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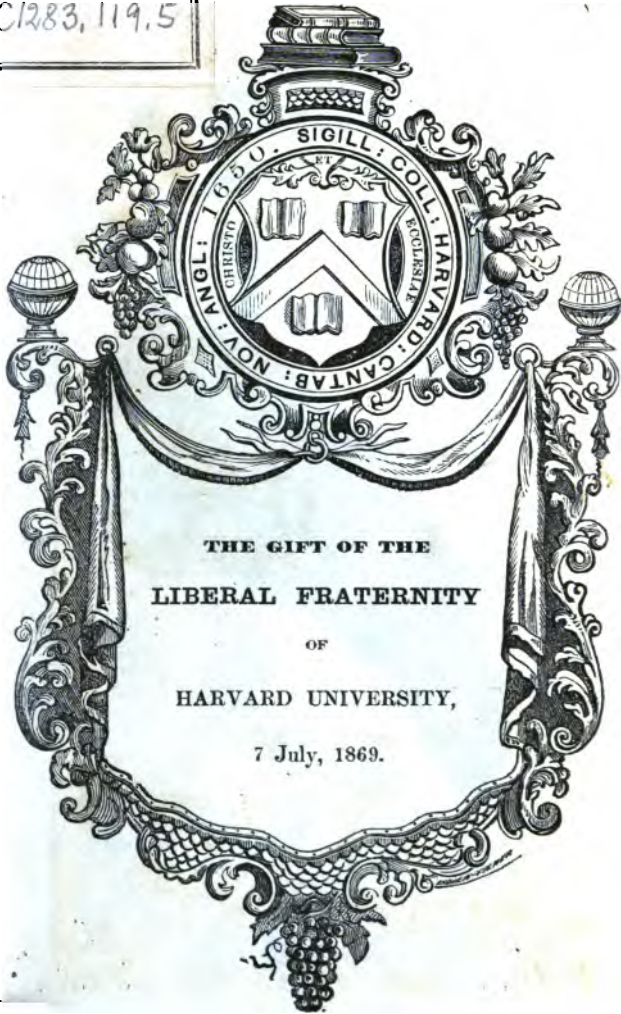
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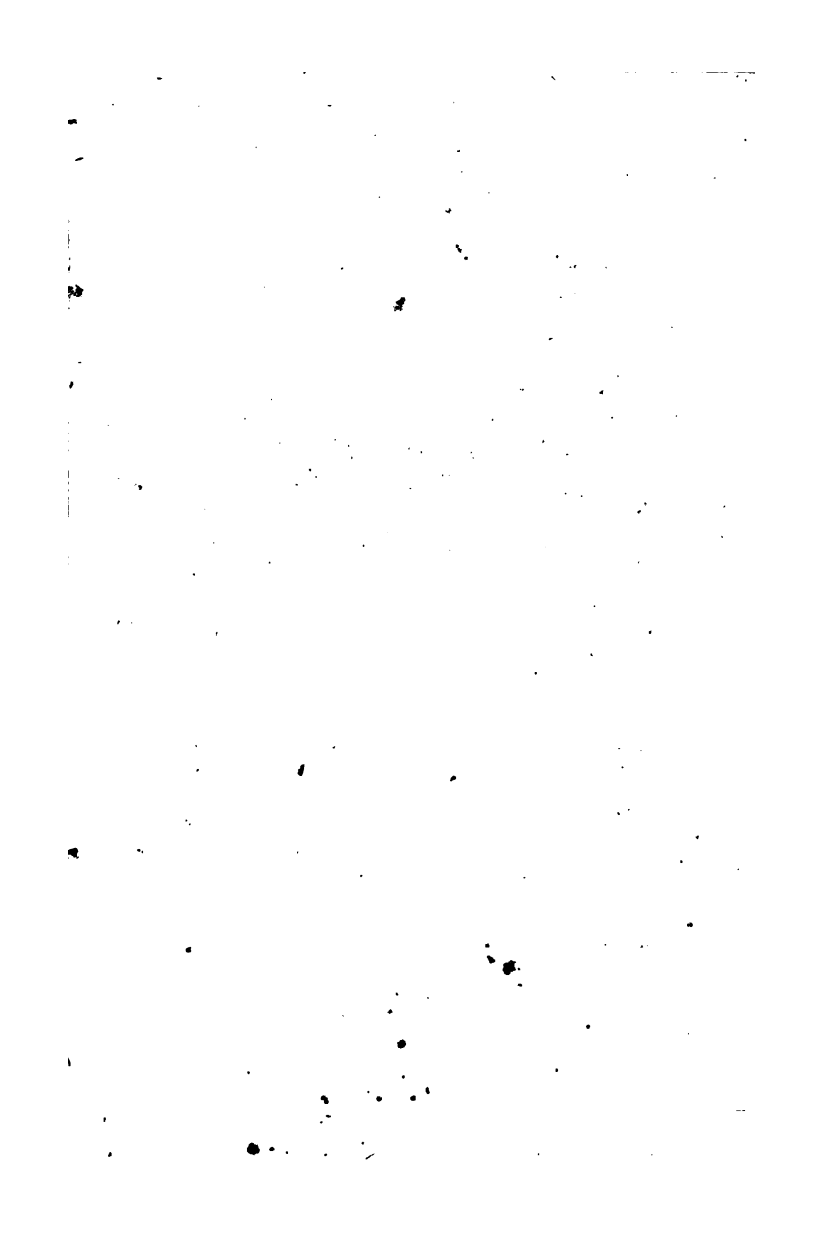
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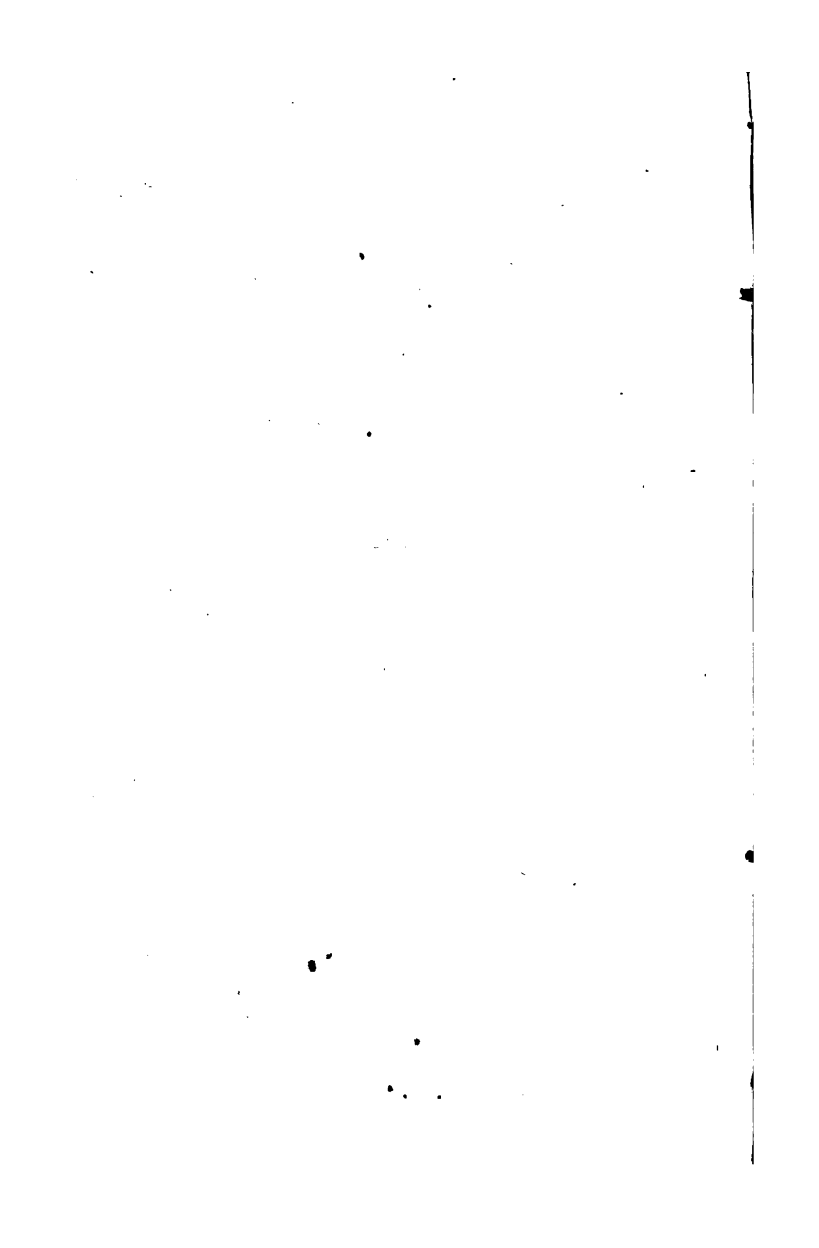


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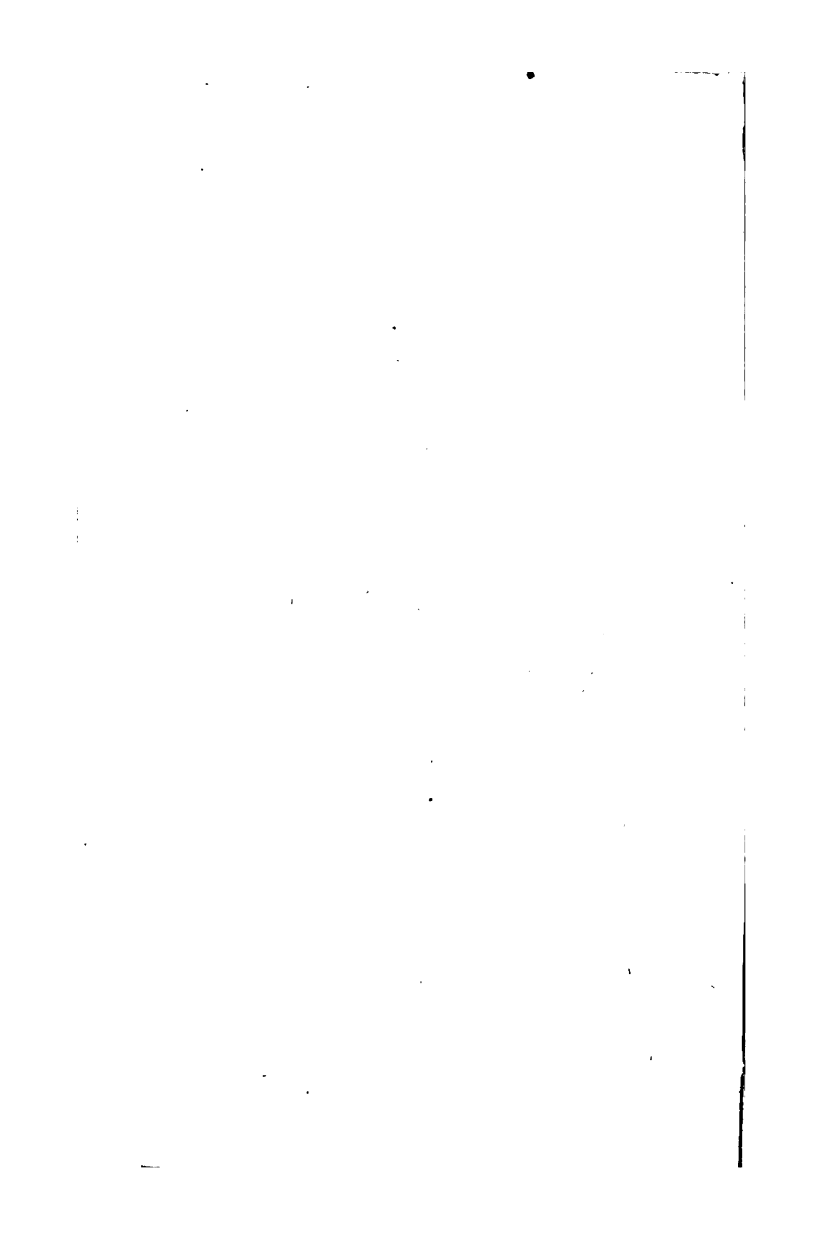
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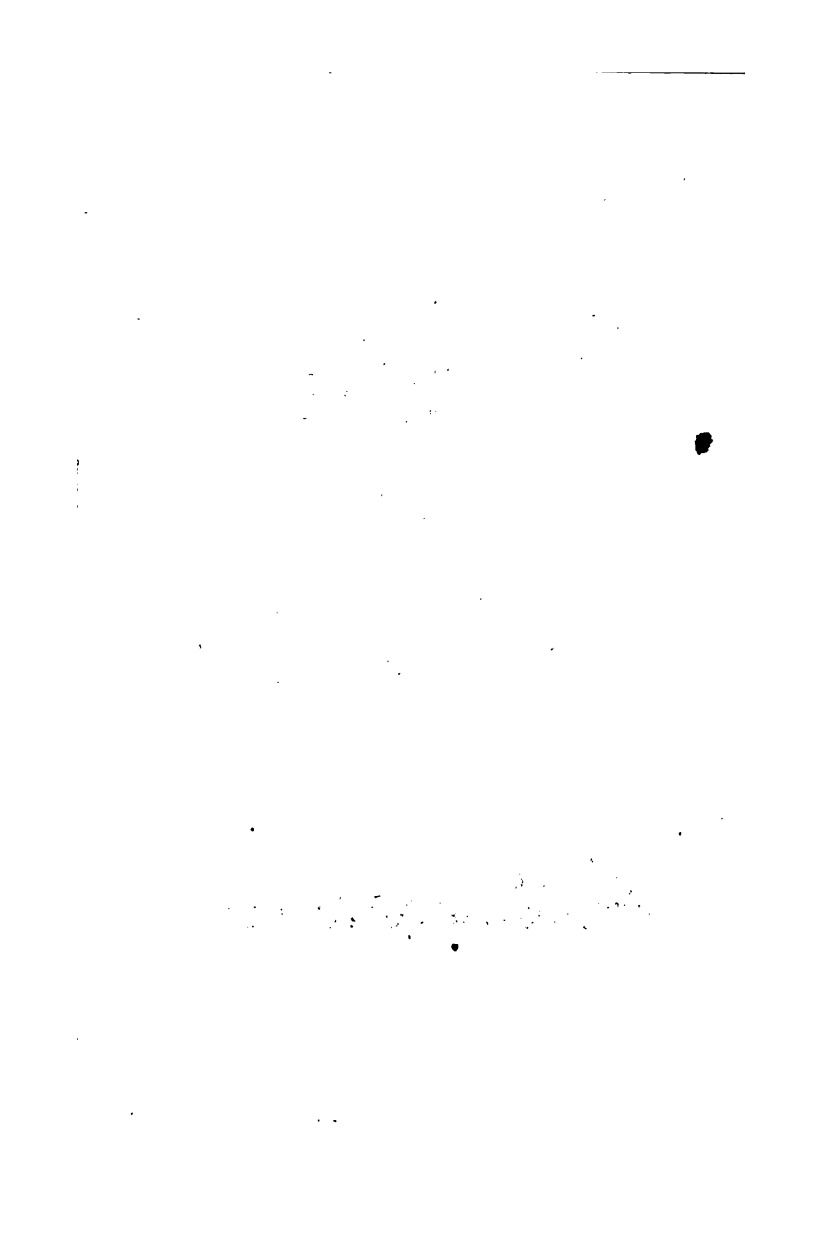














H. Martineau.

BOSTON.

LEONARD C. BOWLES.

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DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES:

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1833.

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DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES:

CONSISTING OF

REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS,

FOR THE USE OF

YOUNG PERSONS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

BY HARRIET MARTINEAU.

From the third London Edition.

BOSTON:
LEONARD C. BOWLES.

1833.

