” So may the Lord say to many riotous gallants now-a-days, “ Many good deeds have I done to thee : I created thee of nothing ; I sent My Son to die for thee ; by My providence I continually protect and preserve thee : for which of these deeds dost thou go about by oaths to blaspheme Me ? ”

Now whereas Ruth doth not say, “ God damn me,” “ God confound me,” “ I would I might never stir ; ” but shrouds the execration under

general terms, " God do so to me, and more also ; " we learn, it is not good to particularize in any kind of punishment when we swear, but only to express the curse in general terms, leaving it to the discretion of God Almighty, to choose that arrow out of His quiver which He shall think most fit to shoot at us.

If aught but death.

See here the large extent of a saint's love; it lasts till death: and no wonder; for it is not founded upon honour, beauty, or wealth, or any other sinister respect in the party beloved, which is subject to age or mutability, but only on the grace and piety in him; which foundation because it always lasteth, that love which is built upon it is also perpetual.

Part thee and me.

Death is that which parteth one friend from another. Then the dear father must part with his dutiful child; then the dutiful child must forgo his dear father: then the kind husband must leave his constant wife; then the constant wife must lose her kind husband: then the careful master must be sundered from his industrious servant; then the industrious servant must be severed from his careful master. Yet this may be some comfort to those whose friends death hath

taken away, that as our Saviour said to the disciples, "Yet a little while, and you shall not see Me; and yet a little while, and you shall see Me again:" so yet a little while, and we shall not see our friends; and yet a little while, and we shall see them again in the kingdom of heaven; for, *non mittuntur, sed præmittuntur*,—we do not forgo them, but they go before us.

To conclude: we see many women so strangely disguised with fantastic fashions, as if they desired to verify the nickname of the philosopher, and to prove themselves in very deed to be very monsters. Yea, many of them so affect man-like clothes and shorn hair, it is hard to discover the sex of a woman through the attire of a man. But we see in my text worthy Ruth taking upon her, not the clothes, but the courage; not the hair, but the heart; not the attire, but the resolution of a man, yea, and more than of a man. Witness her worthy speech, "Entreat me not to depart," &c.

VERSE 18.

*And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded
to go with her, she left off speaking unto her.*

Orpah and Ruth may be compared to two strong forts; Naomi, to one that besieged them; who

made three sore assaults upon them :—the first, in the eighth verse ; which assault both of them resisted with equal constancy :—the second, in the eleventh verse ; to which Orpah basely yieldeth, and accepteth terms of composition :—the last, in the fifteenth verse ; which Ruth most valiantly defeated, and stood upon terms of defiance to the mention of any return. Now as soldiers, when they have long besieged a city with the loss of time, money, and men, being hopeless to take it, they even sound a retreat, and retire home, without accomplishing their desire ; so Naomi, perceiving that all her arguments which she used to conquer Ruth, like water in the smith's forge cast on coals, did more intend * the heat of her constancy, gives over in my text : “ And when she saw,” &c.

Which words do probably persuade what formerly we affirmed, namely, that Naomi dissuaded her daughter, only to search and sound her sincerity, not with any true desire she should go back to Moab. For even as it is plain that the replier in his disputation aimeth not at the suppressing, but at the advancing, of a truth, who surceaseth and cavils no longer, when he sees the neck of his argument broken with a sufficient answer ; so it appeareth that Naomi, what she had said formerly,

* [“ Intensify.”—ED.]

spake it only to try her daughter ; because, having now had sufficient experience of her constancy, she so willingly desisted. God wrestled with Jacob, with a desire to be conquered ; so Naomi no doubt opposed Ruth, hoping and wishing that she herself might be foiled.

'And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded.

The Hebrew reads it, "that she strengthened herself;" that being their phrase to express an oath.

OBSERVATION.

Where we observe, oaths taken upon just occasion are excellent ties and bands to strengthen men in the performance of those things to which they swear. The greater pity it is, then, that a thing in itself so sovereign should be so daily and dangerously abused. Witness Herod, who by reason of a rash oath cast himself into a worse prison than that wherein he had put the Baptist, making that which, being well used, might have confirmed in piety, to be a means to enforce him to murder.

USE.

Let this teach us, when we find ourselves to lag and falter in Christianity, to call to mind

that solemn vow, promise, and profession, which our godfathers in our name made for us at our baptism,—to “forsake the devil and all his works, the vain pomps and vanities of this wicked world; and to fight valiantly under Christ’s standard.” Let us remember from whence we are fallen, and do our first work. We need not make a new vow, but only renew the old; and so settle and establish ourselves in the practice of piety, as Ruth in my text by an oath strengthened herself.

She left off speaking unto her.

She saw she had now enough expressed and declared her integrity, and therefore she would not put her to the trouble of any farther trial.

OBSERVATION.

Hence the doctrine is this: After proof and trial made of their fidelity, we are to trust our brethren, without any farther suspicion. Not to try before we trust, is want of wisdom; not to trust after we have tried, is want of charity. The goldsmith must purify the dross and ore from the gold; but he must be wary lest he makes waste of good metal, if over-curious in too often refining. We may search and sound the sincerity of our brethren; but, after good experience made of their uprightness, we must take heed lest by

continual sifting and proving them we offend a weak Christian. Christ tried the woman of Syrophœnicia first with silence, then with two sharp answers; at last, finding her to be sound, He dismissed her with granting her request, and commending of her faith. When He had said to Peter the third time, "Lovest thou Me?" He rested satisfied with Peter's answer, and troubled him with no more questions.

USE.

It may confute the jealous and suspicious minds of such who still think that their brethren are rotten at the heart, hypocritical, dissemblers, though they have made never so manifest proof of their uprightness. Thomas would not take his Master's resurrection on the credit of his fellow apostles' relation: his faith would not follow, except his own sense was the usher to lead it the way. So these men are altogether incredulous and very infidels in the point of their brethren's sincerity, though it be never so surely warranted unto them on the words of those whom they ought to believe. Hence oftentimes it comes to pass, that they scandalize and offend many weak Christians, whose graces are true, though weak; faith unfeigned, though feeble. Yea, it maketh weak saints to be jealous of themselves, to see others so jealous of them. But we must be

wonderful careful how we give offence to any of God's "little ones." When Esau (Gen. xxxiii. 13) would have persuaded Jacob to drive on faster, Jacob excused himself, saying, that the children were "tender," and the ewes big with young; and if they should be overdriven one day, they would die. Thus, if any would persuade us to sift and winnow, and try the integrity of our brethren, after long experience of them, we may answer, This is dangerous to be done, because "smoking flax" and "bruised reeds," tender professors, may utterly be discouraged and disheartened by our restless pressing and disquieting of them. Wherefore Naomi, having now seen the reality of Ruth's resolutions, left off from any further molesting of her.

VERSES 19, 20, 21, 22.

*So they went both until they came to Bethlehem.
And when they came to Bethlehem, all the city
was moved at them, and they said, Is not this
Naomi?*

*And she said, Call me not Naomi, but call me Marah :
for the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me.*

*I went out full, and the Lord hath caused me to re-
turn empty : why call you me Naomi, sithence **

* ["Since," or "seeing."—ED.]

the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, when she came out of the country of Moab : and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

The Holy Spirit mentioneth not what discourse they exchanged by the way ; yet no doubt they were neither silent, nor busied in unprofitable talk.

And all the city was moved, &c.

See here, Naomi was formerly a woman of good quality and fashion, of good rank and repute : otherwise her return in poverty had not been so generally taken notice of. Shrubs may be grubbed to the ground, and none miss them ; but every one marks the felling of a cedar. Groveling cottages may be evened to the earth, and none observe them ; but every traveller takes notice of the fall of a steeple. Let this comfort those to whom God hath given small possessions. Should He visit them with poverty, and take from them that little they have, yet their grief and shame would be the less : they should not have so many fingers pointed at them, so many eyes staring on them, so many words spoken of them ; they might lurk in obscurity : it must be a Naomi,

a person of eminency and estate, whose poverty must move a whole city.

And they said, Is not this Naomi?

Remarkable it is, that so many people should jump in the same expression; but as Abraham laughed, and Sarah laughed,—both used the same outward gesture, yet arising from different causes; his laughter from joy, hers from distrust,—so all these people might meet in the same form of words, yet far dissent in their minds wherewith they spake them. Some might speak out of admiration: “Strange! wonderful! is this she who once was so wealthy? How quickly is a river of riches drained dry! She that formerly was so fair, now one can scarce read the ruins of beauty in her face. ‘Is not this Naomi?’” Some out of exprobration: “See, see, this is she that could not be content to tarry at home to take part of the famine with the rest of her fellows, but needs with her husband and sons must be gadding to Moab. See what good she hath got by removing: by changing her country, she hath changed her condition. ‘Is not this Naomi?’” Some might speak it out of commiseration: “Alas, alas! is not this that gracious woman, that godly saint, which formerly by her charity relieved many in distress? How soon is a full clod turned into parched earth! one that

supplied others, into one that needeth to be supplied by others ! ‘ Is not this Naomi ? ’ ”

And she said, Call me not Naomi, but call me Marah.

Naomi signifieth “ Beautiful ; ” *Marah*, “ Bitter : ” (Exod. xv. 23 :) where we see, that the godly in poverty are unwilling to have names and titles disagreeing and disproportioned to their present estates ; which may confute the folly of many, which, being in distress, and living little better than upon the alms of others, will still stand upon their points, bear themselves bravely on their birth, not lose an inch of their place, not abate an ace of their gentry. Far otherwise was Naomi affected : being poor, she would not be over-named or title-heavy : “ Call me not Naomi, but call me Marah.”

OBSERVATION.

Here also we may see, that it was a custom of great antiquity in the world, that men and women should have several names whereby they were called ; and that for these three reasons.

1. That they might be differenced and distinguished from others.

2. That they might be stirred up to verify the meanings and significations of their names.

Wherefore let every Obadiah strive to be “a servant of God,” each Nathanael to be “a gift of God,” Onesimus to be “profitable,” every Roger “quiet and peaceable,” Robert “famous for counsel,” and William “a help and defence” to many: not like Absalom, who was not a “father of peace,” as his name doth import, but a son of sedition; and Diotrephes, not “nursed by God,” as his name sounds, but puffed up by the devil, as it is 3 John 9.

3. That they might be incited to imitate the virtues of those worthy persons who formerly have been bearers and owners of their names. Let all Abrahams be faithful, Isaacs quiet, Jacobs painful, Josephs chaste; every Lewis pious, Edward confessor of the true faith, William conqueror over his own corruptions. Let them also carefully avoid those sins for which the bearers of the names stand branded to posterity. Let every Jonah beware of frowardness, Thomas of distrustfulness, Martha of worldliness, Mary of wantonness. If there be two of our names, one exceedingly good, the other notoriously evil, let us decline the vices of the one, and practise the virtues of the other. Let every Judas not follow Judas Iscariot, who betrayed our Saviour, but Judas the brother of James, the writer of the General Epistle:—each Demetrius not follow him in the Acts who made silver

shrines for Diana, but Demetrius, 3 John 12, who had a "good report of all men:"—every Ignatius not imitate Ignatius Loyola the lame father of blind obedience, but Ignatius the worthy martyr in the primitive church. And if it should chance, through the indiscretion of parents and god-fathers, that a bad name should be imposed on any, O let not "folly" be "with" them, because Nabal is their name; but in such a case let them strive to falsify, disprove, and confute their names. Otherwise, if they be good, they must answer them.

In the days of Queen Elizabeth, there was a royal ship called "The Revenge," which, having maintained a long fight against a fleet of Spaniards, (wherein eight hundred great shot were discharged against her,) was at last fain to yield: but no sooner were her men gone out of her, and two hundred fresh Spaniards come into her, but she suddenly sunk them and herself; and so "The Revenge" was revenged. Shall lifeless pieces of wood answer the names which men impose upon them, and shall not reasonable souls do the same? But, of all names, I pray God that never just occasion be given that we be christened "Ichabod," but that the glory may remain in our Israel so long as the faithful Witness endure in heaven. And so much of those words, "Call me not Naomi, but," &c.

For the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me.

Afflictions relish sour and bitter even to the palates of the best saints.

OBSERVATION.

Now bitter things are observed in physic to have a double operation: first, to strengthen and corroborate the liver; and secondly, to cleanse and wipe away choler, which cloggeth the stomach. Both these effects afflictions by their bitterness produce: they strengthen the inward vitals of a Christian, his faith and patience; and cleanse God's saints from those superfluous excrements which the surfeit of prosperity hath caused in them. It may therefore serve to comfort such as groan under God's afflicting hand. (Hebrews xii. 11.) The book which St. John ate, (Rev. x. 10,) was "sweet" in his mouth, but "bitter" in his belly: clean contrary, afflictions are bitter in the mouth, but sweet in the belly; God, by sanctifying them, extracting honey out of gall, and sugar out of wormwood. And let it teach us also not to wonder if the children of God winch [wince], and shrug, and make sour faces, when afflicted. Wonder not at David, if he crieth out in the anguish of his heart; at Job, if he complaineth in the bitterness of his soul; at Jeremiah, if he lamenteth in the extremity of his

grief: for even then they are swallowing of a potion which is bitter unto flesh and blood.

I went out full, and the Lord hath caused me to return empty.

Here may we see the uncertainty of all outward wealth.

OBSERVATION.

How quickly may a Crassus, or Cræsus, be turned into a Codrus; the richest, into the poorest of men! Whom the sun-rising seeth in wealth, him the sun-setting may see in want. Set not up then your horns so high, neither speak presumptuous words, ye wealthy men; for God, if it pleaseth Him, can in a moment dispossess you of all your riches. And let us all “not lay up treasures here on earth, where rust and moths do corrupt, and thieves break through and steal: but lay up your treasure in heaven, where rust and moth do not corrupt, and thieves do not break through and steal.”

Why call you me Naomi, sithence the Lord, &c.

The mention of their former wealth is grievous to the godly, when they are in present poverty.

OBSERVATION.

When the children of Israel are captives in

Babylon, it cuts them to the heart to be twitted with the songs of Sion. And it may teach this point of wisdom to such as repair to give comfort to men in affliction, not to mention that tedious and ingrateful subject, what happiness that party formerly enjoyed. Sum not up to Job in distress the number of his camels; tell not his sheep, reckon not his oxen; read not unto him an inventory of those goods whereof he before was possessed: for this will but add to his vexation. Rather descend to apply solid and substantial comfort unto him.

*Sithence [Seeing] the Lord hath testified against me,
and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*

Every affliction is a witness that God is angry with us for our sins.

OBSERVATION.

Who then is able to hold out suit with God in the court of heaven? For God Himself is both Judge and Witness, and also the executor and inflicter of punishments. It is therefore impossible for sinful man to plead with Him; and it is our most advised course, as soon as may be, to come to terms of composition with Him, and to make means unto Him through the mediation of our

Saviour. Now, that all afflictions are immediately inflicted by God, we have showed formerly.

And they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

The Jews had two distinct harvests, of wheat and barley ; and barley was the first. (2 Sam. xxi. 9.) So here we see the providence of God, in ordering and disposing the journey of Naomi, to end it in the most convenient time. Had she come before harvest, she would have been straitened for means to maintain herself ; if after harvest, Ruth had lost all those occasions which paved the way to her future advancement. God therefore, who ordered her going, concludes her journey in the beginning of harvest.

And thus have we gone over this chapter. Now, as Samuel, in the First Book, chap. vii., verse 12, erected an altar, and called it Eben-ezer ; for, said he, “ Hitherto the Lord hath helped us : ” so here may I raise an altar of gratitude unto God, with the same inscription : “ Eben-ezer : Hitherto the Lord of His goodness hath assisted us.”

CHAPTER II.

