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S E R M O N S

DELIVERED AT

THE SUNDAY-EVENING LECTURE,

FOR THE WINTER SEASON,

AT

THE OLD JEWRY,

By JOSEPH FAWCETT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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SERMONS, &c.

On the Omnipresence of God.

SERMON I.

Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?

JEREM. xxiii. 24.

THE sacred Scriptures have set up an object of adoration, before which the philosopher may bow down along with the multitude. The gods of the gentiles are striking proofs of the latitude in error, into which it is possible for the human understanding to be led, when, without paying any attention to its path, it passively resigns itself to the conduct of false guides. We cannot, for a moment, compare them with ours, without being touched with compassion for their worshippers, and warmed with gratitude to that goodness, which has directed our devotion to that one living and true God, who alone is worthy to receive it.

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The heathen world, as you know, were weak enough to entertain the little idea of local deities. They shut up their gods in limited spheres of action; imprisoned divinity in particular places; divided omnipotence into parts; and assigned each petty deity his province. This country put itself under the wing of one Providence, and that sought shelter under another. Some gods were supposed to preside upon the hills, and some were believed to reign over the vallies.—But we have been taught, and blessed be God we have, to bow down before one God alone; to whom we are instructed to ascribe nothing but what is wonderful and infinite! of whom we are directed to say, and we say it at once with astonishment and triumph, the armies of heaven cannot resist him; “the heaven of heavens cannot contain him.”

Omnipresence is an attribute, which it is not possible for us to contemplate without the utmost amazement. We know not how to stretch out our minds to take in the big idea of a being, who spreads himself over immensity; who is present at every instant, in every place.

The presence of man is confined to a little
room;

room; nor are his faculties able to fill even that at once, but are under a necessity of pervading it by successive steps of attention. He is obliged to move, and is long in moving, from one place to another; and the utmost extent of the space which it is possible for him to traverse at all, is but a speck in the vast universe around him. Although his invention has invoked the winds to waft him over the seas; although he has employed mechanical powers, and appropriated the speed of swifter feet than his own, to lend him wings on the land; yet is he a long time in passing over a little tract of this little ball: and the year revolves, and repeats its revolution, before his voyage round it is completed. —How little do we look, how low should we lie, before that amazing Being, whose presence, through every moment of time, occupies every point of space! who is present, at all times, in all places, in the fullest exercise of all his perfections! who perceives, with one simple attention, every side of every object; every atom of every body; every thought of every breast! who performs, with one single energy, all the countless operations that take place in the whole compass of nature;

all the unnumbered motions that thicken throughout the unbounded and complicated machine of universal government !

I can think of no better way of improving this subject, so as to render it useful and affecting to us all, than by considering the divine omnipresence, separately and successively, in connexion with those operations and characters of Deity which relate to us, and all rational creatures, and which are in the highest degree interesting to us all.

First, God is every where present as the object of worship. His presence is not confined to the temple. His attention is not limited to the great congregation. He dwells in every house ; in every closet ; in every heart. He hears every domestic address ; every secret prayer ; every silent meditation of him.

It is, then, the office of devotion, instead of confining the contemplation of the Divinity within the buildings which do not enclose his presence, to extend to all places the attention to him, whose presence is to all places extended, and whose productions, in all places, proclaim his presence ; in every place, to admire the perfections, and to muse the praise, of an all-surrounding Deity ; in all situations to
set

set him before us, by establishing such a connexion, in our minds, between those two social and companionable ideas, the creation and the Creator, the effect and the cause, as that every recurrence of the works of God to our eye may mechanically recall his idea to our minds, and renew our admiration of his character; instead of contenting ourselves with that irregular remembrance, that intermittent commemoration of the Almighty, that confinement of his image to points of time and of space, to the hour of worship, and to the house of prayer, with which the majority of the professors of religion allow themselves to be satisfied. This is not the true worship of the Father. That is neither confined to a mountain in Samaria, nor to a hill in Judea, nor to a house in Christendom.