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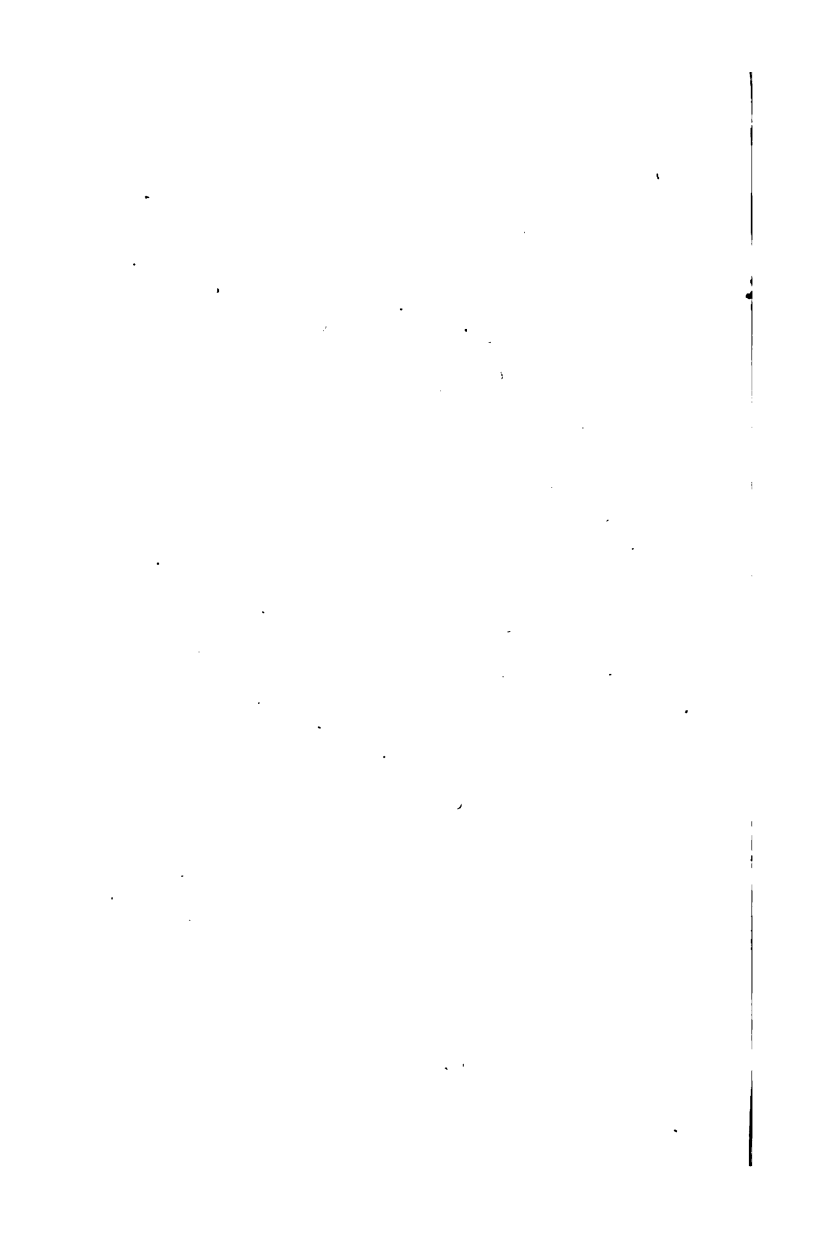
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TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

FEW books are more needed, yet few are more difficult of composition, than such as exhibit the devotional sentiment in its various exercises of faith, gratitude, penitence, confidence, love, and hope. The feelings through which the soul converses with God, may lose their simplicity and fervor when spread out on the written page. This common fault has been avoided in the Reflections and Prayers contained in this little volume. It has also the singular merit of presenting religious thoughts, in which the young may discover not only truth and propriety, but a sympathy with their own views of life, and with the experience of that season when the heart "is glad in the Lord." The "Guide to the Study of the Scriptures," contains many valuable remarks, though, in one or two instances, the writer may be thought to have expressed herself incautiously.

BOSTON, *December 1, 1833.*



PREFACE

TO THE THIRD EDITION.

IN the Preface to the first edition of this work, dated 1823, the following words occur:—" Being yet young, I have a vivid remembrance of the ideas and feelings on devotional subjects, which, in early youth, I found to be the most impressive, and to excite the most powerful emotions, and which are by no means the same ideas and feelings which produce these effects at a more advanced age. Possessing these remembrances, I must believe that the young are best fitted to write for the young, in most cases where the feelings and affections are concerned; and therefore I have written down the thoughts which used to present themselves in a natural train of reflection, and the prayers which I have been accustomed to form, under the guidance of able teachers, for my own use."

After the lapse of nine years, I find myself no longer in the number of those "best fitted to write for the young" on the subjects of this volume. I find that I have lost much of my interest in the ideas and feelings which were penned, nine years ago, with fervency and truth. Coupling this fact with that of the favorable reception of this work among the class for whom it is

intended, I am convinced that my youthful opinion had so much of soundness in it as to render it unadvisable that the Reflections and Prayers should be altered to suit my present views and feelings. I have not dared to improve their value as compositions, at the risk of impairing their congeniality with youthful emotions of piety. A few verbal corrections, and the occasional omission of a few lines, are the only improvements I have introduced into the Exercises.

The Essay at the end is new, being designed to replace with advantage the Treatise contained in the former editions; which Treatise I could not re-issue with satisfaction to myself, or, as I now think, with advantage to my readers. I can only hope that the possessors of the third edition will not think themselves losers by the exchange.

It will be evident to many, that, in sending forth again this my first work, I can have no other satisfaction in view than that of obeying the call of the public, whose word I am ready to take respecting the usefulness of the book. To render my acquiescence complete, it is necessary to place my name in the title-page. This I have resolved upon with the hope that my old readers will excuse me for not having done it before, and that my new readers will understand why I do it now.

H. M.

NORWICH, *August*, 1832.

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REFLECTION.

SUNDAY MORNING.

"A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Psalm lxxxiv. 10.

"And, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day." Luke iv. 16.

For what purpose was the Sabbath instituted? Why was one day in seven set apart, as it were, from the world? and why do we quit our usual employments on that day, and repair to the house of God? Because it is the *Lord's day*. All days ought to be devoted to the Lord; but on this I am especially called to give him praise, and to dedicate myself to his service. I well know that when I am employed in any interesting pursuit, or when I enjoy the recurrence of any favorite pleasures, they are apt to engross my thoughts, and to call off my attention from other pursuits or pleasures which do not so frequently present themselves to my mind. How much, then, must I be in danger of fixing my affections on the world and its affairs, if all my time be given up to them! God knows this, and has wisely

and benevolently appointed a season when I may seek after pleasures which will never fade, instead of the transient enjoyments of merely mortal life.

If this day is set apart for the worship of God, and for my own religious improvement, what should be my dispositions, and what my conduct? I should be grateful for such opportunities of advancement in the most valuable species of knowledge; I should remember with joy the numberless instances of God's bounty which it has been my lot to experience; and this remembrance should incite me to worship him in spirit and in truth, to offer him the homage of the heart. I must begin by thanking him for permitting me again to witness the return of this period of sacred rest: I must employ the leisure afforded by it in studying his word, both as contained in the Bible and in those books which exemplify its doctrines, and will assist in impressing them on my mind. I must be especially careful not to read the words of truth in a negligent manner; but must diligently prepare my mind for dwelling on them with advantage, by excluding vain thoughts, by previous meditation, and by the remembrance of the infinite importance and great solemnity of the truths which I seek to impress upon my heart. I must "search the scrip-

tures," as in them are found the words of eternal life; and let me, in humility and singleness of heart, receive the precepts, and rejoice in the promises, delivered through Jesus Christ, and not read them as a task appointed for the day; by which the employment will be rendered worse than useless.

A part of my time should also be devoted, if possible, to imparting to others, who have not enjoyed the same advantages as myself, that knowledge which may make them "wise unto salvation;" for surely no leisure can be more usefully spent than in revealing to the poor and ignorant the light of heavenly truth, and in making them hail the return of the Lord's day with the same pleasure which I experience. "To the poor the gospel is preached;" and to them it is, if possible, more important than to myself, that the Sunday should be distinguished by the acquisition of religious knowledge, and the impression of religious truth. On this day, more especially, are we reminded that all mankind are the children of a common Father, all created for the same purpose, all tending to the same end, all heirs of the same immortality. On this day should all the lesser circumstances of life be forgotten, in comparison with those in which all have a common interest; and on this day, therefore, should

we assist one another in the pursuit of what is most valuable, as we also would ourselves be assisted. Let it be my care, then, by the benevolence of my conduct, and the cheerfulness of my temper, to render this period of rest a day of happiness to others as well as myself.

While engaged in the public worship of God, may no vain and trifling thoughts intrude on the solemn repose of my soul. May no unworthy meditations usurp the place of those which are my duty, and should be my delight, in his holy place. Let me join with a pure heart and fervent spirit in prayer; and let the words of wisdom, which are addressed to me as well as to others, sink deep into my heart, and work in me the peaceable fruits of righteousness! Of all the duties which are this day incumbent on me, one of the most difficult, and one of the most important, is to exclude unworthy thoughts. But surely there is time enough in the six days allotted to worldly employments, for all worldly meditations; and how much is it to be lamented, that the short portion which should be devoted to the repose of the mind from all turbulent cares, should be rendered yet shorter by the want of self-control! Did I properly estimate the pleasures of devotion, no such difficulty would present itself to me. Did I feel love, joy, and peace in believing, no

subjects of less delight would occupy my mind. Let me, therefore, endeavor to impress myself so deeply and frequently, on this day, and every other, with a conviction of the boundless power and goodness of God, and of the incomparable value of religion, that feelings of reverence and love towards my heavenly Father may be not only warm, but continued and permanent. May every thought, word, and action, throughout this day, conduce to this end; and then indeed it will be blessed to me.

For many days my thoughts have been chiefly occupied with those worldly pursuits which demand a large share of my attention: let me spend *this* day in meditating on the "vast concerns of an eternal world;" in studying the example and precepts of Jesus, and in endeavoring to make God my friend, by subduing every inclination which can lead me to disobey him. Let me worship in his courts with an humble and thankful heart; and strengthen those principles, and confirm those feelings, which shall urge me forward in the way of peace and holiness. Let me now begin the duties of the Lord's day, by asking God to assist me in every good purpose.

PRAYER.

SUNDAY MORNING.

O thou, the eternal and unchangeable God! whose wisdom, power, and goodness, are infinite, deign to accept the humble praises of a grateful heart, the adoration of a soul which comprehendeth not thy greatness. Thou hast created the heavens and the earth, and the mighty sun which giveth light upon the earth; the moon and stars are also thine. All these things show thy power and goodness: but they shall all perish, and be no more, whilst thou shalt endure forever. The world and all that it contains shall pass away, but thou shalt remain. And man, the creature of thy hand, poor, feeble, sinful man, shall also be immortal. Blessed be thy name, O Lord! for thou hast given me life; thou hast bestowed on me more blessings than I can number; thou hast granted me the power of becoming good and happy here; and, above all, thou hast promised that I shall live forever, and hast pointed out to me the way to unfading happiness, by the revelation of thy gospel. Thou hast set before me a pure and perfect example of holiness, and hast bestowed on me the means of knowing and

doing thy will. What have I done, that I should be the object of such unspeakable bounty? How have I deserved that thou shouldst thus shower thy blessings upon me? Alas! I have been unworthy of thy favors. I have not given my whole heart unto thee. I have not continually remembered thy goodness, and been thankful unto thee. O Lord! pardon me, I beseech thee. Impress my heart with holy gratitude and love. May the comforts I enjoy, the gifts of thy hand, never shut my heart against thee, and render me forgetful of thy presence. May my affections never be fixed on the fleeting things of this world; but may I seek after thy favor, which is better than life; and may I love virtue more than all the world can bestow. May thy grace, O Lord! dwell in me, and guide me in the way which leadeth to life everlasting. On this holy day may I devote myself to thee, and gain more knowledge of thy will, and greater strength to perform it.

I ask not these blessings for myself alone, but for all mankind. May all men at length be enabled to acknowledge thee as their Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; thy Son Jesus Christ as the perfect example of all holiness; and thy goodness as worthy of unceasing and everlasting praises.

I commit my life, and all that I have, into thy hand; knowing that thou wilt do what is best for me, and only beseeching thee that thou wilt render me in some measure deserving of thy goodness.

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord! my strength and my redeemer. Amen.

REFLECTION.

SUNDAY EVENING.

“Follow after holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.”
Heb. xii. 14.

“Whether ye eat, or whether ye drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”—1 Cor. x. 31.

I have this day entered the house of God. I have heard of his wonderful perfections; of his unceasing care of his rational creatures; of his love for them, which he manifested by sending his Son Jesus Christ into the world, to reclaim them from sin. Have I not received pleasure from the conviction of his goodness? and do I not feel secure and happy under his guardian

care? Oh yes! and why should not the best pleasures I have this day enjoyed be mine forever? The study of his perfections is ever open to me; and I am invited to hold communion with him in prayer.

If I accustom my mind to take delight in the contemplation of the divine nature, new pleasures will continually offer themselves to me. If I consider the heavens, the work of his fingers, the moon and stars which he hath ordained, I shall find elevated enjoyment in the thought of his infinite power. If I observe how all things that he hath made depend on one another, and work together for the good of the whole, through all that part of the vast creation which comes within the bound of merely human perception, I must be astonished at the wisdom which could form and execute such a plan. If I think how carefully he has attended to the happiness of his creatures; that he has never caused a want without providing a supply; that he has given to the inferior orders of beings enjoyments suited to their capacity for pleasure, and to Man the power of becoming happy here, and infinitely so to all eternity; I must not only adore, but love, the Being whose beneficence equals his power and wisdom. Whatever my eyes behold may remind me of him; every gift which renders me happy

may excite in me emotions of love and gratitude. The reflection that he is ever present with me may render me secure under all circumstances; and subjects of the sweetest meditation may be ever at my command.

If God had not revealed himself to us in his gospel, I might have feared that a weak, insignificant creature like myself, would be beneath his notice; would be, as it were, passed over, and forgotten, while so many vast designs continually require his care. But now no such fears need harass me. I now know that he, who formed me, watches over me; is aware of the thoughts which now pass through my mind; and cannot for an instant forget me; that as he loves all the works of his hand, he loves me, and will provide for my happiness as long as I strive to deserve his favor. Can I, then, forget him who ever remembereth me? Can I, who receive all good things from him, enjoy them without thinking of their Author? Can I form friendships with beings frail and sinful as myself, and seek no communion with him, who, if I love him, will never leave me, nor forsake me? Shall I be intent on gathering together the luxuries of life, when he can disperse them in a moment, or change them into bitter sorrows? Much rather let me make God my friend; let me receive his gifts with

gratitude; let me seek after the heavenly pleasures of devotion, which become sweeter as other enjoyments fail. Let me remember that God is present, not only while I pay my stated devotions to him, but during every moment of my existence. Why, then, should I confine my thoughts of him to those times? I continually need his assistance in all the little trials and temptations which befall me; and his ears are ever open to me, and his love is always ready to assist me. Let me joyfully thank him for every pleasure, and then the gift will be sanctified to me: let me seek his consolations in every sorrow, and its bitterness will be assuaged.

Great as are the delights of devotion in times of prosperity, in affliction their value will be infinitely increased. From the portion of sorrow which has been my lot, I am aware of the insufficiency of worldly comfort. The consolations of religion alone are able to relieve the wounded heart. While the pursuit of all that this world can afford is at times distasteful and irritating to the mind, the reflection that he who made it liable to suffering is beholding and pitying the grief his mercy and wisdom saw fit to inflict, and is able and willing to remove it as soon as it has fulfilled its end, is a source of unspeakable comfort. I know the relief of pouring out a full

heart into the bosom of a friend, though that friend can only afford sympathy and fallible counsel. How great, then, must be the comfort of confiding my sorrows to an Almighty friend! to one whom I have loved above all things, in the midst of prosperity! I must, like all my fellow creatures of mankind, sometimes endure sorrow; and may these consolations then be mine! Let me increase the value of the blessings I now enjoy, by considering them as the gifts of a tender Father; and let me render my gratitude acceptable to him, by a proper use of them. Let me pray to him every morning and every evening for his protection and blessing; and let my thoughts dwell upon him continually during the day. If I always act under a conviction of his presence, and with a desire of pleasing him, every thought and every deed will become an act of devotion. Thus shall I cast all my cares upon him who careth for me; and thus only can I secure to myself the possession of peace in this world, and the inheritance of joy in that which is to come.

PRAYER.

SUNDAY EVENING.

O thou almighty and ever-present God! who knowest all the thoughts of my heart, accept, I beseech thee, the tribute of sincere gratitude and praise which I now offer unto thee. I know that wherever I go and whatsoever I do, thou art with me. All things that I behold are the works of thy hand. Thou sustainest me in life, and continually watchest over me, to provide for my wants, and to shield me from danger. Knowing that thou art within me, above me, and around me, may I make this knowledge a source of comfort to myself by deserving thy love. May I not, while enjoying the gifts of thy providence, be forgetful of the hand by which they are bestowed. May I not live without thee in the world; nor seek after those pleasures which war against the soul, and which would subject me to thy displeasure. Thou hast promised thy grace to those who seek for it with sincerity of heart. O, then, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, that the darkness of guilt may never overshadow me. Let thy love reign in my heart,

that the desire of sinful pleasures may never enter there. In the hours of gladness, may I devote my best powers and affections unto thee; for in sorrow there is no help but in thee. At every return of this solemn day, may I feel that I have advanced in wisdom and goodness, and that I am more worthy of being called a follower of my blessed Saviour.

Continue to me, as far as thou shalt see fit, the comforts and blessings I now enjoy, especially those I most highly prize, the means of improvement in knowledge and piety. I ask not to be exempt from sorrow; but when it comes, may it be borne with meek resignation, and cheerful acquiescence in thy will. May I seek consolation from thee, who alone canst alleviate the sorrow thou hast caused. Whatever may be my lot, may the pleasures of devotion, and the peace arising from trust in thee, be unalloyed by self-reproach, or the miseries consequent on sin. May I pass through life, supported by thy hand, rejoicing in thy love, and relying on the glorious promises of thy gospel; and may the stroke of death, whether it come early or late, find me disposed peacefully to surrender my soul into thy hands who gavest me being, and hoping, through thine infinite mercy, to enter joyfully into the

presence of thy glory, and to taste of those pleasures which are at thy right hand for evermore.

I ask all in the name, and as the disciple, of thy Son Jesus Christ: through whom I would ascribe unto thee all honor and praise forever.

AMEN.

REFLECTION.

MONDAY MORNING.

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” John xv. 12.

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Rom. xii. 15.