VERSES 1, 2.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech ; and his name was Boaz.

And Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi, I pray thee, let me go into the field, and gather ears of corn after him in whose sight I find favour. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

This first verse presents us with two remarkable things.

1. Poor Naomi was allied to powerful Boaz.

2. Boaz was both a powerful man, and a godly man.

Of the first. Poor people may be allied and of great kindred to those that are wealthy ; and those that be wealthy, to such as are poor. Joseph, though governor of Egypt, had poor Jacob to his father, and plain shepherds to his brethren. Esther, though queen to Ahasuerus, hath poor Mordecai for her uncle.

USE I.

Let this confute such as having gotten a little

more thick clay than the rest of their family, the getting of new wealth and honour makes them to lose their old eyes, so that they cannot see and discern their poor kindred afterwards. When Joseph was governor of Egypt, it is said that he knew his brethren, but his brethren knew not him; but now-a-days it happeneth clean contrary. If one of a family be advanced to great honour, it is likely that his kindred will know him, but he oftentimes comes to forget them. Few there be of the noble nature of the Lord Cromwell, who, sitting at dinner with the lords of the council, and chancing to see a poor man afar off which used to sweep the cells and the cloisters, called for the man, and told the lords, "This man's father hath given me many a good meal; and he shall not lack so long as I live." *

USE II.

Let it teach those who are the top of their kindred, the best of their house, to be thankful to God's gracious goodness, who hath raised them to such a height. He hath not dealt thus with every one, neither are all of their kindred so well provided for outward maintenance. And also let them learn to be bountiful and beneficial to their kindred in distress. Mordecai said to Esther, (Esth. iv. 14,) "Who knoweth whether thou art

* Foxe, page 1188.

come to the kingdom for such a time?" namely, to deliver her countrymen the Jews from that imminent danger.

So, who knoweth whether God hath raised thee up, who art the best of thy kindred, to this very intent, that thou mightest be the treasure and the storehouse to supply the want of others which are allied unto thee? But if one should chance to be of so wealthy a stock as that none of his alliance stood in need of his charity, let such a one cast his eye upon such as are of kindred unto him by his second birth, and so he shall find enough widows, orphans, and poor Christians, to receive his liberality.

Notwithstanding, let poor people be wary and discreet, that through their idleness they be not a burden to wealthy men of their alliance. When a husbandman claimed kindred in Grosted,* bishop of Lincoln, and would fain on the instant turn a gentleman, and to this end requested his lordship to bestow an office upon him; the bishop told him, that if his plough were broken, he would mend it; if he wanted a plough, he would make him a new one; telling him withal, that he should by no means leave that calling and vocation wherein God had set him. So ought all poor people in-

* [Spelt variously by old writers, according as they inclined to an English or French form of the name,—Grosthead, Grouthead, Grotehead, and Grosseteste.—ED.]

dustriously to take pains for themselves, and not to give themselves over to ease, relying and depending for their maintenance on their reference and relation to a rich kinsman.

Come we now to the second observation,—that the same man may be godly, and also mighty in wealth, like Boaz. Behold your calling: “not many wise,” yet some wise, as Solomon, and Sergius deputy of Cyprus; “not many rich,” yet some rich, as Abraham, Job; “not many noble,” yet some noble, as Theophilus. For it is not the having of wealth, but the having confidence in wealth; not the possessing it, but the relying on it, which makes rich men incapable of the kingdom of heaven: otherwise wealth well used is a great blessing, enabling the owner to do God more glory, the church and commonwealth more good.

USE.

Let all wealthy men strive to add inward grace unto their outward greatness. ● 'tis excellent when Joash and Jehoiada meet together; when prince and priest, power and piety, are united in the same person; that so greatness may be seasoned and sanctified by grace, and grace credited and countenanced by greatness; that so kings may be nursing-fathers, and queens nursing-mothers, to God's church. Contrary to which,

how many be there, that think themselves privileged from being good, because they are great! Confining Piety to hospitals, for their own parts they disdain so base a companion. Hence, as hills, the higher, the barrener; so men commonly, the wealthier, the worse; the more honour, the less holiness. And as rivers, when content with a small channel, run sweet and clear; when swelling to a navigable channel, by the confluence of several tributary rivulets, gather mud and mire, and grow salt and brackish, and violently bear down all before them: so many men, who in mean estates have been pious and religious, being advanced in honour, and enlarged in wealth, have grown both impious and profane towards God, cruel and tyrannical over their brethren.

And Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi, I pray thee, let me go into the field, and gather ears of corn, &c.

Herein two excellent graces appear in Ruth.

First, obedience: she would not go to glean, without the leave of her mother-in-law. Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so much duty, no, not in natural daughters to their own mothers. How many of them now-a-days, in matters of more moment, will betroth and contract themselves, not only without the knowledge and con-

sent, but even against the express commands, of their parents !

Secondly, see her industry, that she would condescend to glean. Though I think not, with the Jewish Rabbins, that Ruth was the daughter to Eglon, king of Moab ; yet no doubt she was descended of good parentage, and now, see, fain to glean. Whence we may gather, that those that formerly have had good birth and breeding, may afterward be forced to make hard shifts to maintain themselves. Musculus was forced to work with a weaver, and afterwards was fain to delve in the ditch about the city of Strasburg ; as Pantaleon in his Life. Let this teach even those whose veins are washed with generous blood, and arteries quickened with noble spirits, in their prosperity to furnish, qualify, and accommodate themselves with such gentile [gentle] arts and liberal mysteries as will be neither blemish nor burthen to their birth ; that so, if hereafter God shall cast them into poverty, these arts may stand them in some stead towards their maintenance and relief.

And Naomi said, Go, my daughter.

See here how meekly and mildly she answers her. The discourse of God's children, in their ordinary talk, ought to be kind and courteous :

so betwixt Abraham and Isaac, Gen. xxii. 7; betwixt Elkanah and Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 23. Indeed, it is lawful and necessary for Jacob to chide Rachel speaking unadvisedly; (Gen. xxx. 2;) for Job to say to his wife, "Thou speakest like a foolish wife." But otherwise, when no just occasion of anger is given, their words ought to be meek and kind, like Naomi's, "Go, my daughter."

VERSES 3, 4.

And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and it happened that she met with the portion of the field of Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you; and they answered him, The Lord bless thee.

Formerly we have seen the dutifulness of Ruth, which would not leave her mother until she had leave from her mother. Proceed we now to her industry, and God's providence over her. As the star (Matt. ii.) guided the wise men to Judea, to Bethlehem, to the inn, to the stable, to the manger; so the rays and beams of God's providence conducted Ruth, that, of all grounds within the compass and confines, within the bounds and borders of Bethlehem, she lighted on the field of Boaz.

And it happened.

OBJECTION.

How comes the Holy Spirit to use this word ; a profane term, which deserves to be banished out of the mouths of all Christians? Are not all things ordered by God's immediate providence, without which "a sparrow lighteth not on the ground?" Is not that sentence most true?—"God stretcheth from end to end strongly, and disposeth all things sweetly. Strongly, Lord, for Thee ; sweetly, Lord, for me." So St. Bernard. Or was the providence of God solely confined to His people of Israel, that so Ruth, being a stranger of Moab, must be left to the adventure of hazard? How comes the Holy Spirit to use this word, "hap?"

ANSWER.

Things are said to "happen," not in respect of God, but in respect of us ; because oftentimes they come to pass, not only without our purpose and forecast, but even against our intentions and determinations. It is lawful therefore in a sober sense to use these expressions, "It chanced," or, "It fortunèd." (Luke x. 31.) Nor can any just exception be taken against those words in the Collect, "Through all changes and chances of this

mortal life : ” provided always that in our forms of speech we dream not of any heathen chance. It is observed, that *τυχή* is not used in all the works of Homer : but sure St. Austin, in the first of his “Retractations,” complaineth, that he had too often used the word *fortuna* ; and therefore, in the pagans’ sense thereof, we ought to abstain from it.

OBSERVATION.

Now whereas Ruth by chance lighteth on Boaz his field, we may observe, Admirable is the providence of God, in the ordering of contingent events to His glory and His children’s good. The Scripture swarmeth with precedents in this behalf, which at this time I surcease to recite, and conclude with the Psalmist : “O Lord, how wonderful are Thy works ! In wisdom hast Thou made them all. The earth is full of Thy riches.” To which I may add : “O that men would therefore praise the name of the Lord, and show forth the wonderful works that He doth for the children of men ! ”

And, behold, Boaz came unto his reapers.

He had a man over them, yet himself came to oversee them.

OBSERVATION.

Where note, it is the part of a thriving husband, not to trust the care of his affairs to his servants, but to oversee them himself. "The master's eye maketh a fat horse:" and one asking, what was the best compost to manure land, it was answered, "The dust of the master's feet;" meaning, his presence to behold his own business. Hushai would not counsel Absalom to let Ahithophel go with his army, but advised him, "Thou shalt go to battle in thine own person." However he herein had a secret intent, yet thus far the proportion holds: things thrive best, not when they are committed to surrogates, deputies, delegates, and substitutes; but when men themselves oversee them. Let masters therefore of families carefully attend on their own business; and let the daughters of Sarah, whom the meekness of their sex hath privileged from following without-doors affairs, imitate the wise woman, Proverbs xxxi. 15, 27: "She rises whiles as yet it is night, and giveth her meat to her household, and their portions to her maids. She looks well to all the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." And such servants which have careless masters, let them look better to their masters' estate, than their masters do to their own: let them be neither idle nor unfaithful in

their place, knowing that though their earthly master be negligent to eye them, yet they have a Master in heaven who both beholds and will punish or reward them according to their deserts. And as for the sons of the prophets, let them feed the flock over which they are placed, and not think to shuffle and shift off their care to their curates and readers in their own unnecessary absence. And yet how many are there, that preach as seldom as Apollo laughs,—once in the year! Indeed, Elijah fasted forty days and forty nights in the strength of one meal; but surely these think that their people can hold out fasting a twelvemonth. Well, let them practise Boaz' example: as they have curates, so had he one to care for his affairs; and yet, behold, in person he comes forth unto his reapers.

And said unto them, The Lord be with you.

Observe, courteous and loving salutations be-
seem Christians. Indeed, our Saviour (Matt. x.)
forbade His disciples to salute any in the way:
but His meaning was, that they should not lag or
delay, whereby to be hindered from the service
wherein they were employed. And St. John, in
his Second Epistle, saith, that to some we must
not say, "God speed," lest we be made "par-
takers of their evil deeds:" but that is meant of

notorious sinners, which have discovered their impious intents. It is commonly said, that the small-pox is not infectious until it be broken out, so that before the time one may safely converse, eat, drink, lie with them; but after the pox is broken out, it is very dangerous: so we may safely salute and exchange discourse with the most wicked sinners, whiles yet they smother and conceal their bad designs; but when once they declare and express them, then it is dangerous to have any further familiarity with them; for such Marcions “the first-born of the devil,” and “the eldest son of Satan,” are salutations good enough.

USE.

Those are justly to be reproved, which lately have changed all hearty expressions of love into verbal compliments; which etymology is not to be deduced *à completionem mentis*, but *à completè mentiri*. And yet I cannot say, that these men lie in their throat; for I persuade myself, their words never came so near their heart, but merely they lie in their mouths, where all their promises—

“Both birth and burial in a breath they have;
That mouth which is their womb, it is their
grave.”

Yea, those words which St. Paul to the Corinthians thought to be the most affectionate expression of love, is now made the word of course, commonly bandied betwixt superficial friends at the first encounter,—“YOUR SERVANT.” Worse than these are the ambitious saluters, like Absalom, (2 Sam. xv. 4,) who at the same time, by taking his father’s subjects by their hands, stole away their hearts; and the lower his body did couch, the higher his mind did aspire. Worst of all is the treacherous salutation of Judas and Joab, who at one instant pretend lip love, and intend heart hatred; who both kiss and kill,—embrace another with their hands, and imbrue their hands in his blood whom they embrace.

And they answered him, The Lord bless thee.

When one offers us a courtesy, especially being our superior, it is fitting we should requite him. It is a noble conquest for to be overcome with wrongs; but it is a sign of a degenerated nature to be outvied with courtesies; and therefore, if one begin a kindness to us, let us (if it lie in our power) pledge him in the same nature.

VERSES 5, 6, 7.

And Boaz said unto the servant which was appointed over the reapers, Whose is this maid?

And the servant which was appointed over the reapers answered and said, This is the Moabish maid which came with Naomi from the country of Moab ;

Which came and said, Let me gather, I pray, among the sheaves after the reapers : and so she came, and stayed here from morning until now ; only she tarried a little in the house.

And Boaz said unto the servant which was appointed over the reapers.

Here we learn, that it is a part of good husbandry in a numerous family, to have one servant as steward, to oversee the rest. Thus Abraham had his Eliezer of Damascus ; Potiphar, his Joseph ; Joseph, his man which put the cup into Benjamin's sack ; Ahab, his Obadiah ; Hezekiah, his Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah.

OBSERVATION.

Let masters therefore, in choosing these stewards to be set above the rest, take such as are qualified like Jethro's description of inferior judges, (Exod. xviii. 21,) "men of courage, fearing God, dealing truly, hating covetousness." And however they privilege them to be above the rest of their servants, yet let them make them to know their duty and their distance to their

masters, lest that come to pass which Solomon foretelleth, Prov. xxix. 21: "He that bringeth up his servant delicately in his youth, will make him like his son at the last." Let stewards not be like that unjust one in the Gospel, who made his master's debtors write down fifty measures of wheat, and fourscore measures of oil, when both severally should have been a hundred; but let them carefully discharge their conscience in that office wherein they are placed: whilst inferior servants, that are under their command, must neither grieve nor grudge to obey them, nor envy at their honour. But let this comfort those underlings, that if they be wronged by these stewards, their appeal lies open from them to their master, who, if good, will no doubt redress their grievances.

Now if stewards be necessary in ordering of families, surely men in authority are more necessary in governing the church, and managing the commonwealth. If a little cock-boat cannot be brought up a tributary rivulet without one to guide it, how shall a caravan,* a galleon, or argosy, sailing in the vast ocean, be brought into a harbour without a pilot to conduct it? Let us therefore with all willingness and humility submit ourselves to our superiors, that so under them we

* [Sometimes used to denote a *naval* expedition.—Ed.]

“ may live a peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.”

Whose is this maid ?

Boaz would know what those persons were that gleaned upon his land ; and good reason : for we ought not to prostitute our liberality to all, though unknown ; but first we must examine who, and whence, they be ; otherwise, that which is given to worthless persons, is not given, but thrown away. I speak not this to blunt the charity of any who have often bestowed their benevolence upon beggars unknown and unseen before ; but if easily and with conveniency (as Boaz could) they may attain to know the qualities and conditions of such persons, before they dispose their liberality unto them.

And the servant which was appointed.

He herein performed the part of a careful servant ; namely, fully to inform his master. Servants ought so to instruct themselves as thereby to be able to give an account to their lords, when they shall be called thereunto, and give them plenary satisfaction and contentment in any thing belonging to their office, wherein they shall be questioned. Now, whereas he doth not derogate or detract from Ruth, though a stranger, but sets her forth with her due commen-

dation ; we gather, servants, when asked, ought to give the pure character of poor people to their masters, and no way to wrong or traduce them.

Which came and said, Let me gather, I pray.