I observe, wherever I direct my view, that nothing, in all the vast creation, is made to exist alone. All things depend on one another for something essential to their existence. The sun, and the worlds which circle round it, are balanced by other systems through the power of attraction. We can perceive that the earth could not bring forth fruits, without the assistance of the sun and the rain. The sun draws up steams and vapors from the ground, which fall again in showers, and refresh the earth, and enable it to produce those stores, which serve for the support and delight of the living creatures which inhabit it. These animals, in their turn, serve as food for one another and for man. Man, dependent on the ranks of beings below him for subsistence, can enjoy none of the pleasures and advantages of life without the assistance of his

own species. As the community of mankind is formed by my wise and benevolent Father, different individuals are endowed with different powers, inclinations, and talents; and thus scarcely a want can arise, which some one is not able to supply; and not one link in the whole chain of society is wanting.

By this constitution of things I plainly perceive that men are brought into the world, not to live in selfish, miserable independence, but to promote the happiness of each other. They are all the children of a common Parent, and were evidently intended to be social beings, and (what it is to be hoped they will in time become) a happy community. If I believe this to be the intention of my Maker, let me consider what I am to expect from my fellow-creatures of mankind, and what I owe to them. I know that all blessings proceed primarily from God; but he has given them to me by the hands of his creatures: and I can in no way render my gratitude more acceptable to him, than by doing, in my turn, all that I can to promote the good of those whom he hath made. I owe my support, and the care of my infancy, to those parents and friends who with disinterested kindness have brought me up, and rendered me happy when I could not reward their care. Even now do I not owe all the com-

forts of life, of which I possess so large a share, to the labors of others? And what do I, in my turn, for them? It is but little that I can do; but I may always find some, less blessed than myself, whom I can assist in time of need; some more ignorant than myself, to whom I may impart a portion of knowledge: and, were nothing else in my power, there are always some whose joys will be increased by my participation, and whose sorrows will be soothed by my sympathy. Have I not friends, to whom it is my duty to pay kind domestic offices and observances? Can I not find, in the abodes of sorrow, those whom I may nurse in sickness, soothe in distress, or relieve in want? Are there not among the old, some whose passage to the grave may be cheered by my respectful attention, my forbearance of the failings incident to age, and my gratitude for the advice which experience loves to give? Are there not, among the young, those whom I may benefit by the services of disinterested friendship? My power of doing thus will increase with my years: may the disposition increase likewise!

The most powerful arguments, however, for the practice of benevolence are offered by our holy religion, whose chief aim and end is the encouragement of this virtue: and in proportion to

my advance in it will be my progress in religion. The beloved Son of God was the purest example of its perfections; and the tendency of all his discourses was to inculcate it. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, comforted the sorrowful, encouraged and pardoned the repentant; employing his miraculous powers for the good of others, while he himself underwent every species of suffering. The tenor of his instructions ever was, "Freely ye have received, freely give;" "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor;" "Give to him that asketh of thee;" "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again." And in his description of his second coming, benevolence appears to be the chief qualification for enjoying his rewards. Great are these rewards. No less than treasures which nothing can corrupt—treasures which increase in proportion to self-denial—treasures which fail not, eternal in the heavens; the cheering consciousness that the merciful shall obtain mercy; the conviction that God loveth a cheerful giver; that the alms which are given in secret shall be openly acknowledged and recompensed, at the resurrection of the just; and above all, the anticipation of that soul-stirring invitation to those who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and imprisoned, to enter into the enjoy-

ment of the happiness prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

In all the works of God, how apparent is his fatherly love for his creatures! None of his perfections is more evident; and there is none which it is more my duty to imitate. In this respect I may strive to become perfect, as he is perfect. While on earth, I may promote and encourage the growth of that blessed disposition, the exercise of which will, in all probability, form a part of my happiness in another state of being. It is reasonable to conclude this, as it is evident that those whose whole minds are engrossed by the care of their own happiness, are little fitted for dwelling in the presence of God, who is love itself; of Jesus, who gave himself for us; or of those holy men who offered their lives to secure the richest and best blessings to mankind. O! surely the spirit of love is the noblest and best which can dwell in the human heart! It is a portion of God's own spirit; it is the mind which was in Christ Jesus!

O! noble example of this glorious virtue, let that mind be in me also! May thy labors, thy sufferings, thy strivings to promote the good of all men, not be lost upon me! May they animate me to follow in thy steps, to press forward towards the goal which thou hast reached, like

thee seeking no reward but the favor of my God, and the love which he will hereafter extend to those whose benevolence will no longer be exerted in overcoming or alleviating evil, but in promoting the continually increasing happiness of kindred spirits, through all eternity!

PRAYER.

MONDAY MORNING.

Almighty God! the Father of men! to whom I owe life and all its enjoyments, with humble gratitude I bow down before thee, to bless thee for thy continued mercies. Thy power called me into being; thy goodness preserved me during the helpless period of infancy; hath surrounded me with all the means of enjoyment and improvement; hath placed me among those who have been careful of my welfare, and who have taught me to look up to thee as the giver of all good, and to find delight in praising thee. Thanks be to thee, O Lord! for all thy goodness. Without thy protecting care, I could not have escaped from danger and from death: if thou

hadst not granted me the tidings of salvation, I had lived in ignorance of thee: I had possessed thy gifts without knowing their Author, and had been but little above the brutes that perish. If thou hadst not caused the light of thy gospel to shine upon me, I had had no guide to life everlasting, no hope in death. What shall I render unto thee, O Lord! for all thy mercies? What can I do to please thee? I will gratefully enjoy thy gifts; I will contemplate and strive to imitate thy perfections; I will use the powers which thou hast given me for the good of others; I will endeavor to glorify thy gospel, by leading a life, holy, harmless, and undefiled. Thou hast graciously promised that, if performed with a sincere and pure heart, thou wilt accept these humble services. O Lord! grant me thy grace to live according to thy will. Assist me to overcome pride, vanity, selfishness, and all other sinful dispositions. May the same mind be in me, which was in Christ Jesus our Lord; may I be, like him, meek, humble, and devout; may I, like him, labor continually for the good of mankind; may I, like him, give up all worldly advantages which are incompatible with obedience to thee. If any offend me, may I exercise his forgiving spirit; may I be his faithful follower on earth, and at length be thought worthy, by sincere,

though imperfect obedience, to enter into that happy kingdom, where he is seated at thy right hand, and where the spirits of the just made perfect shall rejoice in thy presence, forever and ever.

I thank thee, O my Protector! that thou hast guarded me from danger during the past night, and that thou hast permitted me to arise in peace this morning. Be with me, and all whom I love, I beseech thee, through this day: grant us all that is necessary to our well being, and above all, that we may spend each moment in thy fear. And when we retire to rest this night, may it be with a peaceful consciousness of thine approbation, and with hearts and minds better fitted for thy service.

Hear my prayers, O Lord! and may thy blessing rest upon us forever and ever. Amen.

REFLECTION.

MONDAY EVENING.

“Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.”
John xxi. 15.

“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy Son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”
John ix. 26, 27.

“ [Paul] is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles.” Acts ix. 15.

It is a pleasing reflection, that the gospel not only furnishes me with rules for the regulation of my conduct under all circumstances, but also sets before me a variety of characters, which may serve either as warnings or examples to me. Our Saviour himself was the model by which I may perceive what perfection I ought to aim at; and by the examples of the apostles I may learn that men of various and strong passions, in the midst of dangers and temptations, without advantages of education, were able to overcome the world, and to live and die the faithful disciples of their glorified master.

Peter was a man of impetuous, and, at first, ungoverned feelings; at one time declaring that

Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God; and at another, notwithstanding this conviction, meanly denying him; at one time declaring that, though all others should leave their Lord, yet he would not forsake him; and then flying, with the rest, in the moment of danger; now wrought upon by terror to disclaim all knowledge of the Saviour who had offered him eternal life; and then, melted by the one look which Jesus cast upon him, going out and weeping bitterly; now dismayed and dejected by the death of his master, and afterwards animated, and, as it were, inspired, by the confirmation which the resurrection of Christ gave to his doctrine, coming forward fearlessly and intrepidly as the witness of the life, words and actions of him who was despised and rejected of men. This was the time when Peter struggled to vanquish his ignoble terrors: he seems now to have cast away whatever remained of the spirit of worldliness; he now faced a life of danger and a violent death; and never after, but in one single instance, do we find a trace of the weaknesses it must have cost him so much to surmount. And yet, exalted as were his virtues, how great was his humility! The writings of the Evangelist Mark were seen by him, and he had the power of palliating, if not of concealing, the errors of which he had

been guilty during the life of Jesus: and yet how openly are those errors avowed! and what a proof is this of his humility, and zeal for the honor of his Lord! I know that he spent his life in promoting the spread of the gospel, and at length sealed his testimony with his blood. Let me honor his character with all the reverence and admiration such intrepid virtue demands.

The apostle John was a very different character. In him, meekness, gentleness and benevolence abounded. It is a proof how highly these virtues were esteemed by Jesus, that the apostle who possessed them in the greatest degree was chiefly distinguished by his love. To his care our Saviour consigned his bereaved mother; and well did John fulfil his trust, and happy must he have been, that his master considered him worthy of the charge. We hear little of him after the death of Jesus, except that he also underwent his share of suffering, that he inculcated and practised the love of God and of mankind, and that a peculiar and glorious revelation was made to him in his old age.

The most striking and distinguished character of all among the followers of Jesus, was that of Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. The man brought up in the prejudices which wrought such harm to the gospel; the man who assisted at the

stoning of the first martyr ; who breathed out slaughter against the Christians ; afterwards became the champion of the faith he had striven to put down, and preached the doctrines of him, at whose ignominious death he had rejoiced. He was thought worthy of a special revelation from our Saviour ; and nobly did he, from that moment, devote the vast powers of his mind, all he had, even life itself, to the service of God. Never, through years of sorrow, danger, and suffering of every kind, did he repent the sacrifice he had made : never did he shrink from trials the most hard for human nature to endure ; but, approaching more nearly than any other character which history presents, to the perfections of him, whom not having seen, he loved, he performed the great work of preaching the gospel in strange lands, where the true God was unknown : and vast indeed is the debt of gratitude which I, and generations yet unborn, owe to his labors.

Let me dwell on the virtues of these great men, till I become animated in some degree by their spirit. Let me endeavor to acquire the fervor and earnestness of Peter, the meekness and benevolence of John, the steadfast faith and universal charity of Paul : and then, and not till then, shall I have duly profited by the glorious revelation with which God has blessed me.

PRAYER.

MONDAY EVENING.

O thou ! who triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness, wherefore should I, frail and imperfect as I am, dare to seek communion with thee, the greatest, wisest, and best of all beings ? But, great as thou art, thou hast promised to hear the prayer of those who worship in spirit and in truth. The homage of a grateful soul is acceptable unto thee who delightest in mercy, and the supplications of the humble and contrite will not ascend to thee in vain. Blessed be thou, that thou hast permitted me to call thee Father, and that thou hast invited me, as a member of thy family of mankind, to pour out my soul before thee, and to seek thy support in distress and temptation. I will also offer up my tribute of ardent gratitude for the love which thou hast bestowed upon me, and which an eternity of praise could not repay. Through the past day thy favor hath still attended me. I arose in the morning, in peace and safety ; I have been supplied with convenient food, and with all that is necessary to comfort and happiness. I have enjoyed the means of knowing

thee better in thy word and in thy works, and having been thus blessed, I will lay myself down in peace and sleep, trusting that thy almighty arm will still sustain me, and that thy watchful love will still guard me from evil and danger.

I know, O God! how unworthy I have been of thy favor. I know that I have followed too much the devices and desires of my own heart, and that thy benefits have not excited in me such gratitude as leadeth to implicit obedience. God of all mercy! pardon the imperfections of my service: grant me thy grace to love and serve thee better. May I diligently study thy word, and may the examples of great and good men, there held out to me, induce me, like them, to overcome every weakness, to give up every sinful indulgence, and to conquer every temptation, rather than offend against thee, and draw down upon myself thy most righteous displeasure.

To thy care I commend all whom I love, trusting that thou wilt protect them. O Lord! be thou our guide through life, our support in death, and our eternal portion in that happy state to which thou hast promised to admit all who faithfully and diligently serve thee on earth.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I would ascribe unto thee supreme honors and everlasting praises. AMEN.

REFLECTION.

TUESDAY MORNING.

“Do all things without murmurings or disputings.” Phil. ii. 14.
“Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated.” James iii. 16, 17.

How does it happen that though God has bestowed on every man a large share of blessings ; though he has placed his rational offspring in a beautiful world, created for their enjoyment ; though he has endowed them with social affections, and rendered the exercise of those affections a source of the purest pleasure ; so little unalloyed happiness is found in the world ? Many miseries undoubtedly arise from causes out of the control of man, and many from the gross vices of the wicked ; but there is much unhappiness, independent of these causes. I frequently perceive that families, who are exempted from misfortune, who possess a competent share of this world's goods, and who practise no vices, yet are not at ease. Surely this must arise from the want of amiable dispositions. When all without is prosperous, there must be some mental disease which impairs

their enjoyment; and this disease I believe to be the want of control over the temper. How grievous is it, that this fault, which is never incorrigible, though, where long indulged, very difficult to overcome, should be suffered to make such ravages in comfort and peace! How grievous is it, that beings who might make each other's happiness, and be a mutual support under unavoidable sorrows, should thus render themselves and each other miserable, from want of self-command! Men, from bodily constitution, from early education, and from many other circumstances, grow up with different tastes, inclinations, and tempters, which, unless controlled and carefully managed, will occasion much injury to each other. But if each one were to consider the comfort, and make allowance for the weaknesses of his neighbor, and to govern his temper accordingly, how much of the misery of which all complain might be avoided, and how smoothly and agreeably would the affairs of life go on!

In the hour of calm reflection, my reason confirms these truths. But is my practice never at variance with my convictions? I, like every one else, sometimes meet with crosses and disappointments. Is my temper always proof against provocation? If offended, do I never resent? If unjustly accused, do I with a soft answer

turn away wrath? Can I bear, with meekness and good humor, to have my intentions thwarted, my motives misunderstood, my benevolent designs frustrated, or even my failings rebuked, and my faults censured? Is there no pertinacity in retaining my opinions, no obstinacy in my own will, no peevishness and irritability under vexatious circumstances, no sullenness under reproof? Let me consider the necessity of correcting what is wrong in my temper, and strive to amend it, before the habit is grown too strong. It is absurd to say that my temper is good, while that of others is so; that I am good-humored unless provoked, and that, therefore, the fault lies in others, instead of myself. I can never live in a society where tempers are all perfect: and if that were possible, accidents, which are under no one's control, would continually occur to disturb my tranquillity, if my peace were not beyond their power. It will continually happen that my charity will be abused, my favorite pursuits interrupted, my leisure broken in upon: and what remedy is there for these vexations, if my temper be not prepared to meet them? Let me not think this a trifle beneath my care: let me not persuade myself that, because I am young, the task need not yet be undertaken. My life is in a great measure made up of trifles; and there-

fore nothing which affects my happiness in the smallest degree can be beneath my notice. I cannot form an idea how much the peace of future years may depend on the temper I now encourage; but that they are very intimately connected, the examples I daily see assure me.

How many families are obliged to sacrifice their comfort to one peevish, passionate, or sullen temper; and how unhappy and ungrateful should I be, if I were thus to repay the kindness of those who have brought me up, and endeavored to teach me the lesson of self-government! Let me be aware in time. Let me from this moment command myself when disposed to be vexed by unavoidable circumstances. It will doubtless cause me a struggle; but let the struggle be made before it is too late, and my endeavors will be amply repaid by the peace which will be my portion. Let me remember, that the small trials which I meet with are no less sent by God than greater sorrows, and are equally intended for my good; and therefore let me not be above calling in my religious principles to my aid; for where there is temptation, however small, their assistance will be necessary.

Having thus resolved, let me adhere to my resolution. This very day, perhaps this very hour, some difficulty may occur which it will re-

quire resolution to overcome with good humor ; and then let me call to mind my present reflections. After every victory, I shall find less difficulty in conquering. Let me never yield to temptation of any kind, against the conviction of reason and conscience.

PRAYER.

TUESDAY MORNING.

O! thou all-powerful and all-wise God, all things were created by thee, and all things are at thy disposal. All that I have was bestowed by thee, and whatsoever I do is known unto thee. O Lord! thou hast searched me and known me : thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, and understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. Thou art within me, and above me, and around me. Nothing cometh to pass without thy permission. No word can I speak, no thought can I indulge, which is not known unto thee. O! may this conviction lead me to govern myself in thy fear, to live according to thy will, and to submit my-

self to thy righteous dispensations. If gladness should be my portion, may my thoughts be filled with thy love, and may gratitude enhance every enjoyment: if sorrow should be appointed me, may the remembrance of thy superintending providence, thy fatherly care, lead me to place unshaken trust in thee, and to yield cheerful submission to thy will. Though thou shouldst see fit to deprive me of all beside, yet thou wilt be ever with me, and nothing can estrange thee from the beings thou hast made.

O Lord! may thy grace preserve me from sin: may I fortify my soul, by the love of thee, against all temptations; but if my feet should stray from thy ways, if my heart should no longer be a temple for thee to dwell in, may thy chastening rod bring me back to the paths of peace and virtue. Even if I be bowed down to the dust with sorrow, if every hope but that of pardon be lost, let thy chastisement not cease till I have once more learned to dwell in thy fear. But thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: thou art a God of holiness, and in thy sight the wicked shall not stand. May I, then, never incur thy displeasure, but above all things seek thy favor, which is better than life. I beseech thee to grant me thy support in trial, thy love in prosperity, thy guardianship in life and in death. May I be an

humble follower of our glorified master, and may my sincere, though imperfect obedience, be acceptable unto thee who knowest our frame, and rememberest that we are but dust.