See here Ruth's honesty ; she would not presume to glean before she had leave. Clean contrary is the practice of poor people now-a-days, which oft-times take away things not only without the knowledge, but even against the will, of the owners. The boy of the priest, (1 Sam. ii. 13-16,) when the sacrifice was in offering, used to come with a flesh-hook of three teeth, and used to cast it into the fat of the sacrifice, making that his fee, which so he fetched out. If any gainsaid him, he answered, "Thou shalt give it me now ; or if thou wilt not, I will take it by force." Thus poor people now-a-days, they cast their hook, their violent hands, (gleaning the lean will not content them,) into the fat, the best and principal of rich men's estates ; and breaking all laws of God and the king, they by main force draw it unto themselves. Not so Ruth ; she would not glean without leave.

And stayed here from morning until now.

See here her constancy in industry. Many are very diligent at the first setting forth, for a fit and a gird, for a snatch and away : but nothing violent

is long permanent; they are soon tired, quickly weary, and then turn from labour to laziness. But Ruth continued in her labour “from the morning till now;” till night, till the end of the harvest. O that we would imitate the constancy of Ruth, in the “working out of our salvation with fear and trembling!”—not only to be industrious in the morning, when we first enter into Christianity, but to hold out and to persevere even to the end of our lives.

Only she tarried a little in the house.

No doubt some indispensable business detained her there; and probable it is that a principal one was, to say her matins, to do her devotions, commend herself with fervent prayer unto the Lord, to bless her and her endeavours the day following. “A whet is no let,” saith the proverb: mowers lose not any time which they spend in whetting or grinding of their scythes. Our prayer to God in the morning, before we enter on any business, doth not hinder us in our day’s work, but rather whets it, sharpens it, sets an edge on our dull souls, and makes our minds to undertake our labours with the greater alacrity.

And here may I take just occasion to speak concerning gleanings. Consider, First, the antiquity therefore, as being commanded by God, Levit. xix. 9, and xxiii. 22. Secondly, consider

the equity thereof: it doth the rich no whit of harm; it doth the poor a great deal of good. One may say of it, as Lot of Zoar, "Is it not a little one, and my soul shall live?" Is it not a petty, a small, exile * courtesy, and the hearts of poor people shall be comforted thereby? *Reliquiæ Danaûm atque immitis Achillis*,†—the remnant which hath escaped the edge of the scythes, and avoided the hands of the reapers. Had our reapers the eyes of eagles, and the claws of harpies, they could not see and snatch each scattered ear, which may well be allowed for the relief of the poor. When our Saviour said to the woman of Syrophœnicia, "It is not good to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs;" she answered, "Yea, Lord, but the dogs eat of the children's crumbs that fall from their table." So, if any misers mutter, "It is not meet that my bread should be cast unto poor people, to glean corn upon my lands;" yea, but let them know that poor people (which are no "dogs," but, setting a little thick clay aside, as good as themselves) may eat the falling "crumbs," the scattered ears, which they gather on the ground.

USE.

It may confute the covetousness of many, which

* ["Slender," "trifling;" from the Latin *exilis*.—ED.]

† [VIRGILII *Æneid*. i., 30; iii., 87.—ED.]

repine that the poor should have any benefit by them; and are so far from suffering the poor to glean, that even they themselves glean from the poor, and speak much like to churlish Nabal: (1 Sam. xxv. 11 :) “Shall I take my wheat, my rye, and my barley, which I have prepared for my family, and give it to the poor, which I know not whence they be?” Yea, some have so hard hearts that they would leave their grain to be destroyed by beasts and vermin, rather than that the poor should receive any benefit thereby. Cruel people, which prefer their hogs before Christ’s sheep, mice before men, crows before Christians!

But withal, poor people must learn this lesson, to know the meaning of these two pronouns, “mine” and “thine;” what belongs to their rich masters, and what pertains to themselves. The sheep which had little spots, those were Jacob’s fee; so the little spots, the loose, straggling, and scattered ears, those are the poor’s: but as for the great ones, the handfuls, the armfuls, the sheaves, the shocks, the cocks, these are none of theirs, but the rich owner’s; and therefore let the poor take heed how they put forth their hands to their neighbours’ goods.

MOTIVE.

One forcible motive to persuade the rich to

suffer the poor to glean, may be this : Even the greatest, in respect of God, is but a gleaner. God, He is the Master of the harvest ; all gifts and graces, they are His, in an infinite measure ; and every godly man, more or less, gleanes from Him. Abraham gleaned a great glean of faith ; Moses, of meekness ; Joshua, of valour ; Samson, of strength ; Solomon, of wealth and wisdom ; St. Paul, of knowledge, and the like. Now, if we would be glad at our hearts that the Lord would give us free leave and liberty for to glean graces out of His harvest, let us not grudge and repine that poor people glean a little gain from our plenty. To conclude : when God hath multiplied our “ five loaves,” that is, when of our little seed He hath given us a great deal of increase, let poor people, like Ruth in the text, be the “ twelve baskets ” which may take up the fragments of gleanings which are left.

VERSES 8, 9, 10.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou, my daughter ? Go to no other field to gather, neither go from hence, but abide here by my maidens :

Let thy eyes be on the field which they do reap, and go after the maidens. Have I not charged the servants that they touch thee not ? Moreover,

when thou art thirsty, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the servants have drawn.

Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found favour in thy eyes, that thou shouldest know me, since I am a stranger ?

Mothers and nurses are very careful tenderly to handle infants when they are but newly born. So Ruth: Christ was newly formed in her, a young convert, a fresh proselyte; and therefore Boaz useth her with all kindness, both in works and words: "Hearest thou, my daughter?"

OBSERVATION.

Aged persons may term younger people their sons and daughters. (1 Sam. iii. 6.) And if they were persons in authority, though they were well-nigh equal in age, they used the same expression. Thus Joseph to his brother Benjamin, Gen. xliii. 29: "God be merciful to thee, my son." Let young people therefore reverently observe their duty and distance to their seniors in age, and superiors in authority. Yet, I am afraid, men keep not the method of Jacob's children, the eldest sitting down according to his age, and the youngest according to his youth; but fulfil the complaint of the prophet, "The young presume against the aged, and the base against the

honourable." Let aged persons strive to deserve their respect, by demeaning themselves gravely, and striving to add gracious hearts to grey hairs : otherwise, if they discover any lightness, looseness, wantonness in their carriage, young men will hereupon take occasion, not only to slight and neglect, but also to condemn and despise their paternal distance and father-like authority. Now, as for young ministers, they have not this advantage, to speak unto young people in the phrase of Boaz, "Hearest thou, my daughter?" but must practise St. Paul's precept, 1 Tim. v. 1 : "Rebuke not an elder, but exhort him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, in all pureness."

But abide here by my maidens.

OBSERVATION.

Hence we gather, 't is most decent for women to associate and accompany themselves with those of their own sex. Miriam, (Exod. xv. 20,) with a feminine choir, "with timbrels and dances," answered the men; and the disciples wondered (John iv. 27) that Christ talked with a woman; showing hereby that it was not His ordinary course to converse alone with one of another sex : for herein the apostle's precept deserves to take

place, namely, to “avoid from all appearance of evil.”

Have I not commanded the servants that they should not touch thee?

Boaz had just cause to fear lest some of his servants might wrong her: to prevent which, he gave them strict charge to the contrary.

OBSERVATION.

Here we see, that servile natures are most prone and proclive to wrong poor strangers. Indeed, generous spirits disdain to make those the subjects of their cruelty, which rather should be the objects of their pity: but it complies with a servile disposition to tyrannize and domineer over such poor people as cannot resist them. Like petty brooks pent within a narrow channel, on every dash of rain they are ready to overflow, and wax angry at the apprehension of the smallest distaste. The locusts, Rev. ix. 10, had “tails like scorpions, and stings in their tails;” which by some is expounded, that of those people which are meant by the scorpions, the poorest were the proudest; the meanest, the most mischievous; the basest, the bloodiest. And surely he that readeth the story of our English martyrs shall find, that one Alexander, a jailor, and one drunken Warwick, an executioner, were most

basely and barbarously cruel to God's poor saints.

Secondly, from these words observe, that it is the part of a good master not only to do no harm himself, but also to take order that his servants do none. (Gen. xii. 20; and xxvi. 11.) When Elisha would take nothing of Naaman, (2 Kings v. 20,) Gehazi said, "As the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take something of him." Thus may base servants (if not prevented with a command to the contrary) wrong their most right and upright masters, by taking gifts and bribes privately. The water (though it ariseth out of a most pure fountain) which runneth through minerals of lead, copper, brimstone, or the like, hath with it a strange taste and relish in the mouth. So justice, which should run down like a stream, though it ariseth out of a pure fountain, out of the breast of a sincere and incorrupted judge; yet, if formerly it hath passed through the mines of gold and silver, I mean, through bad servants, who have taken bribes to prepossess the judge their master with the prejudice of false informations, justice hereby may be strangely perverted and corrupted. Many masters themselves have been honest and upright, yet much wrong hath been done under them by their wicked servants. It is said of Queen Mary, that, for her own part, *she* did not so much as bark; but she had them

under her which did more than bite ; such were Gardiner, Bonner, Story, Woodroffe, Tyrrell. Now she should have tied up these ban-dogs, and chained and fettered up these bloodhounds from doing any mischief. Camden, in his *Elizabetha*, in the year 1595, writeth thus of the then Lord Chancellor of England: *Ob sordes et corruptelas famulorum in beneficiis ecclesiasticis nundinandis, ipse vir integer ab ecclesiasticis haud bene audivit.* He ought to have imitated the example of Boaz, not only to have done no harm himself, but also to have enjoined the same to his servants: “Have I not commanded my servants that they should not touch thee?”

Thirdly, in these words Boaz doth intimate, that if he gave a charge to the contrary, none of his servants durst presume once to molest her.

OBSERVATION.

Where we see, masters’ commands ought to sound [as] laws in the ears of their servants, if they be lawful. Indeed, if Absalom (2 Sam. xiii. 28) saith to his servants, “Kill Amnon, fear not; for have I not commanded you?” this command did not oblige, because the thing enjoined was altogether ungodly. Otherwise, men must imitate the obedience of the centurion’s servants; who said to the one, “Go,” and he goeth; and to another, “Come,” and he cometh; and to his servant, “Do this,” and he doth it.

COROLLARY.

Now, if we ought to be thus dutiful to our earthly masters, surely, if the Lord of Heaven enjoineth us any thing, we ought to do it without any doubt or delay. Were there no hell to punish, no heaven to reward, no promises pronounced to the godly, no threatenings denounced to the wicked; yet this is a sufficient reason to make us do a thing,—because God hath enjoined it; this a convincing argument to make us refrain from it,—because He hath forbidden it.

Then she fell on her face, and bowed.

QUESTION.

Was not this too much honour to give to any mortal creature? And doth it not come within the compass of the breach of the second commandment, “Thou shalt not bow down and worship them?” Especially seeing godly Mordecai refused to bend his knee to Haman.

ANSWER.

Civil honour may and must be given to all in authority, according to the usual gestures of the country. Now such bowing was the custom of the Eastern people. (Gen. xxxiii. 3.) As for Mordecai's instance, it makes not against this; he being therein either immediately warranted by

God; or else he refused to bow to Haman as being an Amalekite, betwixt which cursed brood and the Israelites the Lord commanded an eternal enmity.

COROLLARY.

Now, if Ruth demeaned herself with such reverent gesture to Boaz, how reverent ought our gesture to be, when we approach into the presence of God! Indeed, "God is a Spirit," and He will be worshipped "in spirit and truth;" yet so that He will have the outward decent posture of the body to accompany the inward sincerity of the soul.

And said, Why have I found favour?

As if she had said, "When I reflect my eyes upon myself, I cannot read in myself the smallest worth, to deserve so great a favour from thy hands; and therefore I must acknowledge myself exceedingly beholden to you. But principally I lift up my eyes to the providence of the Lord of Heaven: men's hearts are in His hand as 'the rivers of water;' He 'turneth them whither He pleaseth.' He it is that hath mollified thy heart, to show this undeserved kindness unto me." Here we see Ruth's humility. Many now-a-days would have made a contrary construction of Boaz his charity, and reasoned thus: "Surely he seeth

in me some extraordinary worth, whereof as yet I have not taken notice in myself; and therefore hereafter I will maintain a better opinion of my own deserts." But Ruth confesseth her own unworthiness: and from her example let us learn to be humbly and heartily thankful to those which bestow any courtesy or kindness upon us.

Since I am a stranger.

She amplifies his favour, from the indignity of her own person, being a stranger.

COROLLARY.

O, then, if Ruth interpreted it such a kindness that Boaz took notice of her, being a stranger; how great is the love of God to us, who loved us in Christ when we were "strangers, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel!" As the never-failing foundation of the earth is firmly fastened for ever fleeting, yet settled on no other substance than its own ballasted weight; so God's love was founded on neither cause nor condition in the creature, but issued only out of His own free favour. So that in this respect we may all say unto God what Ruth doth unto Boaz in the text, "Why have we found favour in Thine eyes, that Thou shouldest take knowledge of us, seeing we were but strangers?"

VERSES 11, 12.

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

It hath been fully showed me, all.

More than probable it is, that Boaz had received his intelligence immediately from Naomi.

OBSERVATION.

However, here we may see, the virtues of worthy persons will never want trumpets to sound them to the world. The Jews were the centurion's trumpet to our Saviour; (Luke vii. 5;) and the widows, Dorcas her trumpet to St. Peter. (Acts ix. 39.) Let this encourage men in their virtuous proceedings, knowing that their worthy deeds shall not be buried in obscurity, but shall find tongues in their lively colours to express them. Absalom, having no children, and desirous to per-

petuate his name, erected “a pillar in the king’s dale;” and the same “is called Absalom’s pillar unto this day.” But the most compendious way for men to consecrate their memories to eternity, is to erect a pillar of virtuous deeds; which shall ever remain, even when the most lasting monuments in the world shall be consumed, as not able to satisfy the boulimée * of all-consuming Time. And to put the worst, grant the envious men with a cloud of calumnies should eclipse the beams of virtuous memories from shining in the world, yet this may be their comfort, that God, that “sees in secret,” will “reward them openly.” Moreover, it is the duty of such who have received courtesies from others, to profess and express the same as occasion shall serve; that so their benefactors may publicly receive their deserved commendation. Thus surely Naomi had done by Ruth; from whose mouth, no doubt, though not immediately, her virtues were sounded in the ears of Boaz: “It hath been fully showed me, all.”

Here now followeth a summary, reckoning up of the worthy deeds of Ruth; which, because they have been fully discoursed of in the former chapter, it would be needless again to insist upon them. Proceed we therefore to Boaz his prayer.

* [*Boulimy*, or *bulimy*, “ravenous appetite.”—ED.]

The Lord recompense thee.

As if he had said: "Indeed, Ruth, that courtesy which I afforded thee, to glean upon my land without any disturbance, comes far short both of thy deserts and my desires. All that I wish is this, that what I am unable to requite, the Lord Himself would 'recompense.' May He give thee 'a full reward' of graces internal, external, eternal; here, hereafter; on earth, in heaven; while thou livest, when thou diest; in grace, in glory, 'a full reward.'"

Where first we may learn, that when we are unable to requite people's deserts of ourselves, we must make up our want of works with good wishes to God for them. Indeed, we must not do like those in the second of St. James, verse 16, who only said to the poor, "Depart in peace; warm yourselves, and fill your bellies," and yet bestowed nothing upon them. We must not both begin and conclude with good wishes, and do nothing else; but we must observe Boaz his method: first, to begin to do good to those that, being virtuous, are in distress; and then, where we fall short in requiting them, to make the rest up with hearty wishes to God for them.

OBSERVATION.

But the main observation is this: There is a

recompence of a full reward upon the good works of His servants. (Gen. xv. 1.) “Moreover by them is Thy servant taught; and in keeping them there is great reward.” (Psalm xix. 11.) Verily, there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless, there is a God that judgeth the earth. Godliness hath the promises of this life, and of the life to come.

USE I.

It may serve to confute such false spies as raise wrong reports of the land of Canaan,—of the Christian profession; saying with the wicked, Mal. iii. 14, “It is in vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His commandments, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?” Slandrous tongues! which one day shall be justly fined in the Star-Chamber of Heaven, *ob scandala magnatum*, for slandering of God’s noble servants, and their profession. For, indeed, the Christian life is most comfortable: for we may both take a liberal portion, and have a sanctified use of God’s creatures: besides, within we have peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in some measure; one dram whereof is able to sugar the most wormwood affliction.

USE II.

When we begin to feel ourselves to lag in Christianity, let us spur on our affections with the

meditation of that “full reward” which we shall in due time receive; with our Saviour, let us “look to the joys which are set before” us; and, with Moses, let us have “an eye to the recompence of reward;” yet so that, though we look at this reward, yet also we must look through it and beyond it. This meditation of the reward is a good place for our souls to bait at, but a bad place for our souls to lodge in. We must mount our minds higher, namely, to aim at the glory of God; at which all our actions must be directed, though there were no reward propounded unto them. Yet, since it is God’s goodness to propound unto us a reward, over and besides His own glory, this ought so much the more to incite us to diligence in our Christian calling. For, if Othniel (Judges i.) behaved himself so valiantly against the enemies of Israel, in hope to obtain Achsah, Caleb’s daughter, to wife; how valiantly ought we to demean ourselves against our spiritual enemies, knowing that we shall one day be married unto our Saviour in eternal happiness! And this is “a full reward.”

OBJECTION.

But some may say, “These terms of ‘recompence’ and ‘reward’ may seem to favour the Popish tenet, that our good works merit at God’s hand.”

ANSWER.

Reward and recompence unto our good works are not due unto us for any worth of our own, but merely from God's free favour and gracious promise. For, to make a thing truly meritorious of a reward, it is required, First, that the thing meriting be our own, and not another's. Now our best works are none of ours, but God's Spirit in us. Secondly, it is requisite that we be not bound of duty to do it. Now we are bound to do all the good deeds which we do, and still remain but "unprofitable servants." Thirdly, there must be a proportion between the thing meriting, and the reward merited. Now there is no proportion between our stained and imperfect works, (for such are our best,) and that infinite weight of glory wherewith God will reward us. It remains, therefore, that no reward is given us for our own inherent worth, but merely for God's free favour, who crowns His own works in us.

Under whose wings thou art come to trust.

A metaphor: it is borrowed from a hen, which with her clocking summons together her straggling chickens, and then outstretcheth the fan of her wings to cover them. Familiarly it is used in Scripture; and amongst other places, by our Saviour, Matth. xxiii. 37: "How oft would I

have gathered thee together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" And just it was with God,—because the foolish chickens of the Jews would not come to Christ, the hen, calling them,—to suffer them to be devoured by the eagle, the imperial army of the Romans.

OBSERVATION.

God's love and care over His children is as great as a hen's over her chickens. Now the hen's wings do the chickens a double good.

First. They keep them from the kite. So God's providence protecteth His servants from that kite, the devil. For as the kite useth to fetch many circuits and circles, and long hovers and flutters round about, and at length, spying her advantage, pops down on the poor chicken for a prey; so the devil, who, as it is Job i. 7, "compasseth the earth to and fro, and walketh through it," and at length, spying an opportunity, pitcheth and settleth himself upon some poor soul, to devour it, if the wings of God's providence (as the city of refuge) do not rescue him from his clutches.

Secondly. The hen with her chickens broods her chickens, and makes them thereby to thrive and grow. In summer her wings are a canopy, to keep her chickens from the heat of the scorching sun; and in winter they are a mantle, to defend

them from the injury of the pinching cold. So God's providence and protection makes His children to sprout, thrive, and prosper under it. In prosperity God's providence keepeth them from the heat of pride: in adversity, it preserveth them from being benumbed with frozen despair.

USE.

Let us all then strive to run to hide ourselves under the wings of the God of heaven. Hark how the hen clocks in the Psalms: "Call upon Me in the time of trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt praise Me." How she clocks in the Canticles: "Return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may behold thee." How she clocketh, Matth. vii. 7: "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." How she clocks, Matth. xi. 28: "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will ease you." Let not us now be like sullen chickens, which sit moping under a rotten hedge, or proating under an old wood-pile, when the hen calleth them. Let not us trust to the broken wall of our own strength, or think to lurk under the tottering hedge of our own wealth, or wind-shaken reeds of our unconstant friends; but fly to God, that He may stretch His wings over us, as the cherubim did over the mercy-seat. And as always in day-time,

so especially at night, when we go to bed, (for chickens, when going to roost, always run to the hen,) let us commend ourselves with prayer to His providence, that He would be pleased to preserve us from the dangers of the night ensuing ; “trusting,” with Ruth in the text, “under the wings of the Lord God of Israel.

VERSES 13, 14.

Then she said, Let me find favour in the sight of my lord ; for thou hast comforted me, and spoken comfortably unto thy maid, though I be not like to one of thy maids.

And Boaz said unto her, At the meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sate beside the reapers : and he reached her parched corn ; and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left thereof.

Boaz had formerly called Ruth “daughter ;” now Ruth styleth him “lord.” When great ones carry themselves familiarly to meaner persons, meaner persons must demean themselves respectfully [respectfully] to great ones. Indeed, with base and sordid natures familiarity breeds contempt ; but ingenuous natures will more awfully observe their distance towards their superiors, of whom they are most courteously entreated. And if great personages should cast up their accounts,

they should find themselves, not losers, but gainers of honour, by their kind usage of their inferiors. Those stars seem to us the greatest, and shine the brightest, which are set the lowest. Great men, which sometimes stoop, and stoop low, in their humble carriage to others, commonly get the greatest lustre of credit and esteem in the hearts of those that be virtuous.

And spoken comfortably unto thy maid.

In Hebrew, “hast spoken unto the heart.” A comfortable speech is a word spoken to the heart.

MEDITATION.

O that ministers had this faculty of Boaz his speech! not to tickle the ears, teach the heads, or please the brains of the people, but that their sermons might soak and sink to the root of their hearts. But though this may be endeavoured by them, it cannot be performed of them without God’s special assistance. We may leave our words at the outward porch of men’s ears; but His Spirit must conduct and lodge them in the closet of their hearts.

Though I be not like to one of thy maids.

Meaning, because she was a Moabitess, a stranger and alien, they natives of the commonwealth of Israel. In this respect she was far their inferior.

OBSERVATION.

The godly ever conceive very humbly and meanly of themselves: Moses, *Exod.* iv. 10; Gideon, *Judg.* vi. 15; Abigail, 1 *Sam.* xxv. 41; Isaiah, vi. 5; Jeremiah, i. 6; John Baptist, *Matth.* iii. 11; [Paul], 1 *Tim.* i. 15. And the reason hereof is, because they are most privy to and sensible of their own infirmities; their corruptions, which cleave unto them, are ever before their eyes. These black feet abate their thoughts, when puffed up with pride for their painted train of other graces. On the other side, the wicked set ever the greatest price on their own worth: they behold their own supposed virtues through magnifying glasses, and think with Haman, that none deserves better to be honoured by the king but themselves.

USE.

Let us endeavour to obtain humility with Ruth; a virtue of most worth, and yet which costeth least to keep. Yet notwithstanding, it is both lawful and needful for us to know our own worth, and to take an exact survey of those graces which God hath bestowed upon us. First, that we may know thereby the better to proportion our thanks to God. Secondly, that we may know how much good the church and commonwealth expecteth to

be performed by us. And lastly, that if any should basely insult and domineer over us, we may in humility stand upon the lawful justification of ourselves, and our own sufficiency, as St. Paul did against the false apostles at Corinth; always provided that we give God the glory, and profess ourselves to be but “unprofitable servants.”

And Boaz said unto her, At the meal time come thou hither, and eat of the bread.

Two things herein are commendable in Boaz, and to be imitated by masters of families.

First: That he had provided wholesome and competent food for his own servants. So ought all householders to do. And herein let them propound God for their president [precedent]; for He maintaineth the greatest family; all creatures are His servants, and “He giveth them meat in due season; He openeth His hand, and filleth with His blessing every living thing.”

Secondly: As Boaz provided meat for his servants, so he allowed them certain set convenient times wherein they might quietly eat their meat. But as the people of the Jews pressed so fast upon our Saviour (Mark iii. 20) that He had not so much leisure as to “eat bread,” and take necessary sustenance; so, such is the gripple * nature of many covetous masters, that they will

* [“Gripping,” “grasping,” “stingy.”—Ed.]

so task and tie their servants to their work, as not to afford them seasonable respite to feed themselves.

And dip thy morsel in the vinegar.

OBSERVATION.

The fare of God's servants in ancient time, though wholesome, was very homely. Here they had only bread and vinegar, and parched corn. For a thousand five hundred and sixty years the world fed upon herbs; and the Scripture maketh mention since of mean and sparing fare of many godly men. It may therefore confute the gluttony and epicurism of our age, consisting both in the superfluous number of dishes, and in the unlawful nature of them. We rifle the air for dainty fowl; we ransack the sea for delicious fish; we rob the earth for delicate flesh, to suspend the doubtful appetite betwixt variety of dainties. As for the nature of them, many are mere needless whetstones of hunger, which, instead of satisfying, do increase it. And as in the Spanish Inquisition such is their exquisite cruelty, that, having brought one to the door of death by their tortures, they then revive him by cordials; and then again, re-killing him with their torments, fetch him again with comfortable things; thus often re-iterating their cruelty: so men, having

killed their appetite with good cheer, seek with dishes made for the nonce to enliven it again, to the superfluous wasting of God's good creatures, and much endamaging the health of their own bodies. But, leaving them, let us be content with that competent food which God hath allotted us, knowing that "better is a dinner of herbs with peace, than a stalled ox with strife;" and God, if it pleaseth Him, can so bless Daniel's pulse unto us, that by mean fare we shall be made more strong and healthful than those who surfeit on excess of dainties.

And she did eat, and was sufficed.

It is a great blessing of God, when He gives such strength and virtue to His creatures as to satisfy our hunger; and the contrary is a great punishment: for as, (1 Kings i. 1,) when they heaped abundance of clothes on aged King David, yet his decayed body felt no warmth at all; so God so curseth the meat to some, that though they cram down never so much into their bellies, yet still their hunger increaseth with their meat, and they find that nature is not truly contented and satisfied therewith.

And left thereof.

Hence we learn, the overplus which remaineth

after we have fed ourselves, must neither be scornfully cast away, nor carelessly left alone, but it must be thriftily kept; imitating herein the example of our Saviour; who, though He could make five loaves swell to sufficient food for five thousand men, yet gave He command, that "the fragments" should be carefully basketed up.

VERSES 15, 16, 17.

And when she arose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, Let her gather among the sheaves, and do not rebuke her :

Also let fall some of the sheaves for her, and let it lie, that she may gather it up, and rebuke her not.

So she gleaned in the field until evening, and she threshed that she had gathered: and it was about an ephah of barley.

Before I enter into these words, behold, an objection stands at the door of them, which must first be removed.

OBJECTION.

One may say to Ruth, as our Saviour to the young man in the Gospel, "One thing is wanting." Here is no mention of any grace she said to God either before or after meat.

ANSWER.

Charity will not suffer me to condemn Ruth of forgetfulness herein. She who formerly had been so thankful to Boaz, the conduit pipe, how can she be thought to be ungrateful to God, the Fountain of all favours? Rather I think it is omitted of the Holy Spirit to be written down; who, had He registered each particular action of God's saints, (as it is John xxi. 25,) "the world would not have been able to contain the books which should be written."

Let none therefore take occasion to omit this duty, because here not specified; rather let them be exhorted to perform it, because in other places it is both commanded by precept, and commended by practice. (Deut. viii. 10; 1 Cor. x. 31.) Yea, in the twenty-seventh of the Acts, the mariners and soldiers, (people ordinarily not very religious,) though they had fasted fourteen days together, yet none of them were so unmannerly, or rather so profane, as to snatch any meat, before St. Paul had given "thanks." Let us not, therefore, be like Esau, who, instead of giving a blessing to God for his pottage, sold his blessing to his brother for his pottage; but, though our haste or hunger be never so great, let us dispense with so much time as therein to crave a blessing from God, wherein His creatures are sanctified; as no doubt Ruth did, though not recorded.

And when she arose to glean.

The end of feeding is to fall to our calling. Let us not, therefore, with Israel, sit down to eat and to drink, and so rise up again to play; but let us eat to live, not live to eat. 'Tis not matter, we need not make the clay cottage of our body much larger than it is by immoderate feasting: it is enough if we maintain it so with competent food, that God, our Landlord, may not have just cause to sue us for want of reparations.

Boaz commanded his servants, saying, Let her gather among the sheaves, and do not rebuke her.

OBSERVATION.

It is lawful for us, according to our pleasure, to extend our favours more to one than to another. Ruth alone, not all the gleaners, was privileged to gather among the sheaves uncontrolled. Give leave to Jacob to bequeath a double portion to Joseph, his best beloved son; for Joseph to make the mess of Benjamin five times greater than any other of his brethren; for Elkanah to leave a worthier portion to Hannah than to Peninnah. The reason is, because there can be no wrong done in those things which are free favours. I am not less just to him, to whom I give less; but I am more merciful to him, to whom I give more. Yet, in the dealing and distributing of liberality,

let those of the family of faith be especially respected; and of these, those chiefly which, as the apostle saith, are worthy of a "double honour."

COROLLARY.

Shall it not therefore be lawful for the Lord of Heaven to bestow wealth, honour, wisdom, effectual grace, blessings outward and inward, on one, and deny them to another? You, therefore, whom God hath suffered to glean among the sheaves, and hath scattered whole handfuls for you to gather; you that abound and flow with His favours, be heartily thankful unto Him. He hath not dealt so with every one, neither have all such a large measure of His blessings. And ye common gleaners, who are fain to follow far after, and glad to take up the scattered ears, who have a smaller proportion of His favour, be neither angry with God, nor grieved at yourselves, nor envious at your brethren; but be content with your condition. It is the Lord, and let Him do what is good in His eyes. Shall not He have absolute power to do with His own what He thinketh good, when Boaz can command that Ruth, and no other, may glean among the sheaves without "rebuke?"

Had the servants of Boaz, without express warrant and command from their master, scattered handfuls for her to glean, their action had not

been charity, but flat theft and robbery; for they were to improve their master's goods to his greatest profit. On the other side, it had been a great fault to withhold and withdraw anything from her, which their master commanded them to give. Yet, as the unjust steward in Luke made his master's debts to be less than they were, so many servants now-a-days make their master's gifts to be less than they are, giving less than he hath granted, and disposing less than he hath directed. Men commonly pay toll for passing through great gates, or over common bridges: so, when the liberality of masters goeth through the gate of their servants' hands, and bridges of their fingers, it is constrained to pay tribute and custom to their servants, before it cometh to those poor to whom it was intended. Thus many men make the augmentation of their own estates from the diminution of their master's bounty.

QUESTION.

But some may say, "Why did not Boaz bestow a quantity of corn upon Ruth, and so send her home unto her mother?"

ANSWER.