Grant unto all thy creatures, I pray thee, the things which are needful for their support and preservation. Accept my thanksgiving for the protection which thou hast hitherto afforded us.

I ask these things of thee, the God who givest to all men liberally, and upbraidest not, as long as they ask in faith ; and in that faith I would ascribe unto thee, honor, glory, and praise, forever
AMEN

REFLECTION.

TUESDAY EVENING.

“The sting of death is sin.” 1 Cor. xv. 56.

“The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people ; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; for the former things are passed away.” Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

It is too common for the young, while in the possession of health, to forget that their present

enjoyments will not always last ; that the hour of death must come, and may, perhaps, come soon. If it must arrive, it seems almost impossible that so important an event should not engage their attention, even though they were assured that its approach would be long delayed. If I knew with certainty, that at some period of my life I should remove to a distant country, of which I could know little, but that it is essentially different from the one I now inhabit, in which my pursuits must be very unlike what they are at present, and that I must go alone, is it possible that so great a change should not engage my chief attention ; especially if it might take place at any moment ? Would it not be the part of prudence to learn what I could of this other country, and to prepare myself, according to my knowledge, for being happy there ? Such should be my foresight with respect to the important change of death. Let me consider what this change is, and what is the fittest preparation for it.

God has created me with a body and mind, endowed with various senses and faculties. He has placed me in a world which supplies me with all that is necessary for the support and enjoyment of the body and its powers. My animal senses meet with their appropriate gratifications, and are inlets to great pleasures. The mind is

not so fully provided for. Though its faculties have large and delightful occupation in contemplating the perfections of the great Creator in his works, yet this is not sufficient for its capacities. The knowledge it is able to obtain is not enough for its desires : it continually seeks for fuller satisfaction, but cannot find it in this state of its existence. Instead of obliging man to check the aspirings of his nobler powers, and chiefly to seek the gratification of the animal senses, God has promised that all men shall live again, after the body has been dissolved in death ; when, if previously prepared by the means which he hath granted, they shall obtain that perfect knowledge, and full enjoyment, for which they sought in vain on earth. Notwithstanding these hopes and promises, how many, instead of fitting themselves for the highest satisfactions, persist in gratifying the body only, which must soon die with all its pleasures ! One cause of this is the dread of the dissolution which must precede the initiation into the happiness of heaven. It is true that death is commonly accompanied by pain and sickness ; and there is, besides, something in the highest degree awful, in the prospect of entering a state of which we know little, but that it is materially different from the present. But these fears will be increased, instead of lessened, by

deferring all preparation for the event, till its approach. Let me then prepare in time, both for death, and what will follow.

God has revealed to us, that in heaven his manifest presence will be a source of enjoyment to the virtuous. Let me, then, on earth, delight to study his perfections as far as they are open to my contemplation. Let me find happiness, now, in the conviction of his continual presence, that the same conviction may cause the same happiness in a higher state of existence. After death, all sensual enjoyments will be done away : let me now, therefore, make use of them only in subservience to intellectual pleasures. After death, I may be admitted into the presence of Jesus, who died for me, that I might gain entrance into that happy state. Let me study his virtues, and imitate them to the best of my power, that my communion with him may be more perfect. I am told that benevolence is an essential requisite for heavenly happiness. Let me, then, as long as I live, be more careful for the good of others than for my own. Let me fortify my soul against the pains of sickness and the fear of death, by the reflection that the same merciful Father who has placed eternal happiness within my reach, inflicts these preparatory sufferings to enable me the better to obtain it ; and that he has promised himself

to support me, if I put my trust in him, and endeavor to acquiesce in his will, however difficult that acquiescence may be. Let not any mortal fears, then, divert my attention from the glorious hopes beyond the grave. Let me not think only of suffering, till my soul turns for relief to views beneath it: let me not contemplate the dark valley of the shadow of death, till I am tempted to trust to the delusive gleam of earthly pleasures; but let my gaze be fixed on that glorious region, where God himself shall be an everlasting light to those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises he hath vouchsafed to mankind. But, above all, let me not, because the day of death *may* be distant, forget the necessity of these preparations. It is not the few last hours of expiring life which will fit me for immortality. The few last years, even, will be very insufficient for the work I have to do. If I am convinced that it must be done at all, nothing can excuse me from beginning it now. I have passions to subdue, grovelling inclinations to raise, wavering hopes to animate to steadfast faith, pride to change to humility, natural sympathies to strengthen into Christian benevolence, attachment to this world to convert into the citizenship of heaven! Can it ever be too soon to begin such a work as this? It will require continual vigilance, and

unremitting care, through whatever portion of time God shall be pleased to allot me. May his grace assist and sustain me to the end!

PRAYER.

TUESDAY EVENING.

O thou glorious Being! King eternal, immortal, invisible! may these meditations of my heart be acceptable unto thee! I would praise thee for thy mercy in having promised that thy creature, man, shall not always dwell in the midst of sin and suffering, but shall be enabled to enter that state where he shall be immortal as thyself; where thou shalt no longer be invisible; but where thy manifest presence shall be a source of unfailling happiness to him. O may the glories of thy heavenly kingdom not be veiled from me! May I find my supreme delight in thy presence while on earth, that it may be my joy hereafter! May I live on earth as a citizen of heaven; not giving my soul to the vain and transitory pleasures of this world, which will delude and not satisfy, and which will lead me astray from thee,

but contemplating thy perfections till I love things heavenly, and strive to lay up a treasure there, which shall be mine forever. I know that to do this I must overcome sin; I must patiently endure sorrow; I must submit to the stroke of death; I must prepare for judgment! Do thou, O Lord! strengthen me against trial; arm me with heavenly fortitude against suffering; and support me in death! When I am stretched on the bed of sickness, when the passing scenes of this world recede from my sight, when the awful realities of a future and eternal state open upon my view, do thou calm my anxious fears, dispel my doubts, strengthen my sinking heart, and confirm my wavering faith. May no mistrust of thy goodness disturb my departing spirit, but may peace, the peace which passeth all understanding, the peace which Jesus promised to his true followers, sustain me in that awful hour; and may it be succeeded by thy acceptance of my imperfect services!

To thee, O God! do I commit myself, knowing that thy tender mercy will do what is best for me; and, as long as I obey thee, I will fear no evil.

These blessings I ask, not for myself only, but for all men. May the knowledge of thy glorious gospel, confirmed by the resurrection of him who

preached it, spread over the whole earth. May all men, at length, know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; and may this knowledge lead them to live in thy fear, enjoying the blessings of thy love. May thine infinite mercy at length re-unite us all in that better world, where sin and sorrow shall be known no more; where the wicked cease from troubling, the weary are at rest, and the virtuous enjoy eternal happiness in the presence of thy glory.

Unto thee be all blessing and praise forever
AMEN.

REFLECTION.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

“ A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.”

John iii. 27.

“ Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Matt. xviii. 4.

I have often been struck by the pertinacity with which young persons maintain their own opinions, and their unwillingness to allow weight to the advice of those, who, by age and experience, have gained more wisdom than it is possible for the young to possess. And it is not less worthy of remark, that the wisest, both as to human learning and divine attainments, are ever the most modest and open to conviction. Surely, then, humility must be a part of wisdom: otherwise this order would be reversed: those who are the most able would also be the most willing to teach, and the youthful and inexperienced would thankfully learn. Lest I should fall into this error of ignorance and folly, I will reflect on the importance and necessity of acquiring the virtue of Humility.

If I consider humility only as a reasonable and becoming respect which the young should pay to

the aged, its value is great: but when I reflect that it is a Christian virtue, and one on which most others are founded, its importance becomes unspeakable. Without humility, I cannot receive the instructions of the gospel into a teachable heart; and while my heart does not assent to its truths, my progress can be but small. Without humility, I shall not fully avail myself of the assistance which the ministers of religion and other spiritual guides are able to afford; and this great means of improvement will be partly lost to me: and above all, if I do not entertain a due reverence for this noble virtue, I cannot appreciate its beauty as displayed in the character of Jesus; and therefore my imitation of this perfection in him will be wanting.

Christian humility is not, as many suppose, a negative virtue, a natural disposition of the mind, with which some are constitutionally endowed, and in which others are deficient. It is an acquired virtue; one which needs much resolution and great efforts, to establish so firmly that other virtues may be founded upon it. It may be acquired by steadily contemplating the sins and weaknesses of the heart, and by impartially comparing the attainments in virtue already made with the character of Jesus; and not, as is too frequently done, by contrasting them with the follies of those

who are frail and faulty as ourselves. If I compare myself with those who have not enjoyed equal advantages, I shall be in danger of becoming inflated with a sense of my fancied superiority, while perhaps they, considering their opportunities, have made greater advances than myself. Even in a comparison with the wise and good among men, I may be humbled, but not humbled enough. One standard of excellence is fixed, which will never vary; and as long as I fall short of that, I shall have reason for the exercise of humility. Unless springing from this root, all my good qualities will be but as the flowers of the field, shaken by every blast, and withered by the first scorching ray. Fortitude, if not proceeding from the humblest submission to God, will not be a Christian virtue; it will be of the same nature as that practised by heathen philosophers before the revelation of our religion; admirable indeed in them, but cold, cheerless, and hard to maintain, in comparison with that secure and perfect reliance on an Almighty Guardian, which is the duty and the privilege of the Christian.

Charity, in the largest sense of the word, is in the highest degree promoted by humility. If I know by experience the difficulty of overcoming my own weaknesses, I shall be inclined to give my compassion and assistance to those who need

it, instead of exposing their failings, and ridiculing their infirmities. If I consider myself one of the humblest servants of the Most High, it will delight me to promote his plans of benevolence, as far as he has put it in my power, by strengthening the feeble-minded, supporting the weak, relieving the destitute, and instructing the ignorant. Christian charity, proceeding from humility, is the only benevolence which can be acceptable to God ; for the motives which prompt to ostentatious charity are not such as will meet with his approbation and reward.

Perhaps I may sometimes be tempted to say that this humility will abridge my powers of usefulness ; that if I entertained more confidence in myself, my efforts would be attended with better success ; and that, if all my endeavors must appear so imperfect in my own estimation, it is in vain to attempt to make exertions which will never repay me. Let me be assured that genuine humility will never suggest thoughts like these : it is indolence, or reluctance of some kind, that presents itself under the appearance of meekness, to deceive me. Let me be convinced that the dignity of our holy religion is sufficient to support me, and make my exertions available. Let me remember that it will not be what I have achieved, but what I have endeavored, which will be

considered by my final Judge. Let me, in all doubts and perplexities, turn to contemplate the character of Jesus, who, perfect as he was, blended the meekness well becoming the frailest of his followers, with a dignity which proclaimed him the beloved Son of God. Let me endeavor, in youth, in age, in poverty or riches, in joy or sorrow, to be like him, meek and lowly of heart, that I may find rest to my soul!

PRAYER.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

O thou all-righteous God! holy and just! who can appear before thee without sin? who can deserve thy favor? But, blessed be thy goodness, thou hast promised to accept the humble, imperfect efforts of thy creatures to please thee. Thou hast made them frail; and knowing their frame, thou mercifully forgivest their weakness, and pardonest their errors, if they seek to improve in holiness. I have too often sinned against thee, and merited thy displeasure; and thou dost still continue me in existence, and in the enjoyment of

numberless mercies. O Lord! may I not presume upon thy goodness, and think, because thou dost bless me, that I am worthy of thy blessing. May I contemplate the perfection of the Christian character which I must strive to attain; and, the more I contemplate it, the greater be my diligence, and the more humble my self-approval. May my soul not be elated by the conquest of one passion, the attainment of one virtue, or a partial knowledge of thy will; but, when pride or vanity arises in my heart, may I reflect, with shame and contrition, on my own unworthiness, and remember that in this imperfect state I can never, by my own merits, deserve the eternal happiness which thou hast, of thy free grace, promised to those who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality. May I, in the season of youth, devote my powers, in all their vigor, to thy service; and, as my understanding ripens, may my piety also increase; that, if my life be prolonged to old age, when the things of this world lose their value, and earthly pleasures no longer charm, I may have in store hopes and delights which ever outweigh all that earth can give. As I advance towards the grave, may I fix my view on the glorious prospect beyond, which thou hast graciously revealed to man, to cheer him in trial and temptation, and to

encourage him to strive unto the end. If I give my youth unto thee, do thou support me in age, in sickness, and in sorrow, and may my whole dependence be on thee. May I not fear the hour of death, knowing that thou wilt be with me; and when I appear before thy throne, may my sins be pardoned, and my unworthy endeavors accepted; and may I, by thy grace, be permitted to join the happy number of the spirits of the just made perfect, who continually sing praises round thy throne.

Now unto thee, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, who dwellest in light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, or can see, be glory, honor, and praise, forever. AMEN.

REFLECTION.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

- “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man’s religion is vain.” James i. 26.
- “Bringing every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Cor. x. 5.

I have often contemplated the character of Jesus Christ; and the sentiment which always re-

curs on the contemplation is that of admiration of the perfect consistency of the whole. Virtues which some think incompatible with each other, there subsist in beautiful harmony. His meekness is consistent with his holy dignity, his forbearance with his indignation against vice, his exalted holiness with perfect sympathy for his species, his acute sensibility for the sufferings of all men, with perfect trust in God. Self-control could be the only means by which he could so subdue his inclinations, balance his affections, make the lesser virtues subservient to the greater, as to form that Christian character which ought to be a model to all his followers as long as the world endures, and which must ever claim their admiration, reverence, gratitude, and love.

It must be my endeavor continually to approach to the perfection of this noble character; and, to the attainment of this end, self-command is one of the most necessary requisites. If I reflect on my conduct, and try to discover wherein I differ so much from the pattern I ought to imitate, I shall find that I often indulge anger which I afterwards sincerely regret, that I say many things which I would gladly retract, and, above all, that I suffer my thoughts to wander till I have lost all authority over them. As long as my mind is not within my own power, it is in vain to think of

bringing it under religious discipline. It is in vain to fix my standard of right, and to wish to act up to it, while the means which I must employ are not under my own control. I must first gain authority over the passions I wish to subdue, the tongue I mean to rule, and the thoughts I desire to govern.

Being convinced of the danger of uncontrolled license of speech, let me be swift to hear, slow to speak; let me not be too anxious to declare my own opinions till time may have matured them, and corrected the errors into which inexperience may have led me. Let me not indulge in exposing the faults of others; but, where they are so glaring as to force observation, let them serve as a warning to myself, but not as a subject of conversation, except in those very few instances, when the warning may be of use to others. I perceive that it is not always right to speak the whole of what I feel and think; but much more wrong is it to give, as my own, opinions which I have never examined, and of the good or bad tendency of which I am therefore ignorant, but for the consequences of which I make myself responsible by promulgating them. Many young persons are led into this more than error—this sin—by the love of talking; but vanity has often a large share in it also, by prompting them to dis-

play an imagined acuteness of reasoning or talent in argument.

This leads me to consider the necessity of obtaining control over the thoughts. If I could compute the time which has been employed in suffering my thoughts to dwell on the faults of others, on past circumstances so trifling as to deserve only to be forgotten, on future events which may never take place, on hopes and fears without foundation, on plans which have never been executed, on resolutions which have been broken as often as formed, and even on trifles which would be innocent, if any thing could be innocent which contributes to waste of thought, I should be shocked that so large a portion of the day in which only I can work, had been lost, and worse than lost. This evil is to be remedied by constant care, by strong resolution, and especially by frequent and steady self-examination. When a good train of thought is begun, I must be careful to keep my attention fixed upon it till I have followed it to the end, without turning aside for the sake of worthless trifles. I must strive to blend the feeling of duty with every other. In moments of leisure it must be my chief subject of meditation: in the busiest and gayest hours the same idea should be frequently dwelt upon, till it becomes so associated with my occupations and

pleasures of every kind, that they shall introduce good thoughts instead of banishing them, shall awaken the conscience instead of deadening it. Thus, while engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, I shall apply diligently ; while busied with active duties, my whole mind will be given to the performance of them.

When I have entered into communion with my Maker, let my whole soul be absorbed in devotion, that no wandering thoughts may bring in the things of the world to intrude on the privacy which should be given to him alone ; that I may not knock him with the worship of the lips, while my heart is far from him ; that I may not give my soul in bondage to the world, while I ought to be serving him in spirit and in truth. The absence of the mind in the services of religion is one of the most dangerous consequences of want of command over the thoughts ; a consequence which will fall heavily upon me, if I am not on my guard ; for it is an evil almost past cure, when it has been long encouraged. Let me then strive, without ceasing, to acquire the important habit of self-government, without which all virtuous wishes and desires will be ineffectual and vain.

PRAYER.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

Great and ever blessed God, how glorious is thy name, and now adorable are thy perfections! I cannot comprehend thy nature; for what mortal creature can know the eternal God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection? Thou hast existed forever; and of thy being there shall be no end: from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Great as thou art, though heaven is thy throne, though infinite space is thy habitation, thou dost not disdain to protect and sustain the meanest of thy creatures. Though angels that excel in strength are thy servants, though the mighty sun obeyeth thy command, though all that is vast and wonderful is thine, thou dost care for all things that thou hast made; and not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without thy will. Thou hast invited man, sinful man, who disobeyeth and forgetteth thee, to draw near unto thee, to pour out his soul before thee in sorrow for sin: and, like a tender father, who pitieth his children, thou dost pity and pardon him, when he repenteth of the evil which he hath done. O Lord! I would partake of thy grace. I acknowledge

with shame that I have displeased thee. I have done that which I ought not to have done, and have left undone that which I ought to have done. I have followed my own evil inclinations, rather than thy will. Thou hast said, "Give me thy heart;" but I have given my heart too much to the things of the world, and have not cherished holy desires and heavenly hopes. O Lord! teach me thy way; teach me to please thee better, and to devote myself to thy service. May I contemplate thy attributes, till I strive in some measure to be perfect as thou art perfect. May I be a faithful follower of the Captain of our salvation: may I submit myself to his guidance, that I may pass safely and peacefully through the storms of sorrow, the snares of sin, and the dark valley of the shadow of death. Though his form is no more seen on earth, may the voice of exhortation, of encouragement, and of love, which still addresseth our hearts in his holy gospel, never cease to be my instructor in thy will, till the end of all things, when I shall appear before thee. O may I find mercy in that awful hour, and be permitted, through thy grace, to join those virtuous and happy spirits, who forever dwell with thee!

Merciful Father! accept of my humble thanksgivings for the blessings which have marked the

day which is past ; and may thy goodness protect me during the hours of darkness. May I lie down, and sleep, and wake in peace, because thou sustainest me ; and may my first thoughts be devoted unto thee, my guardian and almighty Friend !

Bestow thy blessing, I beseech thee, on all thy children of mankind. Do thou reclaim the wicked, comfort the afflicted, and permit all to rejoice in the light of thy gospel.

I ask all in the name, and as the disciple, of thy Son, Jesus Christ, through whom I would ascribe unto thee all glory, honor, and praise, forever. **AMEN.**

REFLECTION.

THURSDAY MORNING.

“His tender mercies are over all his works.” Psalm cxiv. 9

“In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” 1 John iv. 9.

I have again been preserved from whatever dangers have beset me, and am once more permitted to enjoy the return of day, with its occupations and pleasures. What better season can I find, in which to contemplate the goodness of God? How better than when rejoicing in his mercy, call to grateful remembrance the giver of every good and perfect gift? Though his blessings are more in number than the sand, though no memory can retain them all, and though no tongue can count them, yet it is good to think of them, and thus to make the heart overflow with gratitude.

His bounty is without limits: he blesseth each and all of his creatures, first by granting them existence, and afterwards by sustaining it. How great was his goodness in giving life to such countless multitudes of beings, and in making

that existence happy! How wisely and benevolently hath he suited them one to another, so that they should supply their mutual wants, and contribute to their mutual enjoyment! Man resembles the creatures below him in the possession of these blessings; but he is likewise gifted with a mind in some measure capable of understanding and appreciating the perfections of his Maker; a mind formed, not like the body, to live its day of enjoyment and then perish, but to endure forever. God has also granted to man the knowledge which is able to make him wise unto salvation, the knowledge of a future state of happiness, and of the means of entering into it. These are the inestimable blessings which he has granted to his creatures at large. Now let me consider what I, individually, owe to his goodness.

When I first entered the world, I was a helpless infant, entirely dependent on the care of others for the continuance of existence. God had provided for it by implanting strong parental affection in the hearts of those to whom he consigned me, and who were prompted by that affection to guard me from danger, to nourish me with convenient food, to clothe me, to nurse me in sickness, to watch continually for my good, when one moment's intermission of care, one single

instance of forgetfulness, might have been fatal to me. When I had advanced a stage in existence, when the first dawns of mind appeared, when I began to claim a place in the ranks of rational beings, my parents, appointed by God to the task, assisted to unfold my faculties, carefully tended my growing reason, watered the young plant with the dews of instruction, and fostered it with the sunshine of parental love. By the care of my heavenly Father I was preserved in the most helpless period of my life, and his care did not then cease. By that tender care has my body been preserved in health, and my mind, which he endowed with such various powers, also been provided for. My desire of knowledge has been gratified by stores of wisdom being placed in my power: my benevolent affections have found objects on which to exercise themselves; for I am surrounded by those whom I love, and who love me: my reason has found employment in contemplating those works of God by which I am encompassed, and my imagination, in striving to gain some knowledge of those which are in part beyond my reach. There is exercise for memory, in recalling, as I am now doing, the past mercies of my God; and for hope, in joyfully looking for a future renewal of them. And for those lofty and sublime affec-

tions, which can find no fit object on earth; for that adoration of perfection, that aspiring after something nobler and better than is to be found among men, there is an object higher than imagination can soar, more sublime than the utmost stretch of reason can comprehend, more perfect than the heart of man can conceive, deserving more love than my warmest affection can offer—God, as revealed in his word. By this blessed revelation, I am enabled to enjoy yet more my earthly portion of happiness, and to lay up for myself treasures which shall endure when time shall be no more. By this blessed revelation, mortal life increases in importance, being declared a state of preparation for an eternal existence. By this blessed revelation, I am furnished with a perfect example of holiness, by imitating which, I may obtain the inestimable rewards promised to the righteous. By this blessed revelation, sorrow and death, otherwise to be so much dreaded, take their place among the number of mercies with which I am favored; the one prompting me to seek after a better country, that is, an heavenly; and the other being the entrance through which I may gain admittance into that better country. By this blessed revelation, I learn that if I pass through life, its trials of prosperity and adversity, its snares, tempta-

tions, and dangers, taking God's word for my guide and his will for my law, I shall dwell forever in his presence, continually in a state of improvement, continually approximating to the divine nature, continually increasing my capacities for enjoyment, by gratifying my noblest desires.

Blessed be God, for his unspeakable mercy in granting such a revelation! O may I never forget the gratitude which I owe to his love! Let me fulfil his gracious intentions, which would make me happy forever. Let me glorify the name of the giver of all good, by an implicit obedience to his word, and by striving myself, and leading others to seek for that immortality which is the crowning gift of his mercy. Though all other blessings were withdrawn, though life and the promise of immortality alone remained, yet should my grateful praises ascend to his throne, for his undeserved goodness; and yet would the best services a mortal creature can pay, be owing to my God.

Let me now kneel before him, and offer him the thanksgivings of a heart penetrated with a sense of his mercy, and humbly desiring to become worthy of his favor.

PRAYER.

THURSDAY MORNING.

O God of all mercy! whose goodness filleth the whole earth, who hast created all that exists, how inexhaustible is thy bounty, how unwearied thy benevolence! The sun which thou hast placed on high to rule the day, and the moon to shine by night, the stars also which thou hast ordained, show forth thy praise. The earth, with her mountains and valleys, her forests and rivers, and all else that thy hand hath made, praiseth thee. Thou givest the seed-time and harvest, when thou scatterest the blessings of plenty, and the little hills rejoice on every side. Thou also givest the rain and hail, snow and vapor, and stormy winds, fulfilling thy word, that the stores of the earth may be preserved, and that, when the spring returneth, she may bring forth her fruits again abundantly, and make glad the heart of man. Thou givest the light of day, that thy creatures may enjoy all these things; and thou hast ordained night, that they may obtain refreshment and repose under thy guardian care. How innumerable are the beings that taste of thy bounty! The birds of the air, the fishes of

the sea, and all that passeth through the paths of the seas, the beasts and creeping things that dwell upon the earth, and Man, whom thou hast made a little lower than the angels, all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season ; thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

But to thy rational creatures thou art most plenteous in mercy. Thou teachest them to know thee, and how to please thee ; thou hast offered to conduct them to a better life even than this : and when they ungratefully forget thee, and disobey thy commands, thou dost mercifully forgive them, and receive them to thy favor, if they repent and return to thy ways. O may I never stray ! May the love which thy goodness inspires keep me in thy fear, and lead me in peace and thankfulness to surrender my whole heart unto thee. May I indulge no affections which are incompatible with love to thee ; may I obey no command but thine ; may I indulge no inclinations which are impure in thy sight.

Hear my prayer, O Lord ! which I offer with a sincere and thankful heart. Grant me, in this world, the knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come, life everlasting. To thee be all honor and praise forever. AMEN.

REFLECTION.

THURSDAY EVENING.

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.” Matt. vii. 1.

“But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.” Rom. xiv. 10.

When I exercise the duty of self-examination, how difficult do I find it to employ my whole mind in the act; how unwilling am I to blame my own faults, and how ready to exalt my own virtues! Or if I cannot acquit myself of blame, how great is my inclination to palliate what is wrong, how superficial my examination into motives! But very different is my judgment on the conduct of others. Whether I am called on to judge them or not, I am too ready to ascribe bad motives, and to put the worst construction on actions of which it is not in my power to judge. But I need only consider how often my own actions have been misinterpreted, to be assured that the power of judging is possessed by few. Would that as few possessed the inclination! Perhaps nothing is more difficult to comprehend, few things are more inaccessible to examination, than the human mind. None but those who

have deeply studied it can be aware of its intricacy. Few can search it to the bottom; and those few modestly shrink from the task of exploring the minds of other men, finding it difficult enough to obtain any accurate knowledge of their own. They know how many motives often combine to prompt to an action; and who but the Searcher of hearts shall say which are good, and which are evil? I have often been blamed for actions which proceeded from a right motive, and praised for good qualities, which constitution, early education, or other circumstances, have made easy in the exercise, and which therefore merit little commendation. If the judgment of others is thus imperfect with respect to myself, is it not probable that mine will be likewise mistaken?

If I did possess the power of judging others, what right have I to do it? Even if I could see into their minds, discern the intricate workings of their hearts, feel the influence of circumstances as they do, be subject to the same temptations, and thus be enabled to judge, how should I be authorized to do so? Is there any command which bids us pry into each other's actions, and instead of endeavoring to reclaim the sinner, or to improve the faulty, confirm them in their evil habits by exposing them, and thus blunting the

edge of shame? Hath not God rather said, by the mouth of his servants, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself:" "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor:" "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love?" Hath he not also threatened punishment to "backbiters," and those "full of malignity?" And surely it is malignity, instead of considering every man as a brother, to expose his sins to public observation, to exult, as it were, over his fallen virtue, and to impede his return to the right way, by setting the hearts of men against him.

Though I may not have reason to accuse myself of this sin in so great a degree as this, have I not practised it under an appearance less revolting? Do I not sometimes make the faults or infirmities of my neighbor the subject of my conversation? Do not blemishes occasioned by defective education, or singularities caused by circumstances of which I know nothing, sometimes afford subjects for invective, or at least for ridicule? And how do I know that, by so doing, I am not worthy of greater blame than those I am thus injuring? I certainly know that I am not yielding obedience to the commandment of Jesus, to love one another. I am not exercising that spirit of forgiveness, which I daily pray may

be exercised towards myself. I am not doing to others as I would they should do unto me.

How should compassion be exerted if not on those who are subject to the greatest of evils—Sin? I am ready to compassionate the sorrowful, to assist and relieve them if possible, and at least to grieve with them. Similar should be my feelings towards those who are suffering under the tyranny of sin. I should warn them of guilt and danger. I should by reproof, by exhortation, by persuasion, by every means in my power, recall the sinner from the error of his ways. I should hold out a friendly hand to guide and assist his feeble steps; or, where I am not able to do this, I should be silent concerning him, that I may at least throw no impediment in the way of his return. Such is the forbearance I should wish to be extended to myself, if I should ever stray: such, then, be my conduct to others. Let me remember how the holy Jesus, the Son of God, pardoned and encouraged the sinful on repentance; how he won them back to virtue, by first mildly rebuking their sins, and afterwards remembering them no more. Let me keep in mind the noble apostle's declaration, that he was all things to all men; that, by making allowance for their prejudices, by overlooking their weak-

nesses, and not exposing their errors, he might by all means save some. Let these be my examples; as in all other things, so in this. Christian Charity exhorts me to it: that Charity described by the apostle, over whose heart she exerted such influence. Charity suffereth long, and is kind. Unprovoked by injuries, envying not the prosperity of the wicked, she silently walks the earth, by gentleness overcoming evil, pouring the balm of comfort into the repentant heart, whispering peace in the mourner's ear, drawing a veil over sin, thinking no evil, rejoicing not in iniquity, but rejoicing in the truth; vaunting not herself, and seeking not her own; bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things. O! let me be her follower forever; for when prophecies shall fail, when tongues shall cease, when knowledge shall vanish away, when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but shall know even as we are known, Charity shall never fail. Then shall remain Faith, Hope, and Charity: but the greatest of these is Charity.

PRAYER.

THURSDAY EVENING.

O thou, who dwellest in the heavens, whose throne is among the stars, but who yet art the Father of all thy creatures! I would render unto thee the homage which is due from a weak and sinful creature, to that Being in whom all perfections unite. Hallowed be thy name, O Lord! for thou only art holy; blessed be thy name, for thou art love; adored be thy name, for thou alone art infinitely great, and wise, and good. May the knowledge of thy glorious perfections spread over the whole earth, that all men may bend in homage to thee, who hast created, and dost still preserve them in being. May all live in obedience to thy laws: may all acknowledge the authority of thy gospel, that thy will may be done on earth, even as it is in heaven; and that all may become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, of that immortality which thou hast promised to those who seek it.

Bless and preserve, I beseech thee, myself and those to whom I am bound by the ties of kindred or love, and grant us all needful good. From sickness, from poverty, from danger, and

death, do thou deliver us; for on thee only do we depend. In the hours of darkness, do thou watch over us; and may our first thoughts when we awake be of thee. Continue to us the blessings we already enjoy, but render us willing to resign them, if thou, who didst bestow them, shouldst see fit to resume thy gifts.

I acknowledge with deep sorrow that I have not been worthy of thy past goodness, but, merciful Father! pardon my transgressions. Look with compassion on my frailty, and teach me, who am so erring, to forgive and pity those who may in any way have injured me. May I remember him who was despised and rejected of men, whose life was one of continual suffering from the wickedness of men, but who forgave their cruel injuries, and prayed for them with his last breath.

May I strive to be compassionate and forgiving like him, and ever remember how much I need thy pardon for my numerous offences. Keep me, I beseech thee, from falling into the snares of sin. Strengthen me to overcome temptation, and to subdue all evil passions and inclinations. May I fear no evil but that of being unworthy of thy regard; may I seek no good so earnestly as thy favor. May thy goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life; and may I so ap-

prove myself unto thee by my conduct, while in this state of probation, that I may dwell with thee forever.

Great as thou art, O Lord! thou wilt hear my supplications and thanksgivings, if they are offered in spirit and in truth. Unto thee will my adoration be ever due, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. AMEN.

REFLECTION.

FRIDAY MORNING.

“If ye love me, ye will keep my words.” John xiv. 23.

No one can read with attention the account which the Gospels present of the character of our Saviour, without feeling a high reverence for one who, in a mortal state, exhibited such a perfect example of holiness. But this reverence is very apt to lead men to forget the love they also owe to him, whose every act and word was prompted by the purest benevolence. Do I not find, when I read the New Testament, that while I feel astonishment and awe at the dignity of his character, I do not always bear in mind that my warmest affections ought to be interested in the narrative? In the Son of God, endowed with supernatural power, stilling the storm, subduing the elements to his will, and speaking the awful messages of God, do I remember the son of man, forgiving sins, pitying weaknesses, weeping at the tomb of his friend, and affectionately comforting those who were shortly to lose him? In him who led captivity captive,

and broke the bonds of death, do I remember him who bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows, who was smitten for our transgressions, and by whose stripes we are healed? How many motives should prompt me to the indulgence of gratitude and love! For me, as well as for my brethren of mankind, did he lay down his life, that we might obtain the knowledge of his truth, and, by that means, life everlasting. By this benevolent sacrifice of all that he might have enjoyed on earth, I, in common with millions more of my fellow-creatures, have the benefit of direction in difficulty, support under temptation, unfailling comfort in sorrow, a joy which, though I possessed all that the world could afford, would make the world's gifts worthless in comparison, and a hope which in health, or in sickness, in life, or even in death, may enable me to possess my soul in peace, and to rejoice evermore. For his Gentile disciples of all countries, and in all ages, he offered up a benevolent prayer; and surely if they seek, they shall obtain the blessings which he asked for them. If I feel grateful affection for those friends, who, by their care and kindness, have given me the means of improvement, of maintenance, and enjoyment, what love ought I not to feel for him, to whom, next to my Maker, I owe the most val-

uable of all possessions and privileges! On earth he is no longer seen; but his voice still appeals to me in his gospel, to follow in his steps, to perfect myself by his example, and to fulfil his benevolent intentions, by being worthy of his love! And shall he speak in vain? Shall the good Shepherd, with the voice of persuasion and gentleness, offer to lead his flock to the green pastures and still waters, and shall the sheep not hear his voice, but go astray and be lost? O no! let me rather yield to his guidance, and joyfully accept his protection: let me love him on earth, and bless his name, and then shall I be admitted to companionship with him in heaven, where he will welcome those who have followed him to that state of glory and happiness. Feeble as my powers may be, I can yet do something to further his gracious designs for the good of mankind. I may be able to cheer, with the light of heavenly truth, the mind darkened by guilt, error, or ignorance: I may be able, while relieving the afflicted, to point their view, in gratitude and confidence, to the giver of all good: I may lead some to the forgiveness of their sins by repentance: I may be a peace-maker between those whose angry passions had cherished discord: I may excite those who suffer, to patience, those who fear or despond, to cheerful reliance

on him who raiseth up all that be bowed down ; or at least I may glorify the gospel, by showing its fruits of love, joy, and peace, in my own character. If love, joy, and peace in believing, are the rewards of such conduct on earth, where we dwell in comparative darkness, what must be the bliss reserved for the virtuous in the manifest presence of him who created all men, and of him who was the means of leading them to life eternal, and who will reward with his love those who have been fellow-workers with him in promoting the happiness of mankind ! Let my fervent love and reverential obedience be ever given to him, whom, not having seen, I love ; in whom, though now I see him not, yet believing, I rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

PRAYER.