He might have done so, but he chose rather to keep her still a working. Where we learn, that is the best charity which so relieves people's

wants as that they are still continued in their calling. For, as he who teacheth one to swim, though happily [haply] he will take him by the chin, yet he expecteth that the learner shall nimbly ply the oars of his hands and feet, and strive and struggle with all his strength to keep himself above water: so those who are beneficial to poor people, may justly require of them that they use both their hands to work and feet to go in their calling, and themselves take all due labour, that they may not sink in the gulf of penury. Relieve a husbandman, yet so as that he may still continue in his husbandry; a tradesman, yet so as he may still go on in his trade; a poor scholar, yet so as he may still proceed in his studies. Hereby the commonwealth shall be a gainer. Drones bring no honey to the hive; but the painful hand of each private man contributes some profit to the public good. Hereby the able poor, the more diligent they be, the more bountiful men will be to them; while their bodies are freed from many diseases, their souls from many sins, whereof idleness is the mother. Laziness makes a breach in our soul, where the devil doth assault us with greatest advantage; and when we are most idle in our vocations, then he is most busy in his temptations. A reverend minister was wont to say, that the devil never tempted him more than on Mondays, when (because his

former week's task was newly done, and that for the week to come six days distant) he took most liberty to refresh himself.

Since, therefore, so much good cometh from industry, I could wish there were a public vineyard, into which all they should be sent, who stand lazing in the market place till the eleventh hour of the day. Would all poor and impotent were well placed in a hospital; all poor and able well disposed in a workhouse; and the common stocks of towns so laid out as they thereby might be employed!

So she gleaned in the field until evening.

The night is only that which must end our labours: only the evening must beg us a play, to depart out of the school of our vocation, with promise next morning to return again: "Man goeth out to his labour until evening." Let such then be blamed, who in their working make their night to come before the noon, each day of their labour being shorter than that of St. Lucy [Luke]; and after a spurt in their calling for some few hours, they relapse again to laziness.

And she threshed what she had gathered.

The materials of the temple were so hewed and carved, both stone and wood, before that they were brought unto Jerusalem, that there was not

so much as the noise of a hammer heard in the temple. So Ruth fits all things in a readiness, before she goes home : what formerly she gleaned, now she threshed ; that so no noise might be made at home, to disturb her aged mother. Here we see God's servants, though well descended, disdain not any homely, if honest, work for their own living. Sarah kneaded cakes ; Rebekah drew water ; Rachel fed sheep, Tamar baked cakes. Suetonius reporteth of Augustus Cæsar, that he made his daughters to learn to spin ; and Pantaleon relates the same of Charles the Great. Yet now-a-days (such is the pride of the world) people of far meaner quality scorn so base employments.

And it was about an ephah of barley.

An "ephah" contained ten "omers." (Exod. xvi. 36.) An "omer" of manna was the proportion allowed for a man's one day meat. Thus Ruth had gleaned upon the quantity of a bushel : such was her industry, in diligent bestirring herself ; Boaz his bounty, in scattering for her to gather ; and, above all, God His blessing, who gave so good success unto her. Ruth, having now done gleaning, did not stay behind in the field, as many now-a-days begin their work when others end ; if that may be termed work, to filch and steal ; as if the dark night would be a veil to

cover their deeds of darkness : but home she hasteneth to her mother, as followeth.

VERSES 18, 19.

And she took it up, and went into the city : and her mother-in-law saw what she had gathered : also she took forth, and gave to her that which she had reserved when she was sufficed.

Then her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day ? and where wroughtest thou ? Blessed be he that knew thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz.

And she took it up.

See here, the shoulders of God's saints are wonted to the bearing of burthens. Little Isaac carried the faggot wherewith himself was to be sacrificed ; our Saviour, His own cross, till His faintness craved Simon of Cyrene to be His successor. Yet, let not God's saints be disheartened : if their Father hath a "bottle," wherein He puts the tears which they spend, sure He hath a balance, wherein He weighs the burthens which they bear ; He keeps a note, to what weight their burthens amount, and, no doubt, will accordingly comfort them.

Those are to be confuted who, with the scribes, (Matt. xxiii. 4,) “bind heavy burthens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on the backs of others; but for their own part they will not so much as touch them with one of their fingers.” Yea, some are so proud that they will not carry their own provender, things for their own sustenance. Had they been under Ruth’s ephah of barley, with David in Saul’s armour, they could not have gone under the weight of it, because never used unto it.

And her mother-in-law saw what she had gathered.

Namely, Ruth showed it unto her, and then Naomi saw it. Children are to present to their parents’ view all which they get by their own labour. Otherwise do many children now-a-days. As Ananias and Sapphira brought “part of the money, and deposed it at the apostles’ feet,” but reserved the rest for themselves; so they can be be content to show to their parents some parcel of their gains, whilst they keep the remnant secretly to themselves.

Also she took forth, and gave to her.

Learn we from hence, children, if able, are to cherish and feed their parents, if poor and aged. Have our parents performed the parts of pelicans

to us? let us do the duty of storks to them. Would all children would pay as well for the party-coloured coats which their parents do give them, as Joseph did for his, who maintained his father and his brethren in the famine in Egypt! Think on thy mother's sickness, when thou wast conceived; sorrow, when thou wast born; trouble, when thou wast nursed. She was cold, whilst thou wast warm; went, whilst thou layest still; waked, whilst thou sleepest; fasted, whilst thou feddest. These are easier to be conceived than expressed, easier deserved than requited. Say not, therefore, to thy father according to the doctrine of the Pharisees, *Corban*, "It is a gift, if thou profitest by me;" but confess that it is a true debt, and thy bounden duty, if thou beest able, to relieve them. So did Ruth to Naomi, who was but her mother-in-law.

Which she had reserved when she was sufficed.

OBSERVATION.

We must not spend all at once, but providently reserve some for afterwards: we must not speak all at once, without Jesuitical reservation of some things still in our hearts; not spend all at once, without thrifty reservation of something still in our hands. Indeed, our Saviour saith, "Care not for to-morrow; for to-morrow shall care for

itself:" but that is not meant of the care of providence, which is lawful and necessary; but of the care of diffidence, which is wicked and ungodly. Those are to be blamed which, as Abishai said to David concerning Saul, "I will strike him but once, and I will strike him no more;" so many men, with one act of prodigality, give the bane and mortal wound to their estates; with one excessive feast, one costly suit of clothes, one wasteful night of gaming, they smite their estates under the fifth rib, which always is mortal in Scripture, so that it never reviveth again. But let us spare where we may, that so we may spend where we should: in the seven years of plenty let us provide for the seven years of famine; and to make good construction of our estates, let us as well observe the future as the present tense.

*Then her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? *

These words were not uttered out of jealousy, as if Naomi suspected that Ruth had dishonestly come by her corn; (for charity is not suspicious, but ever fastens the most favourable comments upon the actions of those whom it affects;) but she did it out of a desire to know who had been so bountiful unto her. Yet hence may we learn, that parents, after the example of Naomi, may

and ought to examine their children, how and where they spend their time: for hereby they shall prevent a deal of mischief, whilst their children shall be more watchful what company they keep, as expecting with fear at night to be examined. Neither can such fathers be excused, who never say to their children, as David to Adonijah, "Why doest thou so?" but suffer them to rove and range at their own pleasure. "Am I," say they, "my son's keeper? He is old enough, let him look after himself."

Now, as for those Joashes, whose Jehoiadas are dead,—those young men whose friends and fathers are deceased,—who now must have reason for their ruler, or rather grace for their guide and governor; let such know, that indeed they have none to ask them, as the angel did Hagar, "Whence comest thou, and whither goest thou?"—none to examine them, as Eliab did David, "Wherefore art thou come down hither?"—none to question them, as Naomi did Ruth, "Where wroughtest thou to-day?" But now, as St. Paul said of the Gentiles, that, "having no law," they were "a law unto themselves;" so must such young persons endeavour that, having no examiners, they may be examiners to themselves, and at night, accordingly as they have spent their time, either to condemn or acquit their own actions.

Blessed be he that knew thee.

1 Kings xxii., the man shot an arrow at un-awares, yet God directed it to the chink of the armour of guilty Ahab. But Naomi doth here dart and ejaculate out a prayer, and that at rovers, aiming at one particular mark: "Blessed be he that knew thee:" yet, no doubt, was it not in vain; but God made it light on the head of bountiful Boaz, who deserved it.

Learn we from hence, upon the sight of a good deed, to bless the doer thereof, though by name unknown unto us. And let us take heed that we do not recant and recall our prayers, after that we come to the knowledge of his name; as some do, who, when they see a laudable work, willingly commend the doer of it; but after they come to know the author's name, (especially if they be prepossessed with a private spleen against him,) they fall then to derogate and detract from the action, quarrelling with it as done out of ostentation, or some other sinister end.

*And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she
had wrought.*

Children, when demanded, are truly to tell their parents where they have been. Rather let them hazard the wrath of their earthly father by tell-

ing the truth, than adventure the displeasure of their heavenly Father by feigning a lie. Yet, as David, when Achish asked him where he had been, (1 Sam. xxvii. 10,) told him that he had been “against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites;” when indeed he had been the clean contrary way, “invading the Geshurites, and Gezrites, and the Amalekites:” so many children flap their parents in the mouth with a lie, that they have been in their study, in their calling, in good company, or in lawful recreations; when the truth is, they have been in some drinking school, tavern, or alehouse, misspending of their precious time. And many serve their masters as Gehazi did the prophet; who, being demanded, answered, “Thy servant went no whither,” when he had been taking a bribe of Naaman.

The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz.

We ought to know the names of such who are our benefactors. Those are counted to be but basely born, who cannot tell the names of their parents; and surely those are but of a base nature, who do not know the names of their patrons and benefactors. To blame therefore was that lame man cured by our Saviour, (John v. 13,) of whom it is said, “And he that was healed knew not the

name of Him that said unto him, Take up thy bed, and walk." Yet let not this discourage the charity of any benefactors, because those that receive their courtesies oftentimes do not remember their names. Let this comfort them,—though they are forgotten by the living, they are remembered in the Book of Life. The Athenians out of superstition erected an altar with this inscription, "Unto the unknown God:" but we out of true devotion must erect an altar of gratitude to the memory, not of our once unknown, but now forgotten benefactors, whose names we have not been so careful to preserve as Ruth was the name of Boaz: "And the man's name was Boaz."

VERSE 20.

And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord; for he ceaseth not to do good to the living and to the dead. Again Naomi said unto her, The man is near unto us, and of our affinity.

These words consist of three parts. 1. Naomi's praying for Boaz. 2. Her praising of Boaz. 3. Her reference and relation unto Boaz. Of the first:—

Blessed be he of the Lord.

The Lord is the Fountain from whom all blessedness flows. Indeed, Jacob blessed his sons; Moses, the twelve tribes; the priests, in the law, the people: but these were but the instruments, God the Principal; these the pipe, God the Fountain; these the ministers to pronounce it, God the Author who bestowed it.

For he ceaseth not.

OBSERVATION.

Naomi never before made any mention of Boaz, nor of his good deeds; but now, being informed of his bounty to Ruth, it puts her in mind of his former courtesies. Learn from hence, new favours cause a fresh remembrance of former courtesies. Wherefore, if men begin to be forgetful of those favours which formerly we have bestowed upon them, let us flourish and varnish over our old courtesies with fresh colours of new kindnesses; so shall we recall our past favours to their memories.

USE.

When we call to mind God's staying of His killing angel, *anno* 1625,* let that mercy make us to

* [This "killing angel" was the plague, which in London swept off 35,417 persons in the summer of 1625.—ED.]

be mindful of a former,—His safe bringing back of our (then prince, now) king from Spain ; * when the pledge of our ensuing happiness was pawned in a foreign country. Let this blessing put us in mind of a former,—the peaceable coming in of our gracious sovereign, of happy memory,† when the bounds of two kingdoms were made the middle of a monarchy. Stay not here, let thy thankfulness travel further. Call to mind the miraculous providence of God in defending this land from invasion in '88. On still : be thankful for God's goodness in bringing Queen Elizabeth to the crown, when our kingdom was like the woman in the Gospel, "troubled with an issue of blood," (which glorious martyrs shed,) but stanch'd at her arriving at the sceptre. We might be infinite in prosecution of this point : let present favours of God renew the memories of old ones, as the present bounty of Boaz to Ruth made Naomi remember his former courtesies : "For he ceaseth not to do good to the living and the dead."

He ceaseth not.

Our deeds of piety ought to be continued with-

* [Charles I. is the king here alluded to ; our author retaining the language of his Lectures, delivered at Cambridge in 1630-1, although Charles had long been dead when the Lectures were printed and published as a "Comment."—ED.]

† [James I. of England and VI. of Scotland.—ED.]

out interruption or ceasing. Some men there be, whose charitable deeds are as rare as an eclipse or a blazing star. These men deserve to be pardoned for their pious deeds, they are so seldom guilty of them. With Nabal, they prove themselves by excessive prodigality at one feast: but he deserves the commendation of a good house-keeper, who keeps a constant table, who, with Boaz, “ceaseth not to do good.”

To the dead.

The meaning is, to those who now are dead, but once were living; or to their friends and kindred. Whence we learn, mercy done to the kindred of the dead is done to the dead themselves. Art thou, then, a widower, who desirest to do mercy to thy dead wife; or a widow, to thy dead husband; or a child, to thy deceased parent? I will tell thee how thou mayest express thyself courteous. Hath thy wife, thy husband, or thy parent, any brother, or kinsman, or friends surviving? be courteous to them; and, in so doing, thy favours shall redound to the dead. Though old Barzillai be incapable of thy favours, let young Chimham taste of thy kindness. Though the dead cannot, need not have thy mercy, yet may they receive thy kindness by a proxy,—by their friends that still are living.

Mercy, then, to the dead makes nothing for the

Popish purgatory; and yet no wonder if the Papists fight for it. 'Tis said of Sicily and Egypt, that they were anciently the barns and granaries of the city of Rome: but now-a-days purgatory is the barn of the Romish court, yea, the kitchen, hall, parlour, larder, cellar, chamber, every room of Rome. David said, (2 Sam. i. 24,) "Ye daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, which clothed you in scarlet with pleasure, and hanged ornaments of gold upon your apparel:" but should purgatory once be removed, weep, pope, cardinals, abbots, bishops, friars; for that is gone which maintained your excessive pride. When Adonijah sued for Abishag the Shunammite, Solomon said to his mother, "Ask for him the kingdom also." But if once the Protestants could wring from the Papists their purgatory, nay, then would they say, "Ask the triple crown, cross keys, St. Angelo, Peter's Patrimony, and all." In a word, were purgatory taken away, the pope himself would be in purgatory, as not knowing which way to maintain his expensiveness.

The man is near unto us, and of our affinity.

Naomi never before made any mention of Boaz. Some, had they had so rich a kinsman, all their discourse should have been a survey and inventory of their kinsman's goods; they would have made an occasion at every turn to be talking of them.

Well, though Naomi did not commonly brag of her kinsman, yet, when occasion is offered, she is bold to challenge her interest in him.

OBSERVATION.

Poor folks may with modesty claim their indred in their rich alliance. Let not therefore great personages scorn and condemn their poor kindred. Camden reports of the citizens of Cork, that all of them in some degrees are of kindred one to the other: but I think that all wealthy men will hook in the cousin, and draw in some alliance one to other. But as they will challenge kindred where there is none, in rich folks; so they will deny kindred where it is, in poor. Yet is there no just reason they should do so. All mankind knit together in the same father in the creation, and at the deluge; I know not who lay higher in Adam's loins, or who took the wall in Eve's belly. I speak not this to pave the way to an Anabaptistical parity, but only to humble and abate the conceits of proud men, who look so scornful and contemptuous over their poor kindred.

USE.