FRIDAY MORNING.

O God, my heavenly Father, and my almighty Protector ! again, at the return of day, are my thanksgivings due unto thee for thy watchful care during the hours of darkness. I

laid me down in peace and slept, for thou, O Lord, sustainedst me. I awake in health and vigor, and my voice shall ascend unto thee in praise, and my renewed powers shall be devoted to thy service. Without thy protection I could not exist, surrounded as I am with dangers which I cannot avoid, and subject to evils which I cannot foresee. But I will fear no evils while thou art with me ; for thou art my shepherd, and I shall not want any good thing. While I dwell on earth, thou leadest me to the green pastures, and beside the still waters ; thou wilt support me in the dark valley of the shadow of death ; and, if I truly seek thee, thou wilt be in heaven my eternal portion and everlasting light. With these animating hopes and promises, I will diligently strive to keep my soul from the snares of sin ; and may thy grace be with me, to strengthen my virtuous resolutions, to invigorate my holy desires, and to render my heart a worthy temple for thee to dwell in. While I reflect with gratitude on the rewards thou hast promised to obedience, may the awful threatenings of the gospel against sin make a deep impression on my soul. May I welcome all thy dispensations which may lead me from guilt, however painful they may be. May I remember that thy chastenings are designed to render me more worthy of thy love : and

may this reflection lead me to bow myself to the stroke of sorrow, with perfect acquiescence in thy will. In the present season of youth, while my body and mind are in all their vigor, may I above all things fear to displease thee. While I am entering on the gay scenes of a beautiful world, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be such as thou wilt approve; and when these gay scenes no longer charm, when pain and sickness assail me, do thou, O Lord, support and cheer me unto the end.

I offer these prayers for all thy children of mankind, as for myself. May the same hopes, the same consolations, be the portion of all; may all acknowledge thee as the universal Father, and Jesus Christ as the messenger of good tidings, and by his exalted virtues worthy of our warmest love, unceasing gratitude, and reverential obedience.

Merciful Father! I will trust in thy continued protection; and desire, now and forever, to ascribe unto thee supreme honors and everlasting praises. AMEN.

REFLECTION.

FRIDAY EVENING.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you : and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”—John xiv. 2, 3.

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple : and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”—Rev. vii. 15—17.

It is natural for those who believe the promise of a future state of existence, to desire to learn as much as possible of what they are to expect in that state. They must wish to form some definite idea of the happiness to be enjoyed by the righteous, and the punishment to be inflicted on the sinful. In the holy volume which contains the promises of immortality, little is said which can satisfy this natural desire ; probably because the subject is too high for our comprehension, too vast for our imagination, while in this imperfect state of being. But it is right to meditate on the little information we can obtain, to famil-

iarize our minds with the thoughts of heavenly things, that we may prevent their being fixed on the things of this world ; and because it is frequently necessary in times of temptation, when the exercise of duty is difficult, to call in the aid of future hopes and fears. Indeed it is difficult for men to avoid thinking on a subject which is so nearly connected with every thing most important to them. Though they should be as careful as possible not to make their own interest, even the highest interest, a motive for the practice of virtue, yet it is necessary, at least in the beginning of the race, to think of the prize which is set before them, that if the feet should slide, if the strength should fail, if the virtuous efforts should be slackened, and heavenly ardor grow cold, the thoughts of the high reward promised to the righteous may inspire them with fresh vigor to press towards the mark. For this purpose there seems to be no reason why each one should not form what ideas are most agreeable to him, on the subject of the nature of the future happiness of the righteous, as long as his opinions are not inconsistent with scripture declarations concerning it.

As by these declarations I learn that holiness is the only qualification which will admit me into those happy regions, and as I know that even on

earth the pleasures arising from its exercise are greater and more enduring than any others, I must conclude that the happiness of immortality consists principally in the nobler and more unimpeded exercise of virtue, and especially in the full employment, in the manifest presence of God, of the highest affections with which man is endowed. Here, however heartfelt may be the reverence of him, however warm and pure the sentiments of devotion may be, however diligent may be the efforts to keep him in all the thoughts, yet the things of this world will sometimes intrude to shut him from our view. But we are told that, in heaven, God will be an everlasting light unto his people; that he shall be with them, and shall be their God; that those who are one in Jesus, shall be one in him also. This must be the principal source of happiness; happiness pure as his holiness, stable as his throne, eternal as himself. This happiness must include in it all arising from the exercise of virtue; for none but the righteous can thus dwell with him, in whose sight the wicked shall not stand, or of him who died that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and who promised to his faithful followers that where he is, there they shall be also. O, what a transporting prospect to the believer, in the midst of toils, temptations,

and dangers, to contemplate that state where the dead who die in the Lord shall rest from their labors; where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest; where he who was tempted like unto us, will have subdued all evil, even death itself; for he shall put all things under his feet, shall stand at the right hand of God, and forever receive the grateful love of those whom he hath rescued from the power of sin, and brought into that happy kingdom!

There faith shall be recompensed; there hope shall give place to certainty; but there love shall find its noblest employment in communion with the spirits of the just, each increasing the happiness of the others, by unimpeded interchange of thought, by entire sympathy, by boundless love, resembling the delights of virtuous friendship on earth, but as much exceeding them as heaven is greater than earth. There may the desires of knowledge be gratified; for then shall the veil be withdrawn which conceals from mortal eyes the mysteries of heaven; then shall the dealings of God's providence be clearly revealed; there shall we no longer know in part, but shall know even as we are known. There shall memory dwell with tender delight on the past scenes of mortal life; shall rejoice in past sufferings; shall be grateful for past trials; and anticipation shall

look forward to endless ages of still increasing happiness, of still improving virtue, of still nearer approximation to the divine nature. With such transporting hopes and glorious promises to the righteous, however I may be exposed to earthly sorrow, I should possess my soul in patience, should yield myself up to the guidance of Religion, who will lead my feet into the way of peace, will roll away the clouds from the dark valley of the shadow of death, now visited by the day-spring from on high, and will disclose to my view the glories of that heavenly kingdom which I am called to inherit.

I know not how soon I may be taken from my earthly pilgrimage; how near may be my approach to the grave; but if prepared by the frequent contemplation of divine things, I shall be ready at any moment to quit my earthly abode, hoping that when the heavens and earth shall have been dissolved, when the glory of the sun, the glory of the moon, and the glory of the stars, shall have passed away; when terrestrial shall have given way to celestial glory; when the body that is sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption; when that which is sown in dishonor, shall be raised in glory; when that which is sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; when that which is sown a natural body, shall be

raised a spiritual body ; when death is swallowed up in victory ; I may join with an innumerable company of angels, with the general assembly and church of the first-born, with the spirits of just men made perfect, and with Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, in saying with one voice, " Alleluia ! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

PRAYER.

FRIDAY EVENING.

O Lord God Almighty ! to whom only honor and glory are due, may my humble tribute of thanks and praises be acceptable in thy sight. How continually renewed are thy mercies, and how unceasing thy care for thy earthly offspring ! Every morning I awake, blessed by thy bounty ; every evening I lay me down, and sleep in peace, guarded from fear, evil, and danger, by thy protection. O may each day be spent in thy service ; and whenever I retire to rest, may it be with the peaceful consciousness of having advanced in the Christian course, and risen in thy favor.

May I remember that each time when I address my prayers to thee, I have advanced nearer to the end of life, and to the hour of judgment : and may this remembrance quicken my diligence, and inspire me with fresh desires to work the work thou hast given me to do, while it is yet day, that, when the night of death shall overtake me, I may be prepared to await the awful judgment into which all my deeds shall be brought, whether they be good or whether they be evil. May I reflect continually on the duties I must perform. May my sense of thy presence, leading me to watchfulness against evil, my respect, love, and charity to those who surround me, my diligent endeavors to improve in all useful acquirements, testify unto thee my sincere desire to become worthy of thy favor. Do thou, O Lord ! watch over me, I entreat thee ; pour into my mind the light of thy truth ; encourage my virtuous endeavors ; and enable me to avoid that which is evil. Thou knowest that I desire holiness above all things ; do thou, then, I beseech thee, lead me to be holy like unto my blessed Saviour. May I repine at no means that thou mayst appoint for this end. If affliction shall weigh heavily upon me, may it be sanctified unto me by rendering my heart purer and better. May I thus be prepared for that happy state, the

glories of which it is good to contemplate. O may I be admitted into that everlasting kingdom. May I cherish love to thee and to my fellow-creatures, believing that the indulgence of these affections will form my happiness in heaven. May my views ever be turned towards the end of life ; and may I watch, knowing not the day and the hour when I may be called out of this world.

I humbly ask these things, O God ! trusting that thou wilt grant those which are good, and withhold those which will be hurtful : and, with full and cheering confidence in thy mercy, I ascribe unto thee all glory, honor, and praise, forever. AMEN.

REFLECTION.

SATURDAY MORNING.

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.” 1 Tim. vi. 17.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matt. xiv. 33.

How common is it for men to speak of the uncertainty of all worldly possessions and pleasures; and indeed it would be difficult for them to avoid being convinced of this truth, while so many instances occur under the observation of every one. Yet who would suppose, from the conduct of most men, that such is their conviction? Who would think that the same beings who eagerly strive to obtain wealth, pleasures, or worldly honors, were aware of their transitory nature? Even those who seek after better things, also, are liable to the same folly. Young as I am, I can perceive the instability of all that belongs to this world, and the necessity of providing for myself a future store of happiness, if I wish to enjoy it permanently. The young are very apt to rely on the continuance of present comforts; and to forget, because they now possess them, that they

ever may feel their loss. But I have been warned against this delusion ; and, to impress the warning more forcibly on my mind, let me consider the value of these blessings, and the probability of their continuance.

Life itself is the greatest of all blessings, and the means by which we enjoy all others. It has been given to me with the hope of spending it happily here, and to all eternity. But how are these purposes to be answered ? Not by grasping the unsatisfactory pleasures which we must forever relinquish with mortal life ; not by gratifying unworthy propensities, or forgetting the giver of life itself. He may in a moment deprive me of it : while, believing that I have much goods laid up for many years, that very day my life may be required of me. I ought therefore to make my life subservient to obtaining salvation ; and to be ready willingly to resign it, whenever its Author shall recall his gift.

Health is not only an important possession in itself, but adds great value to most others. But what is more uncertain ? What tenure is more precarious ? Those whom I see one day in full health, revelling in all the enjoyments of a beautiful world, happy and gay, on the next are stretched on the bed of pain ; the good finding peace in more stable pleasures ; the wicked seek-

ing comfort, and finding none. Let me mark the sunken eye, the faded cheek, the agonizing countenance, and remember that, though the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, the word of the Lord shall stand forever ; and on that word, as on an unshaken rock, will I build my hope.

Riches, we are told, "take to themselves wings, and fly away ;" and with them depart the luxuries of life, power, rank, the applause of the world, and also, in part, the more valuable pleasures of leisure, ease, and the means of doing good. Wealth is indeed valuable to those who estimate it properly ; but it is by no means necessary to happiness ; for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. It will be true wisdom, therefore, to make myself as independent as possible of the external things of life, to know how to abound, and to suffer need ; to learn, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. However I may be situated, let me remember that they who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare ; for the love of money is the root of all evil, which those who covet after, err from the faith, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

Fleeting and transitory as these things are, pleasures are to be found on earth, which may be cherished and enjoyed to the utmost ; as they are

neither displeasing to God, nor liable to end in the grave. Such are the delights of virtuous friendship, of companionship with the wise and good, of obtaining knowledge, especially that which may make me wise unto salvation, and of the indulgence of the benevolent affections, which will all probably form a part of the happiness of the righteous hereafter. Let such be the objects of my care, as I pass through life, at the same time enjoying with thankfulness and moderation the pleasures with which an indulgent Father may see fit to strew my path. Instead of prizing chiefly the mortal years, which are but as yesterday when it is past, as a watch in the night, as a sleep, as the grass which groweth up in the morning, in the evening is cut down and withereth, let me desire the life of which there shall be no end. Instead of the unsatisfactory pursuits of this world, let me seek after the fulness of joy which is in the presence of God, and the pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore. Instead of trusting in uncertain riches, let me lay up for myself a treasure in the heavens, which faileth not. Instead of unhallowed and tumultuous earthly joys, let me seek after the peace of God which passeth all understanding, in which he will keep those who love him.

PRAYER.

SATURDAY MORNING.

God of my life, from whom I derive my being, and to whom therefore I owe all gratitude and praise, reverence and love, again do I approach thy presence with deep humility, but with strong confidence in thy continued mercy. Amidst the perils of the day, and the darkness of the night, thy strong arm shall be my protection: in gladness, thy love shall be my chief joy; and in sorrow, I will put my trust in thee. I ask not for riches, honor, or any of the splendid gifts of this world; for thou only knowest whether they are good for me; but, shouldst thou see fit to bestow them, may they be used to glorify thee. If thou givest me wealth, may it be employed in alleviating the ills of poverty to the needy; and, instead of seeking my own indulgence, may I remember how the Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." If honor in this world should be mine, may I endeavor, with all the influence I possess, to lead men to think of thee, and to become faithful followers of thy Son Jesus Christ. Whatever be my lot, may I lay up a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; that no

changes of mortal life may destroy my hopes of happiness. May the continual vicissitudes of life teach me to fix my desires only on thee, the Rock of Ages. May the instances of death, sickness, and poverty, which every where surround me, render me grateful that thou hast continued to grant me the blessings of life, health, food, raiment, and a habitation wherein to dwell; and that thou hast preserved to me the pleasures of intercourse with virtuous kindred and friends, and the means of improvement in piety and holiness. May I never forget that I must lose these blessings; that I, like all thy children of mankind, must descend into the tomb, and quit the busy scenes of life, to appear in judgment before thee, the all-righteous God. Oh! when that day shall arrive, may I commend my soul in peace unto thee, as unto a faithful Creator. May no doubts of thy tender mercy ever disturb my mind; may I repent with sincerity of all my transgressions, and put unflinching confidence in the promises which thou hast revealed by thy Son Jesus Christ. By the example of him who, pure and holy himself, pitied our sorrows, and compassionated our frailties, may I qualify myself for obtaining thy approbation: by his instructions may I uniformly regulate my conduct; and in his name, and as his disciple, may I ever, with

sincere humility and love, ascribe unto thee all honor and praise, both now and for evermore.
AMEN.

REFLECTION.

SATURDAY EVENING.

“The end of all things draweth near: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” 1 Pet. iv. 7.

“For what is your life? It is even as a vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” James iv. 14.

No reflection is more common than that life is short, and that time flies fast. The virtuous, the sinful, the rich, the poor, the humble and industrious, the proud and ambitious, all complain that the portion of time allotted to them is too short for the fulfilment of their schemes. But life is made long enough, and suited to its important work, by a wise God and indulgent Father. Scarcely any portion of time would satisfy the desires of the worldly man, who, the more schemes he plans, the more he becomes attached to the world, and unwilling to leave it. He may not have time to secure all the wealth, honors,

and power; which he tries to grasp; but the humble Christian, however short may be his term of existence, has time enough to secure the joys of a more enduring world.

But, however sufficient the time appointed me on earth for the obtaining of salvation, may be, if properly employed, it will be short indeed, if I am negligent of my duties and forgetful of my obligations. Another week has now elapsed; a portion of time in which much may be done to improve the mind, and forward it on its Christian course. Have I properly improved this important portion of time? Whatever I have done, I might have done more. I am conscious of having wasted a part of it in unprofitable thoughts and discourse; in too great attention to trifling circumstances, and in forgetfulness of my important destination. If the same time had been spent in obtaining useful knowledge, or in maturing by reflection the store already possessed; in meditating on the will of God, and thus enabling myself the better to perform it; in censuring my own faults, instead of those of others; in raising my desires, and subduing my unworthy inclinations; in making every circumstance, however small, conducive to my improvement; how great would have been my progress, compared with what it has been! Let me lose no more of a life, short

indeed, but yet long enough for the work I have to do, if I employ its smaller as well as larger portions conscientiously. I am now at the most important period of life, when virtuous habits must be fixed, or it will be too late; and therefore time, always valuable, is now peculiarly so; for the loss of time differs from most other losses, in the impossibility of retrieving it. Once gone, it is gone forever. If I were spared to the latest possible hour of human existence, no length of life could make up for the loss of any of the valuable days of youthful activity. And who can tell that my period of life will be long? Who can tell that I may not be called from this world in a few months, days, or even hours? And how shall I appear before my Judge, if I have wasted the most valuable of the many talents he has consigned to my care? If I do not diligently improve every hour, this must be my fearful reflection whenever I am about to leave this world. I know that no knowledge or device is found in the grave; that, as I die, so I must appear before God; and I ought already to have advanced far in that holiness which should enable me to present myself, as I am commanded, spotless and unrebukable in his sight. I have long been taught what is my duty to God, what he requires

of me, and what I have to expect from him. Possessing this knowledge, and being favored with so many means of improvement to myself and usefulness to others, let me not pass my days in the gratification of unworthy desires, which will soon cease to afford pleasure, and will leave behind nothing but regret and mortification. Let me rather yield the reasonable service of my powers to the God who gave them; let me now, while it is in my power to form my tastes, and to institute good habits, have continually in view the purpose for which I was created; let me educate myself for that endless state of existence which is placed in my view; let me encourage on earth the desires whose gratification will form my happiness in heaven. Let me in life strive to make every thought, word, and deed, an act of devotion, from the motives which influence me: while truly meek and humble, let my light so shine before men, that, seeing my good deeds, they may glorify their Father in heaven. Thus shall I pass through the changing scenes of life, whether prosperous or adverse, possessing an inward peace which passeth all understanding, undisturbed by apprehension or remorse: thus shall I tranquilly await the stroke of death, prepared for its approach, whether it arrive early or late; seeing no

horrors in the darkness of the tomb, and not fearing to enter the eternal world which shall afterwards be revealed.

Further than this it is not permitted for mortal view to penetrate into the mysteries of heaven: but I know that happiness, greater than eye hath seen, or ear heard; or than it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive, is reserved for those who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

PRAYER.

SATURDAY EVENING.

O thou great and glorious Being! in whom our life is, and whose are all our ways, thou art from everlasting to everlasting, and shalt never change. From thee I have derived my being, and unto thee, therefore, is the tribute of my adoration due.

Once more have I been preserved during the week, and again am I permitted to look forward to the pleasures of the day of rest. I thank thee, O Lord, for all thy goodness; and especially that

I have been blest with the glad tidings of salvation. By them am I enabled to surmount temptation, to endure sorrow with cheerfulness, to taste the delights of gratitude when in the enjoyment of prosperity, and amidst all the changes of life to look forward to a state of uninterrupted happiness. As week after week of my mortal life passeth away, may I become more and more fitted for that eternal existence on which I must soon enter. May I waste none of the hours which thou hast given me to prepare for judgment: may I never forget that thou requirest me to become holy, just, and good; not loving the vain things of this world, but desiring chiefly to please and glorify thee. I know that all who diligently seek thee may find thy support and favor at all times on earth, and may dwell in thy manifest presence in heaven. O Lord! enable me to prepare myself to appear before thee, whether I be taken early or late from my mortal pilgrimage. If but a short time yet remaineth to me, may I purify my heart, and exalt my affections, so that I may not fear to enter on another state of being. If many months and years are allotted me in this life, may I diligently labor, as long as I live, to please thee. May no long possession of worldly happiness make me unmindful of thee, the giver of all good; but may I be a

worthy instrument of thy benevolence, in promoting the best interests of mankind.

I pray for myself, and all whom I love, that thou wilt continue unto us the same gracious protection which hath hitherto guarded us from evil. May we sleep in peace this night, and arise in the morning prepared to spend the holy day so as to nourish and strengthen our hearts in all pious and benevolent dispositions. May we ever put our confidence in thee alone, the universal Father; and may thy best blessings be the portion of all thy children of mankind. May the glad tidings of salvation be universally diffused and gratefully received. May thy will at length be done on earth, as it is in heaven; and when this world and the things of it shall have passed away, may the countless millions of beings, who by thy mercy shall have become heirs of eternal life, surround thy throne, praising thee, their Creator, God, and Father, forever and ever.

AMEN.

A GUIDE
TO THE
STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Among the multitude of Bible readers in this Christian country, it is a rare thing to meet with one who is well acquainted with the holy scriptures. There are many who can quote texts in support of their religious opinions; many who can relate parables to children; many who can instruct those around them in the moral teachings of the messengers of God; and very many, no doubt, who can at any time call to mind passages which carry in them reproof of sin, encouragement to virtuous efforts, and consolation under sickness and sorrow. Many children learn out of the Bible from day to day; their parents listen from week to week to what is read or expounded in places of worship; and the aged are often seen poring over the holy book in the intervals of their daily employments, and heard to repeat favorite passages out of it when eye-sight fails, or

during sleepless portions of the night. Yet among all these there may be little real knowledge of the volume so much studied; and that there actually is little knowledge is proved by the difficulty of finding any persons but those who have been bred to theology as a profession who can give any clear account of what the Bible is, who wrote it, for what purpose the various parts were prepared, at what times they were written, what is the comparative value of different portions, what makes some passages obscure and others strange, and all extremely unlike any other book commonly read.

If the teachers of a large school, in some place where Christianity had never been heard of; were anxious to provide instruction for their pupils, and thought that the Greeks were the wisest people that ever lived, and their books the most valuable that could be collected; if they accordingly set about collecting all that they could get hold of that was written by Greeks, and for the sake of convenience bound up the whole in one volume, that volume would be somewhat like our Bible. The most valuable part of it would be the history of the life and death of Socrates, accompanied by accounts of his lectures, and private teachings, and familiar conversations. There would be besides a pretty full account of his prin-

cipal followers, and the letters they wrote on the subject of Socrates, and reports of their methods of learning during his life, and of teaching after his death. There would also be accounts of other instructors who had lived at various periods before him. There would be several histories of Greece in different ages, and in the different circumstances through which its inhabitants had passed; at one time they might appear a nation of barbarians, at another of heroes and philosophers; they would have one kind of government in one age, and another in another; now they would appear as conquerors in war and princes in peace, and now overcome, and oppressed, and humbled. Mingled with these different histories, there would be poems, some long, some short; epic poems, hymns, songs, and fables. They would contain traditions about the origin of the Grecian empire, narratives, some true and some fictitious, about good and bad men, triumphal verses to celebrate victories, and lamentations for defeat. Now, if the children in this school had such a book put into their hands, with no further explanation than that they were to study it diligently, and learn as much out of it as they could, they might read it all their lives, and get but a very imperfect notion of what it really was. They would not know what happened at

one time and what at another, how many of the events related really took place, and where, and why. They might store their memories with beautiful tales, or take to heart much valuable instruction, and follow the advice of Socrates as much as they could; but they would be much perplexed at little things at every page, and might make tremendous mistakes about matters of more consequence, for want of information which ought to have been given them from the beginning, or which they should have been put in the way of finding for themselves. There would be little use in telling them that they might discover all they wanted to learn in the book itself, unless they were shown how. They would not know where to begin or how to proceed. But if any person should once give them a hint to try to find out how long Socrates lived, how many years in private, and how many as a public teacher; if any one brought a map into the school, and pointed out the boundaries of the Grecian empire in different ages, and where the various philosophers were born, and how far they travelled; on what mountains armies were collected; on what plains battles were fought; if another teacher displayed pictures of the temples where the philosophers taught, and the gardens where they reposed themselves; if another instructed the pupils

how to distinguish poetry from prose, fable from history; if another produced annals of different countries in order to compare dates and events, and find out how long the Grecian empire lasted, —the whole school would be in the way to understand what they were studying, to keep clear of mistakes, and to profit duly by the contents of each portion of the volume. Many who had become tired of hearing particular parts read very often, would now find that there was much more in these very parts than they had been aware of. Many who had found it a dull duty to spend half an hour a day in reading this book, beginning any where as it might happen to open, would now enjoy hour after hour of study; comparing one part with another when they had a point to make out, finding some beautiful meaning in what had before been a mere jumble of words; and perceiving the reasonableness of many instructions which had once appeared wrong or absurd.

The case of our Bible readers is very like that of the pupils of this supposed school; but worse, inasmuch as that which they lose is of greater value than any thing which may be overlooked in Grecian philosophy or morals. Moreover, the Bible readers are less in the way of discovering their own confusion of ideas and consequent ignorance, from there being a large mixture of

superstition in that ignorance. The more important the study is to them, and the more sacred its subject, the less willing are they to regard it in the same light with other studies, and the greater is their fear of deviating from old methods of reading the scriptures. All, however, who are discontented with their present state of Bible knowledge, and distressed by their growing distaste to the study, may be comforted by the consideration that the peculiar sanctity of the scriptures affords a reason why they should be better instead of worse understood than other writings; and that if true and especially appointed for our instruction, they cannot but be more honored and beloved, the more freely they are used and the more carefully they are investigated. If this were generally considered, if more would cry out for direction in studying the Bible, instead of privately grieving over their dislike of it; if children were encouraged to inquire about any thing which appears strange to them; if, instead of reading a chapter daily, and seldom more, (as if the practice were to operate like a charm,) the hearty study of the volume were made a regular employment, our young people would understand the Bible better at twenty years of age than it is now commonly understood at sixty; and this, not only in the historical and the prophetic and less

obvious portions, but in those preceptive parts which are familiar to every one's ear, and supposed to be fully comprehended and taken to heart by all good Christians.

The Sermon on the Mount, for instance. Children are apt to think that they have learned the whole of it by the time they are twelve years old ; and its language becomes so familiar as to make little impression after that time. But some who have held this notion as children, have found at thirty years old that they are only beginning to comprehend the full meaning of that which is taught in our Sunday schools, and which is, indeed, food for infant piety, while it may go on to sustain that which is enlarged to the utmost by knowledge and experience. The child may comprehend what meekness, mercy, purity and peacefulness are, and how certainly they are blessed ; but not many of mature age are exactly aware what is meant by the kingdom of heaven, by inheriting the earth, by being called the children of God. It requires much study to be satisfied what particular value there is in these promises, and why these virtues were selected and placed in their present arrangement by Jesus. To understand even what is meant by the comparisons of salt, of lighted candles, of different kinds of judgments, of oaths, of raiment, of modes of alms-giving and of prayer, and many others,

requires considerable knowledge of Jewish customs, and of the natural productions of the country where this sermon was delivered. A child's or other ignorant person's ideas of the purpose of Christ's instructions in this discourse, can scarcely fail of being generally correct, and its moral teachings will therefore be very valuable; but over the whole there will be a strangeness and mystery which do not belong to the subject, being wholly the product of the reader's own ignorance. When he has learned that there are salt-rocks in Judea, of which the parts that are exposed to the sun lose their saltness and become useless, he will understand why the peculiar people were compared to this insipid salt, after they had parted with the pure religion with which they were appointed to season the world from corruption. When he has fully learned what is the Law, in distinction from the Gospel, he will understand how Jesus came to fulfil the law, and why he set up precepts of his own in distinction from those "of old time." When he has learned how charity was bestowed in Jerusalem, and where the alms-chest stood, there will be no mystery in what is said of a trumpet, and the synagogue, and the left hand not knowing what the right hand does. There will also seem nothing strange in the allusions to prayer in the streets, to anointing the head, and to throwing

jewels before swine. He will know in what kind of privacy men were recommended to pray, and why the lilies of the field were thought to be more gloriously arrayed than Solomon, and how it was that rain as well as winds proved destructive to houses. Groups of persons, glimpses of landscape, will rise up before his mind's eye as he reads, and his admiration of the beauty of the discourse will grow into enthusiasm before he reaches its close. If, moreover, he has informed himself of the condition of society at the time when Christ came; if he knows how Jews and Gentiles were circumstanced with respect to each other before and after that period, he will discern a wisdom and divine benevolence in this discourse which will affect him with a higher awe than springs out of mystery; and the somewhat painful feeling of strangeness will give place to the delights of clear and vivid perception.

Thus would it be with innumerable other passages of the sacred writings. Not that deep and extensive study would be required for every one. If this were necessary, few could enjoy them as we would fain have every one enjoy them. On the contrary, one piece of information serves as a key to unlock a great number of mysteries. The knowledge which is necessary to a full understanding of the Sermon on the Mount will render intelligible almost the whole of what now

confuses a large proportion of readers, and alarms others. Any portion of that knowledge will explain something in every book of scripture; and it is knowledge which is within the reach of all, if they were but aware of it.

“But how,” inquires one and another, “are we to get at this knowledge? We do not know how to begin. Our notions of the whole Bible are confused. We have gone backwards and forwards from the New to the Old Testament, and from the Old to the New, till the whole, except the life of Christ, is perplexed and mysterious. We understand nothing of the Prophets, and we do not know the Epistles from one another. What must we learn first; and where must we look for what we want?”

The first thing to be learned is what the Bible is; and this may be ascertained from the Bible itself, together with a few helps which are within almost every body's reach.

It will be seen that the Bible, with the exception of a few chapters at the beginning of Genesis, relates to a particular nation, the Jews, who took their rise from Abraham. The brief history from the creation to the time of Abraham is a mere introduction to the account of the peculiar people who sprang from him. The place of their original abode, the place of their bondage in the time of Moses, the scene of their wanderings

DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES.

in the bosom of a friend, though that
can only afford sympathy and fallible
consolation. How great then, must be the com-
fort of commending my sorrows to an Almighty
Father, who is one whom I have loved above all
in the midst of prosperity! I must, like
other fellow creatures of mankind, sometimes
be sorrowful; and may these consolations then
be mine! Let me increase the value of the
mercies I now enjoy, by considering them as
gifts of a tender Father; and let me render
them acceptable to him, by a proper use
of them. Let me pray to him every morning
and evening for his protection and bless-
ing. Let my thoughts dwell upon him con-
stantly the day. If I always act under
the shadow of his presence, and with a desire
to please him, every thought and every deed
will become an act of devotion. Thus shall I
commit my cares upon him who careth for me;
thus only can I secure to myself the posses-
sion of peace in this world, and the inheritance
of glory in that which is to come.

under his direction, of their conquests under his successors, and of their settlement till their final dispersion, may be traced upon the map, and ought to be well fixed in the memory, that the impression of reality may be retained amidst all that is afterwards read. The next step is to discover what the books of the Bible are, and who wrote them. The historical ones may be first picked out; and if read with the same kind of attention as other histories, they will be found nearly as plain, and marvellously interesting. It is only because they are read piece-meal and confusedly that they are ever felt to be otherwise. It will be found easy to follow the course of events; and, if not to count the years, to calculate, without much danger of mistake, how the nation proceeded from age to age; and how long its different forms of government lasted; and thus to know by reference to histories of other nations what the rest of the world was doing at the same time. Instead of being unable to say whether Noah or Esau was most of a Jew, instead of being apt to suppose that all the events of the Old Testament happened close together, and those of the New at some unknown distant time, the reader will be able to mark out the striking periods of the narrative, and to measure their distances with more or less of accuracy. In the history he will find mention of the authors of the other books, and will

therefore be able to distinguish them by their various characters, and to refer them to their proper periods. It has often happened that children who had grown tired of the well-known story of Ruth, have begun to take a new interest in her when they found out that she was the great-grandmother of David. Very little mystery, but much more interest, will belong to the Psalms, when they are read in connection with the narrative of the events to which they relate. It has strangely startled many unreflecting readers to find Psalms that they knew by heart in the middle of the books of Samuel; and no less to discover what an active part some of the prophets took in the events of their times; how they lived in courts, and moved among the people, and came out into life like real men, instead of being shrouded in the obscurity of their own prophecies.

The nature of the collection of books being thus discovered in the course of perusal, the design of the whole will be easily apprehended. It will be seen that they constitute *a record* of revealed religion,—the poetry no less than the history,—the Old Testament equally with the New. Every book relates to the dealings of God with the Jews, or with others by means of the Jews. As revealed religion was mixed up with every thing that concerned the Jews; as all that was Jewish did, in fact, appertain to revealed

religion, the history of that people is, to all intents and purposes, the record of revelation; and whatever throws light upon them, illustrates their religion and ours.

To ascertain this, is, then, one object with which the scriptures may be read; and no one has begun to study them to much purpose who has not made out, from themselves, their *nature* and their *design*.

Supposing that some clear ideas of the history, chronology and geography of the Hebrew nation and their country have been obtained while pursuing the last-mentioned object, a new and interesting one may be found in discovering the meaning of whatever customs seem strange, and whatever natural productions remarkable, in Judea. These are things which cannot be learned entirely from the scriptures themselves; but there are many books that teach more or less of them, and friends enough, it is to be hoped, near the reader who can satisfy his inquiries, or put him in the way of satisfying himself. When he has once learned a new circumstance, he may search for as many passages as it may explain. As one trifling instance;—when he knows how it was the custom of the Jews to place themselves at meals, he may look for all the narratives in the Bible which relate to what happened at such times. It may possibly surprise him to find how much light is

thrown upon obscure passages by this one piece of information. He will be able to imagine the scene when Joseph's brothers ate before him ; in the house of Saul when David had disappeared from his place ; at the feast at Cana ; in the abode of Simon, when one *stood at the feet* of Jesus, *behind him*, weeping ; at the supper when the beloved disciple lay in the bosom of Jesus ; and on various occasions mentioned in the Acts when the disciples met at table. When he has informed himself how the worship of the synagogue was conducted, the reader will be struck with admiration, instead of perplexed at the accounts of whatever was done by Christ in the synagogues, either in the way of miracles or preaching. The narrative (in the fourth chapter of Luke) of his ministration in the synagogue at Nazareth, of his receiving the book, or scroll, and standing up to read, closing or rolling it up when he had read, and sitting down to address the worshippers ; his delivering the book to the "minister," and taking upon him,—stranger as he was, and not known to be authorized,—to preach ;—all this will be no longer incomprehensible, or supposed to be a violation of the usual rule. The performing of miracles in places of worship, and what the apostles did and suffered on similar occasions, will appear in a

new light when the customs connected with the synagogue are understood. Much, very much more is made clear by what may be known concerning the temple ; and also respecting the dwellings of the Jews, their furniture and dress, their occupations, their administration of justice, their modes of celebrating births, marriages and funerals, &c. With this, may proceed an inquiry into the natural productions of the country. Previous to such an inquiry, no one would have an idea how much is lost by ignorance of the habits of the camel and the stork, the locust and the quail, the scorpion and the ostrich. There is frequent reference to perfumes and spices, to forest trees, shrubs and flowers, to vicissitudes of season and climate, on which the whole meaning of a saying, the entire significance of an incident, may depend. To detect such meanings, to apprehend this significance, is surely an object which may add new interest to the study of sayings and incidents whose sound has long been familiar to the ear.