Let such as are allied to rich kindred be heartily thankful to God for them; yet so as they under God depend principally on their own labour, and not on their reference to their friends. And

let them not too earnestly expect help from their kindred, for fear they miscarry. A scholar being maintained in the university by his uncle, who gave a basilisk for his arms, and expecting that he should make him his heir, wrote these verses over his chimney :—

*Falleris aspectu basiliscum occidere, Plini ;
Nam vitæ nostræ spem basiliscus alit.*

Soon after it happened that his uncle died, and gave him nothing at all ; whereupon the scholar wrote these verses under the former :—

*Certè aluit, sed spe vana ; spes vana venenum ;
Ignoscas, Plini, verus es historicus.*

So soon may men's expectations be frustrated, who depend on rich kindred. Yea, I have seen the twine-thread of a cordial friend hold, when the cable-rope of a rich kinsman hath broken.

Let those therefore be thankful to God, to whom God hath given means to be maintained of themselves, without dependance on their kindred. Better it is to be the weakest of substances, to subsist of themselves, than to be the bravest accidents, to be maintained by another.

VERSE 21.

*And Ruth the Moabite said, He said unto me also,
Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until
they have ended all my harvest.*

He said unto me also.

Ruth, perceiving that Naomi kindly resented Boaz his favour, and that the discourse of his kindness was acceptable unto her, proceeds in her relation.

DOCTRINE.

People love to enlarge such discourses which they see to be welcome to their audience.

What maketh talebearers so many, and their tales so long, but that such persons are sensible that others are pleasingly affected with their talk? Otherwise, “a frowning look” (Prov. xxv. 23) will soon put such to silence. When Herod saw (Acts xii. 3) that the killing of James “pleased the Jews, he proceeded farther, to take Peter also.” Detractors, perceiving that killing of their neighbours’ credits is acceptable to others, are encouraged thereby to imbrue their tongues in the murdering of more reputations.

Secondly. Whereas Ruth candidly confesseth what favour she found from Boaz, we learn, we ought not sullenly to conceal the bounty of our benefactors, but express it to their honour, as occasion is offered. The *giver* of alms may not, but the *receiver* of them may, “blow a trumpet.”

This confuteth the ingratitude of many in our age; clamorous to beg, but tongue-tied to confess

what is bestowed upon them. What the “sin against the Holy Ghost” is in divinity, that ingratitude is in morality,—an offence unpardonable. Pity it is but that moon should ever be in an eclipse, that will not confess the beams thereof to be borrowed from the sun. He that hath a hand to take, and no tongue to thank, deserves neither hand nor tongue, but to be lame and dumb hereafter.

Observe by the way, that Ruth expresseth what tends to the praise of Boaz, but conceals what Boaz said in the praise of herself. He had commended her (verse 11) for a dutiful daughter-in-law, and for leaving an idolatrous land. But Ruth is so far from commending herself in a direct line, that she will not do it by reflection, and at the second hand, by reporting the commendations which others gave her.

DOCTRINE.

“Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth.”

How *large* are the penmen of the Scripture, in relating their own faults! How *concise* (if at all) in penning their own praises!

It is generally conceived that the Gospel of St. Mark was indited by the apostle Peter; and that from his mouth it was written by the hand of John Mark, whose name now it beareth. If so, then

we may observe, that Peter's *denying of his Master*, with all the circumstances thereof, his cursing and swearing, is more largely related in the Gospel of St. Mark than in any other: but as for his *repentance*, it is set down more shortly there than in other Gospels.

Matthew xxvi. 75: "And he went out, and wept bitterly."

Luke xxii. 62: "And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

But Mark xiv. 72, it is only said, "When he thought thereon, he wept."

So short are God's servants in giving an account of their own commendations, which they leave to be related by the mouths of others.

Thou shalt keep fast by my young men.

OBJECTION.

"Here either Ruth's memory failed her, or else she wilfully committed a foul mistake. For Boaz never bad her to 'keep fast by his young men,' but, (verse 8,) 'Abide here fast by my maidens.' It seems she had a better mind to male company, who had altered the gender in the relating of his words."

ANSWER.

Condemn not the "generation of the righteous," especially on doubtful evidence. Boaz gave a

command (verse 15) to his young men to permit her to glean: she mentioneth them therefore in whom the authority did reside, who had a commission from their master to countenance and encourage her in her extraordinary gleaning, which privilege his maidens could not bestow upon her.

VERSE 22.

And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.

see page 172

And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law.

DOCTRINE.

It is the bounden duty of parents to give the best counsel they can to their children; as Naomi here prescribes wholesome advice unto her daughter-in-law.

It is good.

That is, it is better. It is usual, both in the Old and New Testament, to put the positive for the comparative in this kind. Luke x. 42: "Mary hath chosen that good part," that is, the

better part. "It is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body;" (Matt. v. 29;) "profitable," that is, more profitable; and, as it is expounded, Matt. xviii. 8, "better." "It is good for a man not to touch a woman;" (1 Cor. vii. 1;) that is, it is better; it is more convenient, and freer from trouble, in time of persecution. "It is good for thee that thou go out with his maidens;" that is, it is better.

DOCTRINE.

Maids are the fittest company for maids; amongst whom a chaste widow, such as Ruth was, may well be recounted. Modesty is the life-guard of chastity.

That they meet thee not in any other field.

Here she rendereth a reason of her counsel, because Ruth thereby should escape suspicion, or appearance of evil.

OBJECTION.

"What hurt or harm had it been, if they had met her in another field? She might have been met there, and yet have departed thence as pure and spotless as she came thither."

ANSWER.

It is granted. Yet, being a single woman, slanderous tongues and credulous ears meeting together had some colour to raise an ill report on her reputation. Besides, being a Moabite, she ought to be more cautious of her credit ; lest, as she was a stranger, she might be taken for a “ strange woman,” in Solomon’s sense. And therefore *nimia cautela non nocet*. In some ears it is not enough to be honest, but also to have *testes honestatis* ; many a credit having suffered, not for want of clearness, but clearing of itself, surprised on such disadvantages.

VERSE 23.

*So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto
the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest ;
and dwelt with her mother-in-law.*

So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz.

Here was good counsel well given, because thankfully accepted and carefully practised.

DOCTRINE.

It is the duty of children to follow the advice of their parents.

We meet with two examples in wicked persons, which in this respect may condemn many undutiful children of our days. The one, Ishmael; who, though he be charactered to be “a wild man,” (Gen. xvi. 12,) “his hand against every man, and every man’s hand against him;” yet it seems his hand was never against his mother Hagar, whom he obeyed in matters of most moment;—in his marriage, Gen. xxi. 21: “His mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.”

The second is Herodias; of whom no good at all is recorded, save this alone, that she would not beg a boon of her father Herod, until first she went in to her mother Herodias, to know what she should ask. How many now-a-days make deeds of gift of themselves, without the knowledge and consent of their parents!

Unto the end of barley harvest.

Commendable is the constancy and the continuance of Ruth in labour. Many there are who at the first have a ravenous appetite to work, but quickly they surfeit thereof. Ruth gleanes one day so as she may glean another. It is the constant pace that goeth farthest, and freest from being tired. Matt. xxiv. 13: “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

And dwelt with her mother-in-law.

It was Christ's counsel unto His disciples, (Matt. x. 11,) to "abide" in the place wherein they did enter, and not to go from house to house. Such the settledness of Ruth,—where she first fastened, there she fixed: she "dwelt with her mother." Naomi affords Ruth house-room, Ruth gains Naomi food; Naomi provides a mansion, Ruth purveys for meat; and so [they] mutually serve to supply the wants of each other.

If envy, and covetousness, and idleness were not the hinderances, how might one Christian reciprocally be a help unto another! All have something, none have all things; yet all might have all things in a comfortable and competent proportion, if seriously suiting themselves as Ruth and Naomi did, that what is defective in one might be supplied in the other.

FINIS.

[Here ends this beautiful Comment, to the regret of all its readers. Why Fuller did not proceed to draw quaint lessons of wisdom and piety from each line of the last two chapters of Ruth, we are not informed. It may be that his course of Lectures was broken off by fresh preferment in the Church, with a corresponding increase of duties. That he was not deterred by any difficulties in the third chapter, is obvious

from the skill with which he handled the previous two; not forcing the meaning, as was the wont of many of his contemporaries, but with ready ease pressing choice wine from the ripe fruit of each phrase of the text.

While perusing this Comment, some readers will be reminded, as we have been, of the lines written on "RUTH" by a man of kindred genius, who, cast in a more mirth-loving age than Fuller's, fed the public with lighter food than he did, but whose powers were really as great in serious as in comic prose and verse.—ED.

"She stood breast high among the corn,
Clasp'd by the golden light of morn;
Like the sweetheart of the sun,
Who many a glowing kiss had won.

* * * *

Thus she stood among the stooks,
Praising God with sweetest looks.
'Sure,' I said, 'Heaven did not mean
Where I reap thou shouldst but glean:
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
Share my harvest and my home.'"

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NOTES UPON JONAH.

BY

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NOTES UPON JONAH.

CHAPTER I. VERSE 1.

The word of the Lord came also unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying.

SOMETHING must be premised of the name, parentage, time, and place of this prophet.

His name: JONAH, signifying a “dove” in Hebrew: but he answered his name rather in flying so fast away, than in want of gall, where-with he abounded.

Parentage: “son of Amittai.” Men are differed in the Bible, 1. By their fathers: as “Benaiiah son of Jehoiada.” 2. Mothers: as “Joab son of Zeruiah.” 3. Husbands: as “Mary the wife of Cleophas.” 4. Brothers: as “Judas the brother of James.” 5. Sons: as “Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.” But that this prophet was son to the widow of Sarepta, I believe no more than that Dinah, Jacob’s daughter, was wife to Job; or that Ruth

was daughter to Eglon king of Moab: both which are as fondly fabled by the Jews as justly rejected by Christians.

As for the time and place of this prophet, when and where he lived, though here omitted, is supplied, 2 Kings xiv. 25. He was of Gath-hepher, a city of the tribe of Zebulun, and lived in the time of Joash king of Israel.

The word of the Lord came.

All prophets and preachers ought to have their patent and commission from God. "How can they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. x. 15.) That is, How can they preach lawfully and profitably? though *de facto* they preach, to their own great harm and others' little good. But as long as there is current coin, there will be counterfeit: Jeroboam's priests under the Law, and Sheva's sons in the Gospel, and at this day some who leap from the loom to the pulpit. I must confess, an ass's head was good food in a famine; coarse meat is dainty when no other can be had. But now (thanks be to God) great is the company of preachers, able and learned; and, for aught I see, the universities afford more vine-dressers than the country can yield them vineyards. No necessity, therefore, that such blind guides should be admitted.

VERSE 2.

Arise, and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it ; for their wickedness is come up before Me.

The words contain Jonah's commission ;—the place whither he was sent ;—what he should do there.

The commission : “ Arise.” As if He had said, “ Thou hast long preached in Israel to little purpose : great the pains, small the profit, of thy ministry. I will therefore transplant thy preaching, to see if it will bring more fruit in another soil.” It is a sign of a ruin of a church, when their pastors are called from their flocks to go to foreigners : as Jonah, who was here made non-resident against his will. When the eye-strings are broken, the heart-strings hold out not long after. The prophets are called “ seers : ” their departure presageth that their parishes soon after will die and decay. For sure the children of Israel prospered not long after that Jonah, a star of the first bigness, was fallen from that firmament, to arise into the horizon of Nineveh.

Go to Nineveh, that great city.

It is more than probable that this city, being

the metropolis of Assyria, was not a little proud of the greatness of it, as able thereby to outface the judgments of God, and to blunt the edge of His revenging sword with the populousness of her inhabitants, before it could cut clean through them. But let no city, though never so great, thus presume upon her multitudes. The greater, the fairer mark she is for the arrows of God's judgments; (though indeed nothing seems great in His eyes, save that man that seems little in his own;) and God can quickly subtract in a day, by sword, plague, and famine, what health, peace, and plenty hath multiplied in seven years. This island, since the ends of two kingdoms were made the middle of one monarchy, hath got the addition of "Great Britain;" yet, if compared to the continent, we may say of it, as Lot of Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" Isaiah xl. 15: "Behold, the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust in the balance: He taketh up the isles as a very little thing." Let us, the inhabitants thereof, not be proud of the greatness of it, which probably puffed up Nineveh, the "great city."

And cry against it.

Ministers must not mutter, but publicly and strongly cry, against sinners. First, because

sinners are *afar off*. Isaiah lix. 2: "But your iniquities have separated betwixt you and your God." Matt. xv. 8: "Their heart is far from Me." Ephes. ii. 13: "You who sometimes were afar off." Secondly, because they are *deaf*. Thirdly, *asleep*. Fourthly, *dead*. If any object, "Why, then, it is lost labour to cry against sinners: preaching to the dead is as unprofitable as praying for them;" I answer, Not so. For it is said, John v. 25, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." To blame, then, are those that are cruelly kind unto their people in sewing pillows under their elbows. Honey-dews, though they be sweet in taste, do blast and black the corn: and smoothing of people in their sins, though pleasant to the palate of flesh, dameth and destroyeth the soul. And yet this command to "cry" no whit favours their practice, who change the strength of matter into stentoriousness of voice. Such pieces make a great report with powder, but are charged with no shot, and are useless to the beating down of sin. And it may be said of their "crying," that they do but whisper whilst they holloa.

For their wickedness is come up before Me.

What the particular sin of Nineveh was, is not

expressed. Some think, had that city been arraigned for the sins of Sodom, it would have been found guilty. And no doubt sorcery, the sin of the East, was no stranger in her own country; and therefore the Ninevites thereto much addicted. But that *oppression* was certainly their predominant sin, may be gathered out of the third of Nahum, verse 1: "O bloody city! it is full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not." Not content to be a queen of those countries she had subdued, she was a tyrant. So then we see, all sins, but oppression especially, though naturally they tend downwards to their centre, and with their weight press sinners to hell, yet they do mount upwards by their cry and clamour. (Gen. iv. 10; and xviii. 20.) It were then an advised way for us to make some counter-sounds to drown the noise of our sins, that God may not hear them. First, by sending up sighs from a penitent heart. Secondly, prayers and alms. Acts x. 31: "Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." Thirdly, by pleading Christ His merits; that the loud language of His blood may out-noise and silence the cry of our sins. (Heb. xii. 24.) Yet let oppressors take notice, that theirs being the sin of Nineveh, as it is of a higher nature, so is it of a higher cry than other sins. And let the remorseless extortioner take this into his consideration:—

hand-mills, though they grind not so much, yet they grind as much to powder as either wind-mills or water-mills, which are far greater:—though these oppressors do not mischief to so many as Nineveh did, yet to so many as come within their clutches they show as merciless cruelty; and this is a sin [which] will come up before God.

VERSE 3.

But Jonah rose up to flee into Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Japho [Joppa]; for he found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, that he might go with them into Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

But Jonah rose up.

Whose superscription doth this book bear? Jonah's. Why did he not, like Alexander, when he was painted, lay his finger on his wart? Why did he not conceal in silence his own faults and infirmities? Why did he paint his own deformity with his own pencil? Because the penmen of the Holy Word are impartial relators of their own faults, and [those] of them who are dearest and nearest unto them. Who speaks more against David than David? "So ignorant was I and foolish, even as a beast before Thee."

Who accuseth St. Paul more than St. Paul? 1 Tim. i. 13: "I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and an oppressor." We learn from St. Stephen, (Acts vii. 22,) that Moses "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;" but in Moses, in his own writings, we find no mention or commendation of this his learning. He spared not himself in registering his passion in smiting of the rock; neither spared he to record the cruelty of Levi his grandfather, the shrewishness of Zipporah his wife, the idolatry-promoting of Aaron his brother, the murmuring of Miriam his sister, the profaneness of Nadab and Abihu his nephews. This, amongst other reasons, may be one to prove, that no "Scripture is of private interpretation; but that holy men of God wrote it, as as they were inspired by God's Holy Spirit." Whereas the books of heathen writers are nothing else but the inventories of their own virtues. What are Cæsar's Commentaries, but commentaries on the text of his own valour? But, for a man thus far to be unmanned as to banish self-love from himself, and, with Jonah, to put his own flight and fault into the calendar of eternity;—who sees not the finger of God in Jonah's hand writing this prophecy?