If a yet more engrossing object is wanted, the reader may turn to the making out the biographies of the personages of sacred history. The lives of the Old Testament personages are usually given simply and straight-forward. There is little more to be made out respecting Joseph, Samuel, David, and others of the most interest-

ing actors in the narrative, than is told uninterruptedly and copiously. But in the New Testament, where all were contemporaries, they are mixed up together, acting variously in the same set of events—travelling in distant places at the same time, suffering under different tyrants in the same persecution, and interweaving their experiences around that of him who appointed them their various offices. There was, of course, a considerable resemblance in their fortunes; and some readers, perhaps, might not, if questioned, be able to separate the adventures of Paul from those of Peter, as told in the book of Acts: but it will be found that their experience was diversified in proportion to the varieties of their characters; that they viewed and acted upon circumstances differently, according as one was more impetuous, another more gentle, a third more calmly energetic, a fourth more highly educated and more conversant with society than his companions. To ascertain these resemblances and these diversities, to compare the narratives, and digest from the whole a series of biographies, is one of the most interesting occupations that can be imagined; and, if done in an enlightened manner, will be found to open up new sources of evidence, and to bring down new light into the gospel narratives in a manner which could not have been foreseen. This object will not be very

rapidly attained and done with. Even that life, to illustrate which all the others are related,—that life on which the most copious details are collected, cannot be made out satisfactorily without very close examination. The important point of the duration of our Lord's ministry remains, in the opinion of many, unsettled. The evidence on this point, as on most others of a like kind, is within the grasp of all who know enough of the succession of the seasons in Palestine, and of the Jewish feasts, to be able to compare the notices of these things in the narrative, and to frame a little chronology out of them. Any careful reader may note how often wintry storms, seed times and harvests, are adverted to in the history of Jesus, and how many feasts he attended, and how these notices in the different evangelists may be adjusted to one another. A gradual satisfaction may thus be obtained; and every established point will help to settle some point in another biography; till the whole set of personages becomes distinguishable, and the whole series of lives consistent; instead of all being a burden to the memory and a perplexity to the understanding.

This distinction of the biographies will lead to a discrimination of the writings of the scripture personages. The epistles will no longer be known from one another only by the order in

which they stand. The subject matter and style of each will be seen to be as unlike as the minds of their authors. Paul's will become distinguishable at a glance, from their being as characteristic as his spoken words could ever have been. The majesty and calm energy of Peter's will appear to form a beautiful comment on the events and actions of his life ; and the exquisite beauty of James's will be seen to be of a wholly different cast from that of any other scripture composition whatever. While engaged in this process of discrimination, the student will find that, instead of the perusal of one chapter being irksome, it will become difficult to leave an epistle unfinished, or, at least, to quit it till the topic under consideration is dismissed, however many breaks may occur through the arbitrary division into chapters.

Such are some of the subordinate objects by which the reading of the scriptures may be made profitable and interesting : but it must ever be borne in mind that these are but subordinate objects. The study itself is only a means to a much higher object than any of these—the ascertainment of Christian doctrine and morals. Of the yet loftier end to which even this ascertainment is subservient, it is not our present office to speak : but we cannot too strongly insist

on the consideration that the investigations we have recommended are but preparatory to the all-important research into the truth which God has given to be our guide through life, and the exponent of his will. If this is contemplated with due earnestness, it will be seen how inadequate are the methods usually adopted for learning Christian doctrine and morals.

It is commonly supposed that the doctrines of Christianity are to be looked for in the discourses only of Jesus and his followers, and the morals of Christianity in the form of direct precepts. Misled by this supposition, multitudes go through life with those confused notions of what they are to believe which cannot but arise out of an adoption of human explanations of the gospel, and a forced application of discourses designed to be no more than comments on doctrine which was to be learned in a very different manner. The same is the case with Christian morals ; the common method of studying them being to look for them only in the form of direct precepts. Various, beautiful and rich as are the precepts of Jesus, they neither convey, nor were intended to convey, more than a small part of his instructions respecting the formation of the Christian character. Instead of its being enough to learn texts day by day, till every word recorded as spoken by Jesus is fixed in the memory, this practice

(good as far as it goes) proceeds but a very small way towards giving an acquaintance with those principles which formed the character of Christ to its moral perfection. To prove this, let any one copy out and arrange as he will, all that he can find *said* in the New Testament about the nature and character of God, and his purposes in sending Christ into the world; and he will have but little that he could form into a profession of faith. Let any one copy out and arrange as he will, all that he can find *said* in the New Testament respecting the duty of man, and he will have very scanty and imperfect materials for the formation of a rule of duty. Many virtues and many vices are not mentioned at all; some are mentioned only incidentally, and there is no attempt at arranging them in their proper order. All this proves, not any deficiency in the instruction provided for us, but only that if we look in the wrong direction, we shall not discover what we want. The wisest and best men, who could never learn enough of what Christianity is appointed to teach, have found that it taught more than they could learn in a life-time. Instead of becoming weary because they could meet with nothing new, these men have found more that is new, more that is wonderful, more that is beautiful, year by year, as long as their eyes could distinguish the sacred text, their memories retain its

meaning, and their understandings ponder its purposes. In them, the workings of revelation were answerable to its design, because they understood revelation. They knew that the doctrines of the gospel were to be found in the facts of its history, and the morals of the gospel in the perfect character of him who brought it.

Before Christ came, the Jewish nation had been taught, by experience as well as by express revelation, the great doctrine of the Unity of God. They had found that promises and threatenings made in one age were fulfilled in another; that there was a consistency in the rule which governed them, an agreement among all the truths made known to them, which proved that the same God was over them all from age to age; and that promises and threatenings made by their God respecting other nations were also fulfilled, proving that there was not a deity for every nation, as their heathen neighbors believed, but one Jehovah who ruled all the earth. Christ came, not to reveal this doctrine, which was already known, but to make it more widely known, and to reveal one other great truth. A Future Life had been hitherto speculated on and hoped for; but it was not known with any certainty that there was one till Christ was raised from the dead. He alluded to it frequently in his discourses, and his followers afterwards enlarged

eloquently upon it ; but the truth was revealed in the manner most unquestionable and most certain not to be misunderstood ; by Christ himself being made to enter on a life after death, in the presence of many witnesses. In this case, the doctrine is to be learned from the fact, and confirmed by the discourses, rather than learned from the discourses alone. In like manner, the acts which he did, and the things which he suffered, teach us what his powers and his office were ; and the results which have followed inform us what was the purpose of God in sending him into the world. We are glad of any light cast upon these subjects by the words of Jesus ; but the facts are, and were designed to be, our best instructors, the sources of our most complete knowledge. The facts of the gospel are, then, what we must study in order to learn Christian doctrine. We must ascertain and reason upon all that took place, and ascertain what state the world was in when Christ came, and how his coming operated upon the world ; and thence discover what we are to believe respecting the designs and workings of Providence in giving to man this new religion.

No system of morals was ever made so perfect as the character of Christ. Rules which are written down may be misunderstood by some ; they may not suit the circumstances of others ;

and they will lose much of their use and beauty as ages pass on, and knowledge increases, and men's ways of thinking and acting therefore change. But an example of perfect virtue continues to teach the best lessons, age after age, to persons of all degrees of intelligence and goodness. All children in all countries and times can feel the beauty of Christ's benevolence in feeding the hungry and healing the sick; while few or none could understand or would regard mere rules about doing good. The holiest man now living may find something more to imitate and strive after in the character of Christ; while mere precepts to be holy, just and good, might have ceased long ago to teach him more than he already practises. In like manner, the worst of men may be touched on hearing what Jesus underwent through the malice of the wicked, and how he bore his sufferings, and how he treated his enemies; while the same man might turn away from all that was offered in the way of precept. As there is matter of interest to every bad man in the conduct and fate of Iscariot, and to every good man in the lives of the apostles, there is matter of near and dear concern to all in the perfect character of him who was especially offered as an example, and to whom more love and gratitude are due than to any one besides, except God who sent him. The words of Jesus, then,

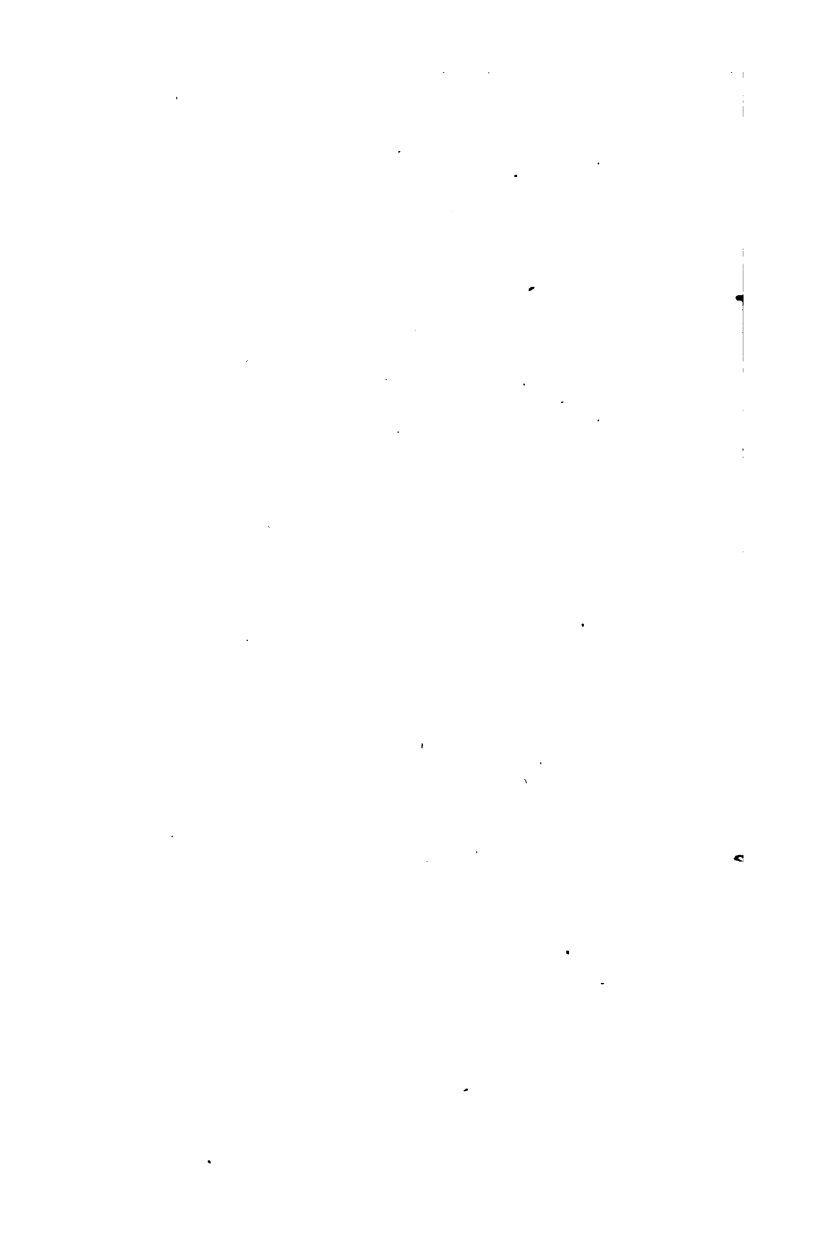
are to be regarded as the most valuable explanations, the most beautiful comments that can be obtained, on our duties : but the rule of duty itself must be the conduct of Jesus. What he did in his circumstances, what he would do in ours, must be the rule of our actions ; and it is a rule which we can never have done studying. The wiser we grow, the more able shall we become to discern the reasons of his conduct, and to discover therefore new motives for our own. The more benevolent we grow, the more touching will be the instances of his disinterested love to man, and therefore the more animating his example. The more pious we grow, the better shall we understand how he lived with God ; and the more able shall we become to love and trust and delight ourselves in his Father and our Father. Thus, the better we grow, the more enlarged will our views of duty be ; and in turn, the more enlarged our views, the better we shall grow ; so that there need be no end to what we learn from the gospel ; while, if we study no more than what Jesus said, without attending to his character, we shall not gather half the instruction which his mission was designed to afford us.

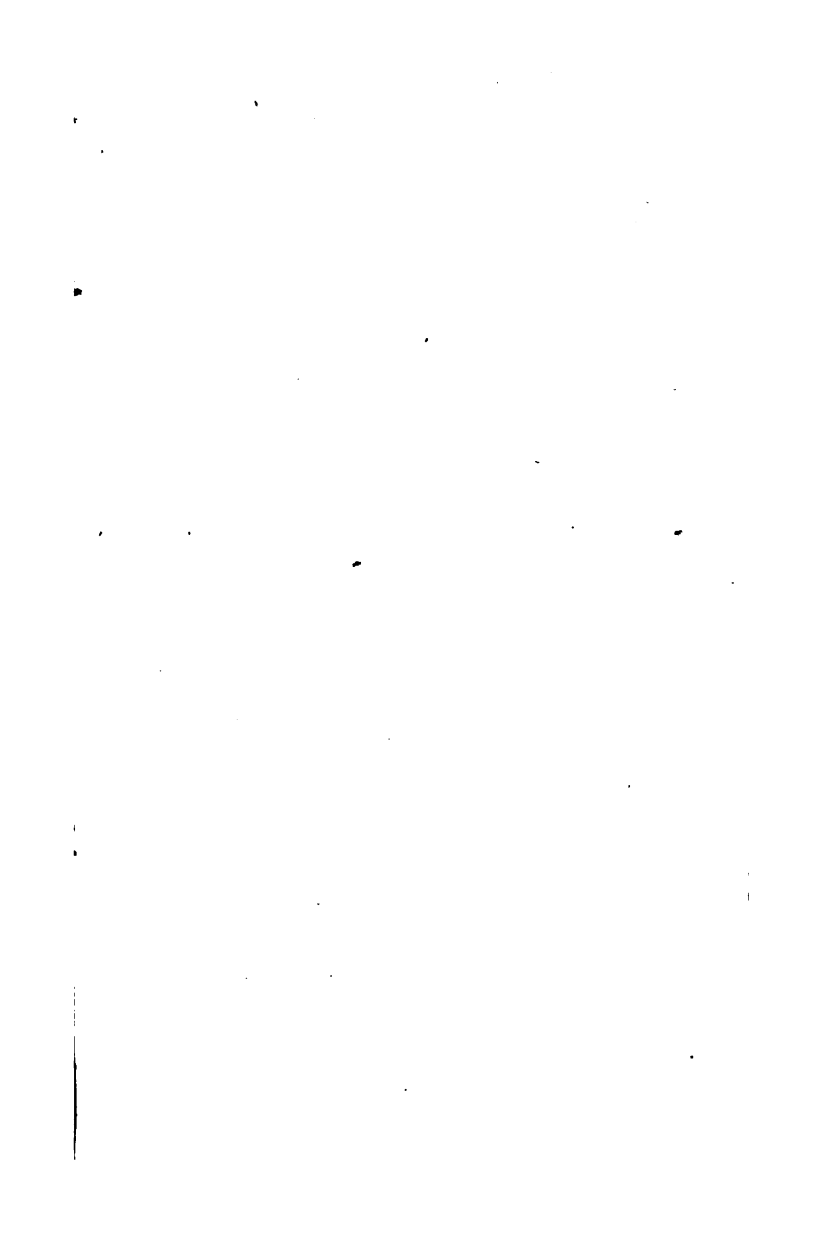
The highest objects with which we can study the scriptures are now before us. We must study the *life* of Christ to learn what *truth* he came to teach us. We must study his *character* to

learn what *holiness* he came to teach us. Once fairly engaged in this study, there is little fear that we shall read amiss. We shall not then grow weary of hearing some portions, while we remain ignorant of others. We shall no longer lament the confusion of our ideas, or complain of the obscurity of religious truth. We shall no longer take up the Bible as a task, and gladly lay it down at the close of a prescribed portion: but, remembering that it contains the record of most that is ascertained of God, of the best that is known of man, and of all that nature silently breathes forth, we shall resort to it as to a compendium of whatever it concerns us most to know. We shall find how it opens its treasures more and more to the discerning eye and the teachable spirit. We shall find (to use the words of one* who was wont to speak eloquently of the value of scripture truth) that "it supplieth us with business of a most worthy nature and lofty importance; it setteth us upon doing things great and noble as can be; it engageth us to free our minds from all fond conceits, and cleanse our hearts from all corrupt affections. It putteth us upon the imitation of God, and aiming at the resemblance of his perfections; upon obtaining a friendship and maintaining a correspondence with the High and Holy One."

* Barrow.

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