Sundry carnal reasons may be alleged for Jonah's flight. First, fear of extreme and cruel usage from the wicked Ninevites. Secondly,

despair that his preaching, barren in Israel, should be fruitful in Asshur. Thirdly, the strangeness of the message; distasteful to a Jewish palate, to be sent to the Gentiles. Fourthly, a zeal to his country: he might perceive that the conversion of the Gentiles would be the eversion of the Jews; and therefore he was loth to be accessary to the destruction of his own nation. Fifthly, the reason alleged by himself in the fourth chapter and verse 2: he feared to be disproved, because God was so merciful. But let his reasons, though never so many and weighty, be put into one scale, and God's absolute command weighed against them in the other, TEKEL; They are "weighed in the balance, and found too light." Prosper: *Obedientia non discutit Dei mandata, sed facit.* The Popish tenet of blind obedience is true doctrine in this case: what God commands let us put in speedy execution, without denying, or delaying, or disputing the difficulties that attend it.

To flee.

God bids Jonah go, and he flies; he supererogates, but in a wrong work. In him the proverb finds truth, "The more haste, the worse speed." We see, then, those that want legs to go in goodness, can find wings to fly in wickedness. The elders of the Jews, (probably aged grandsires,)

how late were they up that night our Saviour was betrayed ! How early did they rise that morning He was condemned ! How duly did they attend the whole day He was crucified !—who otherwise, no doubt, would have been in their beds as drowsy as dormice. It is not therefore the greatness of the strides, nor the swiftness of the pace, but the rightness of the way, which maketh our going pleasing unto God. 1 Cor. ix. 24: “ So run, that ye may obtain.” And if, with David, we cannot run the way of God’s commandments, let us go them ; if not go, let us creep. And this may comfort us, that though we go not so swift in our calling as we could desire, yet we go in our calling : our pace, though not fast, is firm ; and still by degrees we draw nearer and nearer to that Nineveh to which God hath sent us.

To Tarshish.

What and where this Tarshish was, authors only agree in disagreeing. Let this suffice : be this Tarshish in Asia, be it in Africa ; be it city, be it country ; be it sea, be it continent ; this sure I am, it was not that Nineveh to which Jonah was sent.

From the presence of the Lord.

It were great ignorance in us to charge Jonah

with such ignorance, as if he thought it absolutely possible to fly from God's presence. And if he had been so erroneous, he made the most unadvised choice,—to fly to the sea, where there appears the most evident demonstration of God's powerful presence. Psalm cvii. 23: "They that go down to the sea in ships," &c. The sight of the sea might have been a remembrancer to an atheist, and put him in mind of a God. Esau went to kill his brother Jacob; but when he met him, his mind was altered, he fell a kissing him, and so departed. Thus the waves of the sea march against the shore, as if they would eat it up: but when they have kissed the utmost brink of the sand, they melt themselves away to nothing. And this spectacle must needs make a man acknowledge a Deity. So, then, these words, "to fly away from the presence of the Lord," are not simply to be understood; there being no flying from God but thus:—from God, an angry Judge for our sins; to God, a merciful Father in our Saviour. By this phrase, then, is meant, he deserted the office of a prophet; he forsook and relinquished the ministerial function, whereabout God had employed him. Thus to be *in God's presence* is used in Holy Writ: Deut. x. 8: "The Lord separated the tribe of Levi to stand before the Lord." 1 Kings xvii. 1: "As the Lord liveth," saith Elias [Elijah], "before whom I stand." What kind of men, then, ought

we ministers to be? How decently ought we to demean and behave ourselves, who are chaplains in ordinary to the King of Heaven! Every month is our waiting month: we are bound to constant and continual attendance. It was the title of the angel Gabriel, (Luke i. 19,) "I am Gabriel that stands in the presence of God," *i. e.*, ever ready to be sent of Him in any employment. Now, as angels are God's ministers in heaven, so ministers are God's angels on earth, and stand in His presence, from which Jonah did fly.

And he went down to Japho; for he found a ship going to Tarshish.

Japho was the port of Jerusalem, distant from thence some thirty miles, in the tribe of Dan; afterwards called Joppa. Here Jonah finds a ship for his purpose. How all things seem to favour and flatter his flight! He lights on a ship, the ship sets sail, and at the first the tide serves, the wind seconds them. Let us suspect ourselves, and search our actions, whether they be not wrong, when we run without rub, and sail without *remora*:* for the first entrance into sin is easy and pleasant; whereas in good actions, when we begin them, it is a thousand to one but that the devil or our corruptions start some enemies or obstacles to hinder us.

* ["Hindrance," "obstacle," "delay." A Latin word of frequent occurrence in the writings of Fuller and his contemporaries.—ED.]

So he paid the fare thereof.

Jonah herein seems to be a man of a good conscience. Hearken, ye detainers of the wages of the hirelings: know that Oppression, the master whom you serve, will deal otherwise with you than you deal with your servants: for “the wages of sin is death,” and that shall duly be paid you. And you servants who have received your hire aforehand, deal not worse with your masters for dealing the better with you, but conscionably do your work, that the outlandish proverb may not be verified in you, “He that pays his servant’s wages aforehand, cuts off his right arm;” that is, occasions him to be lazy and slothful.

That he might go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Pharaoh’s dreams were doubled, because it was a thing determined by God. (Gen. xli. 32.) So these words were doubled in the text, to show that it was no sudden motion or project whereon Jonah stumbled unawares, but it was a purpose consulted, concluded, debated, determined. He would, *that* he would, fly from the presence of the Lord. Now, it is the opinion of some, that Jonah altered his calling, and turned merchant; but this is more

than can be proved out of the words. Traffic in itself is lawful, making those wooden bridges over the sea, which join the islands to the continent; adopting those commodities to countries, whereof they are barren themselves by nature. But it is not fitting that the tribe of Levi should change lots with the tribe of Asshur; or that those who have *curam animarum*, should take upon them *curam animalium*; apply themselves to husbandry, grazing, or any mechanical trade.

VERSE 4.

But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

But the Lord.

Though the man did thus leave his Master, yet the Master will not leave His man; but sends a pursuivant after him. Learn from hence, God is careful for His servants, though they be careless for themselves. (Gen. xix. 16.) Thus also was God merciful to Thomas, (who, for his temper, may be called the Jonah of the apostles,) making a new apparition for the confirming of his faith. (John xx. 26.) Let us pray to God, that He would love us to the end; that, though we forsake Him, He would not forsake us; that, though we forget the

duty of children to Him, He would be pleased to remember the love of a Father to us. And here we may admire God's goodness to take such pains about the recalling of a froward sinner. Lord! what was Jonah, that Thou shouldst regard him? or the son of Amittai, that Thou shouldst visit him?

Sent out a great wind into the sea.

God is the Commander of the winds, and hath them at His beck, as the centurion had his servants. He saith to the east wind, "Go;" and he goeth; (Exod. x. 13;) and the west wind, "Come;" and he cometh; (Exod. x. 19;) and to the south wind, "Do this;" and he doth it. (Psal. lxxviii. 26.) If it be objected, that the devil is styled, (Ephes. ii. 2,) "the prince of the power of the air;" and therefore, (to give the devil his due,) sithence [since] wind is nothing else but air moved by vapours, it may seem to be a subject of the devil's dominions: I answer, The devil is no absolute prince of the air, no monarch, but only he hath a deputed command therein under the God of Heaven. And Satan dares not, for the fear of a *præmunire*, exceed his commission, and endeavour anything in the air, without God's express command or permission. Much less can witches and conjurers (lieutenants under the devil) per-

form anything therein. And as for the heathen's fancy, which make Æolus god of the wind, it is lighter than the wind itself.

So that the ship was like to be broken.

Here a difficult objection may be started. "How could it stand with God's justice to put so many innocent mariners in hazard and jeopardy of their lives for the sin of Jonah alone? 'But these sheep, what have they done?' 'Will God destroy the righteous with the wicked?' 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do righteously?'" I answer, first, at large: In God's proceedings what we cannot conceive to be good, we must not condemn to be bad; but suspect ourselves, suspend our censures, admire His works, which are never against right, though often above reason. To come nearer: God need not pick a quarrel with man; He hath just matter enough at any time to have a controversy with him, and to commence actions against him. These mariners, though not guilty with Jonah in this particular act, yet had deserved this punishment of God for their manifold transgressions, from which no man is free.

Yet God hastened this punishment upon them for Jonah's presence with them. Wash not in the same bath with Cerinthus; decline the society of notorious sinners. (Rev. xviii. 4.) Gold.

though the noblest metal, loseth of his lustre by being continually worn in the same purse with silver: and the best men, by associating themselves with the wicked, are often corrupted with their sins, yea, and partake of their plagues. Yet when men are implunged in misery through the faults of others, and suffer for company for the sins of others, (as men in suretiship, undone by the prodigality of their friends for whom they were bound,) let them reflect their eyes on their own faults, and know that, though they be innocent in this particular, yet they have deserved this punishment of God for some other sin; and God may justly take advantage at His own pleasure to inflict the punishment. However, let *them* know themselves for sinners in a high degree, who involve others within the very latitude of their own punishments; as drunken husbands, who by their prodigality drowned their whole family in a sea of want, making their wives, children, servants, cattle, pinch and pine through their riot and excess. For our parts, let us labour to attain to true piety; that so we may rather be a Joseph, whose goodness may make a whole family to prosper; rather one of those ten righteous, for whose righteousness a whole Sodom might be saved; than an Achan, for whose sins an army may be routed; or a Jonah, for whose fault a whole ship full of men was like to be broken.

VERSE 5.

Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay down, and was fast asleep.

Then the mariners were afraid.

These words afford a harder than Samson's riddle. Out of the bold came fear; out of the profane, piety; out of the covetous came casting away of goods. Mariners, they are the hardiest of all people, so always in danger that they are never in danger, as if their hearts were made of those rocks amongst which they use to sail. Yet see, they feared. They are accounted a profane kind of people, a-kin'd unto the unjust judge. (Luke xviii. 2.) They are esteemed the Nazareth of the world, out of which cometh no good. Yet see, they pray. They are generally covetous, venturing their lives for lucre. Yet see, they cast away their goods. Whence we may learn, that afflictions are able to affright most profane men into piety: whether really inflicted, as unto Pharaoh; or certainly denounced, as unto Ahab. Wherefore, let us labour that we be as good when afflictions are removed, as when

they are inflicted ; as pious in wealth as in want ; as well affected in health as in sickness ; that in prosperity we prove not apostates from those pious resolutions which we made in adversity. When David had appointed Solomon king, (1 Kings i. 36,) “Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered, AMEN. And the Lord God of my lord the king say, AMEN.” So, when in afflictions we have made any vows of future piety, if we have deliverance, let us pray to God to ratify and confirm our resolutions, and to give us strength to fulfil and perform them ; lest otherwise we take but a lease of piety, during the term that the tempest doth last, and relapse to our former wickedness when the calm begins.

And cried every man unto his god.

General punishments must have general prayer and humiliation ; otherwise the plaster will be too narrow for the sore.

To his god.

The ship was fraught with a miscellany of all nations : it was a Babel, and contained a confusion of as many religions as that of languages : none were at a loss for a deity to pray to. (So an unnatural sin was atheism.) Yet woful then was the estate of the world, when one could not

see God for gods. But let us now be thankful, that as the true serpent of Moses ate up and devoured the seeming serpents which Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptian enchanter, did make; so now in the civilized world the knowledge of the true God hath devoured and done away all fancies and fables of feigned gods. Nevertheless, as the heathens in this ship, so every Christian may still pray to his proper God. "My Lord and my God," saith Thomas. "I thank my God." (1 Cor. i. 4.) The same is God to all in general, and to each in particular.

And cast the wares that were in the ship into the sea.

"Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life."* (Acts xxvii.) Now, if life be so dear, how dear is the life of our life, the eternal happiness of our souls! "What shall a man gain, if," &c.? Therefore, when it cometh in competition whether we shall lose our souls or our goods, let us drown our outward self, lest it drown us; let us cast it away, lest we be cast away by it. "Woe be to him that loadeth himself of thick clay!" (Hab. ii. 6.) Rather, as Joseph saved himself from his mistress, though

* [Job ii. 4. Fuller gives the reference, "Acts xxvii.," simply to draw the reader's attention to the illustration of this *dictum* afforded by the account of St. Paul's shipwreck, when "they lightened the ship, and cast the wheat into the sea," &c.—ED.]

he left his garment behind him ; so it matters not though we lose (the clothes of our souls) our earthly possessions, so be it our souls themselves still remain safe and entire. And if in such a case we must forgo our goods, much more must we forsake our sins, which are good for nothing, but to sink us down to destruction. (Heb. xii. 1.) “ Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us ; ” and not only pray to God to assist us, but, with the mariners in the text, back and second our prayers by using all lawful means for our own safety.

But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship.

I here read a contradiction in Jonah's actions. He went “ down into the sides of the ship : ” this savours of flight and of fear. And there he “ slept : ” this, of confidence and security. Yet wonder I not that I cannot make sense of Jonah's actions, who surely at this time could scarce make sense of his own. Sin distracts men, and makes them at the same time embrace contradicting purposes ; so that their resolutions fight as the twins in Rebekah's womb, and are as contrary to themselves as to God's laws. See, Jonah at one instant *formidat et audet*.

And lay down, and was fast asleep.

An emperor, hearing of the death of one of his subjects, who was deeply indebted, sent to buy his bed, supposing there was some opium or soporiferous virtue therein, that he could sleep so soundly thereon and be so much engaged. Surely this emperor would have proved a frank chapman to have purchased Jonah's ship; who, notwithstanding he had so many things within, without, about, above, beneath, to disturb him, yet, as if the tossing of the waves had been the rocking of this cradle, and the roaring of the winds lullabies in his ear, "was fast asleep."

Learn, First: It is a great sin, with Jonah, to be drowsy, when the rest are at their devotion; and yet many such separatists and non-conformists we have, who by their sluggishness divide themselves from the whole congregation. Indeed, Eutychus had some plea for his sleeping, because St. Paul's sermon was continued until midnight. But we may say to our people, as our Saviour to His disciples, "What! can ye not watch with me one hour?"

Secondly: It is a great sin with us (with Jonah) to be secure, whilst we, with others, are in a common danger and calamity. Consider the present estate of the Christian church. Is it not

tossed with the tempest of war, as bad as Jonah's ship? It lost an anchor, when the Palatinate was lost. It sprung a leak, when Rochelle was taken. One of the main-masts thereof was split, when the king of Sweden was killed.* Though we in this island be safe in the sides of the ship, yet let us not be sleepy as Jonah; but with our prayers commend to God the distresses of our beyond-sea brethren; and thank God that we, like Gideon's fleece, are dry, when the ground round about is wet with weeping, steeped in tears, bedewed with mourning.

Thirdly: Persevering in sin besots men, and makes them insensible of the greatest dangers. It makes men like Nabal; their "heart dies within" them, and they "become like a stone;" so frozen in their sins that no fear of hell fire can thaw them. Thus David, when he killed Uriah, seemed to kill his own conscience. How was he bereft of sense of sin and punishment for nine months together! Yea, the time of Bathsheba's deliverance was come, but the time of David's repentance was not come. Who ever saw the sun so long in an eclipse? Let us, therefore, stop sin in the beginning: for profaneness, as well as piety, is advanced by degrees, and in the progress thereof hath certain stages before it comes to the

* [Gustavus Adolphus, at the battle of Lutzen, November 6th, 1632.—ED.]

journey's end. Crush it, therefore, in the first motion, before it comes to be a settled thought; in the thought, before it break forth into action; in the action, ere it become a disposition; in the disposition, ere it be a habit; in the infant habit, before it become inveterate and another nature.

And here also we may see how desperate security in wicked men hath by usurpation entitled itself to be true valour. Men count wicked men full of fortitude, which run on God's drawn sword without any fear; when, alas! it is nothing but a sottish security, arising from a seared conscience. Will any say, that it is true valour in a Bedlam that he feels no pain, whose limbs are benumbed and past sense?

VERSE 6.

*So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him,
What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon
thy God, if so be that God will think upon us,
that we perish not.*

So the shipmaster.

The shipmaster that was,—but now no master of it, the tyranny of the tempest commanding both it and him,—begins to bestir him. Great men must not think to be privileged from danger by the eminency of their place. Mordecai to

Esther: "Think not thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews." Yea, sometimes great men are in the greatest dangers; they are most aimed at. "Fight neither against small nor against great, save only against the king of Israel." (1 Kings xxii. 31.) Now sithence [seeing] there was a governor in a ship, it teacheth us that no company can long subsist without order and superiority one above another. From the courtiers to the prisoners, (Gen. xxxix. 22,) Joseph had all the prisoners in the prison committed to his hand. Ten is but a small number, yet Moses made governors over ten. (Exod. xviii. 21.) Yea, as there is Michael the archangel in heaven, so is there Beelzebub the prince of devils in hell: so much order there is in the very place of confusion. Away then with the Anabaptist, who would set all men at odds by making all men even! For a commonwealth to want [a] chief, it is the chief of all wants; every man will do what he list, few what they should. Too much liberty would make men slaves to their own self-will. Let us therefore be "subject to the higher powers," knowing that "there are no powers but of God."

Came unto him, and said.

Every one in authority ought to look unto those which are under their command: otherwise they shall answer to God for such faults as those

commit which are under their charge, through their oversight and neglect. Christ is said to have baptized, John iii. 22; and yet it is said, John iv. 2, that He “Himself baptized not, but His disciples.” We see that the deed of the servants, being done by the countenance and command of the Master, is attributed and ascribed to the Master as His own proper work. If the master hears of his servant’s drunkenness, and punisheth it not, it is the master’s drunkenness. If the master hears of his servant’s profaneness, and reproves him not for it, it is his profaneness. Blameworthy, then, are those magistrates who would have the profit, not the pain; the credit, not the care, of their place and charge: so that they deal with those that are under them as David did with Adonijah; they will not so much as trouble themselves to say to offenders, “Why doest thou so?”

What meanest thou, O sleeper?

See here, the Gentile teacheth the Jew, the Pagan preacheth to the Prophet, and he is content to hear him. How faulty is their pride, who count it an imbasings of their knowledge to listen to the advice of others who in any respect are their inferiors! (John ix. 34.) Yet David hearkened to the advice of Abigail; Abraham, to the counsel of Sarah; Apollos, to the instruction

of Aquila and Priscilla ; yea, Solomon, the wisest of earthly kings, had a council of aged men which stood before him. Neither need any man think much to learn of the meanest of men, who may be taught by pismires and lilies. Yet, when inferiors on just occasion adventure to counsel those that are above them, that their counsel may better relish, let it be seasoned with these three ingredients. First : secrecy. This alone was good in Peter's reproof of our Saviour, (Matt. xvi. 22,) προσλαβόμενος, he "took him aside." Secondly : seasonableness. Abigail (1 Sam. xxv. 36) told drunken Nabal neither more nor less, till the next morning : she thought her physic would work the better, if she gave it him fasting. Thirdly : humility. Naaman's servants : "Father, if the prophet had bid thee some great thing, wouldst not thou have done it?" (2 Kings v. 13.) They brought not only good logic, reasoning from the greater to the less ; but also good ethics, "Father." These cautions observed, meaner persons, by God's assistance, with hope of success may take upon them to advise their betters.

Arise, and call upon thy God.

He doth not only reprove him for what he hath done amiss, but also directeth him in what he should do well. They are miserable guides, that

tell the wandering traveller that he hath lost the way, but tell him not how to find it.

Arise.

Men must put away all laziness, when they prepare themselves to prayer. Indeed, when in sickness we are God's prisoners, then we can only rouse up our souls, and not arise in our bodies. Then, with Hezekiah, we may lie on our bed and pray, pleading to God, as Mephibosheth to David, that His "servant is lame." But otherwise, "Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently." The first fruits of the ass was not to be dedicated to God in the Levitical law, but the neck thereof was to be broken. Let us break the ass's neck ; let us banish all sloth and laziness, when we go about to perform any service of God.

Call upon thy God.

Because perchance the shipmaster had a great opinion of the sufficiency of Jonah's God ; or because he might have a conceit that Jonah's prayers might be more prevalent than his own. Æschinus said unto his uncle Micio, in the comedy :—

*Tu potius deos comprecare ; nam tibi eos certò scio,
Quo vir melior es, quàm ego sum, obtemperaturos
magis.**

* [TERENTII *Adelphi*, iv., v., 70, 71.—ED.]

Or else he only aimed at a general collection of prayers, hoping that that cable-rope would be strongest that was twisted of most several cords.

If so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

It is worth our search to know when these words, "If so be God will," are to be inserted into our prayers, and when they must be omitted. When we pray for pardon of our sins, then we must omit them: for God hath said, "At what time," &c., "I will put all his wickedness out of My remembrance." Now let us not dispute of what is determined, suspect what is sure. God saith, He will: let us not say, "If so be God will." If our repentance be unfeigned, our pardon may be undoubted. In such a case, let us come to the throne of grace with boldness in the assurance of faith, with reasoning, trust perfectly in grace. But when we pray for the removal of punishment, then these words are no parenthesis, but an essential part of our prayers. Then we must submit ourselves: not our wills, but "Thy will be done." Then, with children, we must not cry to carve our own meat, but eat that which God our Father cuts for us: though it be un-toothsome for our palates to taste, it is never un-wholesome for our stomachs to digest.

VERSE 7.

And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we [may] know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

And they said every one to his fellow.

The apprehension of the present danger was the cement that did glue and unite their different judgments and affections to resolve on that which they conceived was for their general good. It is likely that the beasts in the ark, when they were in a common danger of drowning, did agree together, and for that time dispense with their mutual antipathies. Grant, then, that we have several tempers, humours, opinions; yet the apprehension that we have one grand impartial enemy, the devil, who like a roaring lion seeks to devour us,—this should make us centre our votes in such resolutions which are behoof-ful for all our goods.

Come, let us cast lots.

The use of lots was very ancient amongst both Jews and Gentiles. They were of three natures. First, the lot divinatory, used by Haman. (Esther iii. 7.) And as for this kind of lot, it is utterly unlawful: “We have no such custom, nor yet the churches of God.” Secondly,

divisory. (Obad. 11 ; Matt. xxvii. 35.) Thirdly, consultory. (Lev. xvi. 21 ; Josh. vii. 18 ; 1 Sam. xiv. 42.) These are lawful, if used lawfully, with these cautions :—First : in matters of difficulty ; as quicksilver in the *iliaca passio*, when nothing else can untwine the guts ; in perplexed and intricate causes. Secondly : in matters of consequence : otherwise there may [be] *difficiles nugæ*, riddles not worth the reading ; hard shells without a kernel, not worth the cracking ; difficulties which deserve not the resolving. Thirdly : they are to be ushered with prayer, as in the choice of Matthias. (Acts i.) Fourthly : that nothing therein be attributed to chance. Prov. xvi. 33 : “The lot is cast into the lap ; but the whole disposition thereof is from the Lord ;”—“*whole.*” Fortune, that god of man’s making, is a mere idol of Dagon, and falls down at the approach of the ark of God’s providence ; losing both head and hands, power both to plot and perform. It is not Fortune, blind through ignorance, that cannot see ; but Divine Justice, blind through impartiality, that will not see, which ordereth the matter. Lastly : no cozenage or deceit is to be used in them. Lots are God’s scales, wherein He weigheth matters of seeming equality, and shows which preponderates : they therefore that falsify this balance of the sanctuary must needs be abomination in the sight of God.

Now, because lots may say to cards what Naomi said to [of] Boaz, "They are near unto us, and of our affinity," something also of the use of them. It were no great harm if there were no other cards used than those of clothiers about wool, and of mariners in the ship. But as for cards to play with, let us not wholly condemn them, lest, lacing our consciences too strait, we make them to grow awry on the wrong side.

Such recreations are lawful, if we use them as Jonathan tasted the honey: putting forth the end of his rod, he touched a little of it, and his eyes were cleared. But let us take heed of a surfeit, into which those do fall who either play out of covetousness, or for more than their estates can bear, or constantly and continually. All their meat is sauce; all the days in their almanack play-days, though few holy-days. The creation lasted but a week, but these men's recreations all the days of their lives. Such using of lawful exercises is altogether unlawful.

*That we may know for whose cause this evil is
upon us.*

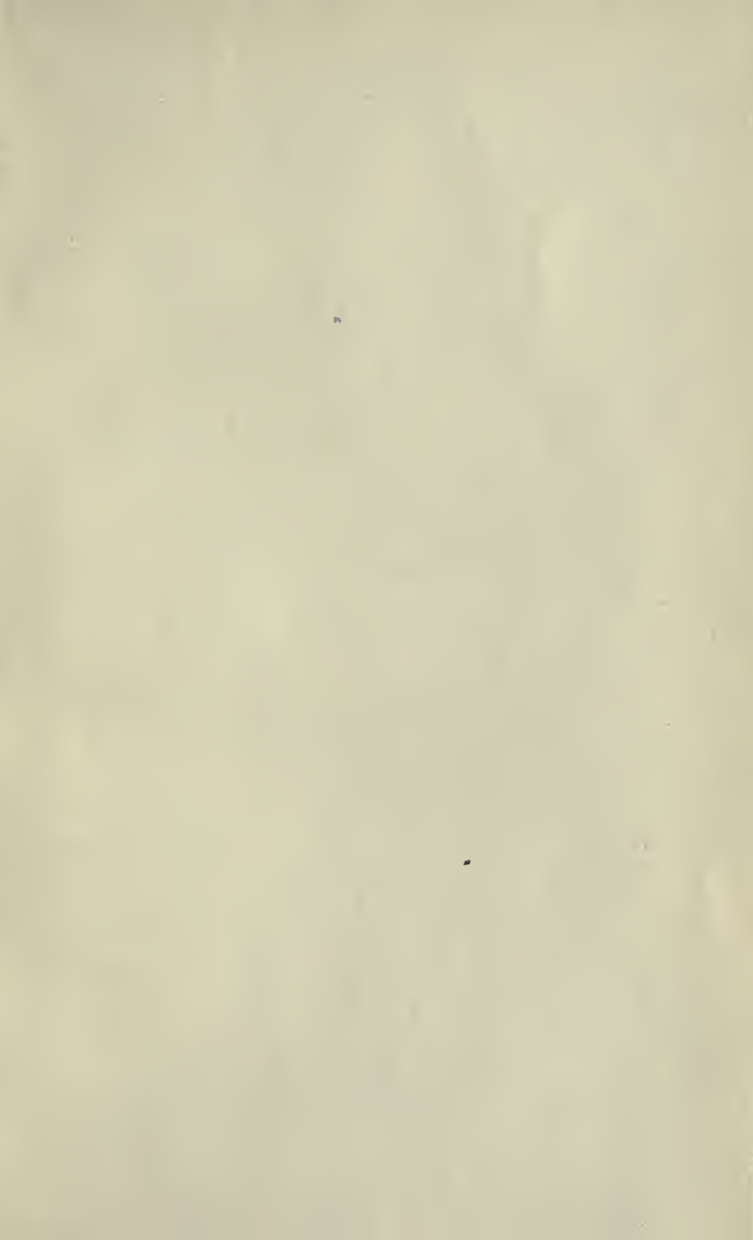
The best man in the ship carried sin enough about him to drown himself, ship, and passengers. But this milk we suck from the breasts of our mother Eve, to shift and post off the fault from ourselves, how guilty soever we are. 1 Sam. xv.

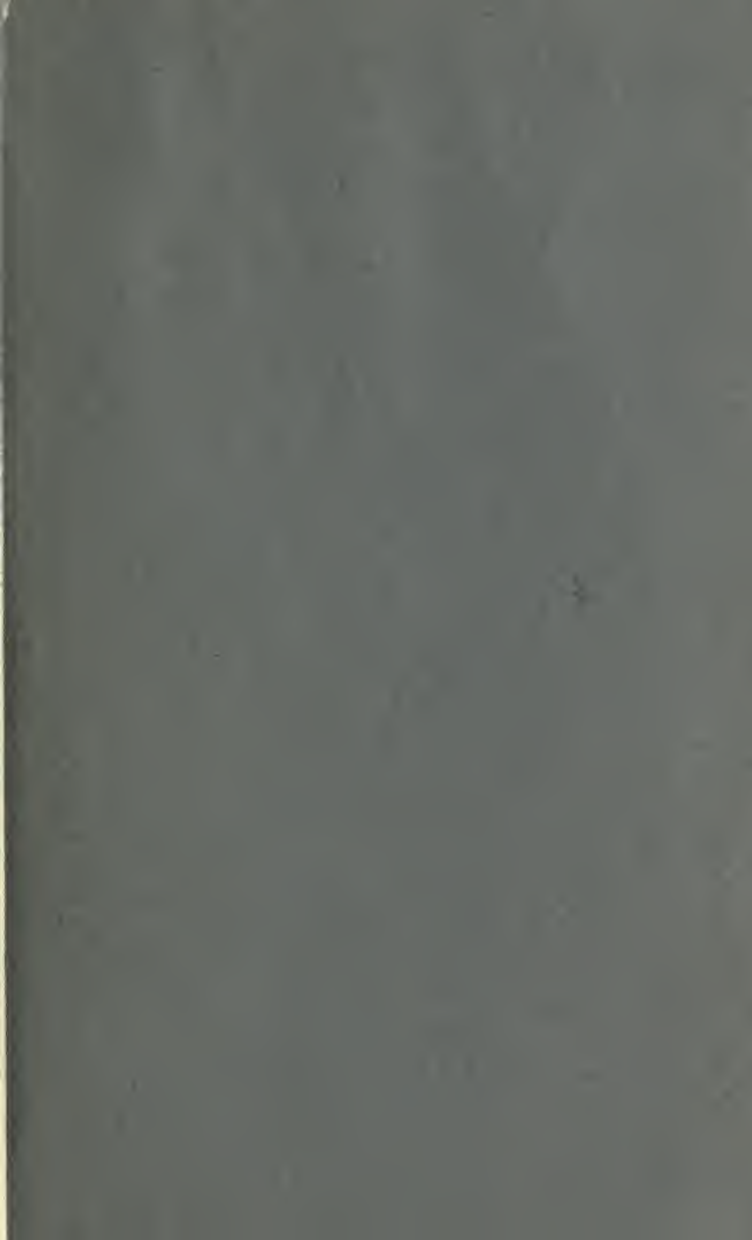
9: "But *Saul* and the people spared Agag, and the best sheep." Now, verse 15, it is said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep." He that was the greatest in the sin, would not be at all in the shame. Should God scourge this land with famine, or any other general punishment, the courtiers would impute the cause thereof to the covetousness of the citizens; the citizens to the prodigality of the courtiers: the rich to the unthankfulness, discontented murmuring of the poor; the poor to the hard-heartedness of the rich: the laity to the clergy's want of preaching; the clergy to the laity's want of practising. Every one would post the fault from himself, and be inquisitive, with these mariners, "for whose fault this evil was upon" them.

FINIS.

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