The true worshipper of the omnipresent God considers every spot upon which he stands, as holy as the ground where Moses trembled; as consecrated as the enclosure where the church assembles. His worship is not shut round by the sides of a sacred edifice. The biggest buildings of man cannot contain it. Wherever God has thrown a work before him, there he worships God. Wherever he has

left a print of his hand, there he presents the tribute of his praise. He considers the universe as the grand house of God; the only one that is worthy of the name; that immense and most majestic temple; not made with hands; not with hands to be measured; constructed by his own mysterious and amazing energy! decorated and consecrated by the displays, with which it is crowded, of the builder's wisdom, power, and goodness! He wants no ecclesiastical architecture, no cathedral pomp of pillars, and arches, and fretted vault, to strike into him a religious awe. The broad, all brilliant arch of heaven is the glorious roof that best raises his religious contemplation! That is the superb and solemn vault, that most powerfully inspires him with devout veneration, and most effectually enables him to lift up his heart unto God. Neither vocal, nor instrumental notes are needed by him, to enliven his praise to God; by the shouting and singing of "the pastures clothed with flocks, and the vallies covered over with corn;" by the song of feathered happiness that, on every side, salutes his ear; by the low of contentment which he hears from "a thousand hills;" by the genial and animating appearances

ances of surrounding Nature, who claps her hands, and calls upon him to be happy; by these stimulations his devotion is most powerfully excited. Having fixed in his mind the association of nature's beautiful and blissful scene with the source of all its beauty and of all its bliss, he as readily thinks of God, whenever he looks on nature, as he, who, in the fields, inhales a fragrance familiar to his sense, immediately thinks of the flower from which it flows, and of which, though he cannot see it, the picture instantaneously presents itself to his mind; or as naturally as he, who hears a literary production mentioned, or looks upon it as it lies before him, with the author of which he is personally acquainted, mechanically and irresistibly admits into his mind, at the same moment, a lively image of the man.

Such is the true worship of him who is every where present, and the author of all that appears. The temple of God is not here, or there; it has no threshold; it has no walls; we are always in it; we cannot go out of it; whether we go forward, or backward, to the right hand, or to the left, we are still in the presence, we are still at the altar of God. Let, then, our thoughts and affections form

one unbroken flow of praise; one continued act of worship.

What I have said to inculcate habitual and contemplative piety, in opposition to that which is merely periodical and local, most powerfully recommends it to the cultivation of every man, by placing, in the most striking point of view, the pleasures which arise from it, when it has taken its proper hold of the heart. He, who has learned to love God, as every rational creature ought, and may, and must, if he would ever be happy; who rejoices in his presence as in the presence of a friend; who delights to contemplate his amiable character; of whose thoughts the contemplation of his beautiful perfections is the most pleasing employment; whose principal pleasures are supplied by the entertainment of his idea, as every where regarding him with a complacential eye, and overshadowing him with a protecting wing; derives from this source, not only a continual sense of security, but likewise a perpetual sense of society, which peculiarly recommends the spirit and sentiment of piety to man, who is not only a weak, but a social creature; who wants not only a protector, but a companion. This
social

social enjoyment, which devotion supplies, and which is always at hand, produces a comparative independence of human society; and prevents that painful feeling of loneliness, to which they are subject, in some situations, whose communions are confined to man, and who are strangers to this strong and joyful apprehension of the divine presence.

The pleasures, which spring from human society and friendship, are sometimes required by the heart when they are out of its reach; and are liable to be broken by intervals, the length of which creates a painful craving after them. There are moments, when at least interesting society is not at hand; when affectionate friendship is afar off; yet when nature, drooping perhaps under a weight of animal depression, without any real cause for dejection, or depressed by an absence too protracted, pants for the company of a friend. Such moments frequently occur; when solitude becomes oppressive; when cheerfulness takes its flight; when the sun seems to go down upon the heart; and the shadows of melancholy gather round it. In such hours as these, a pious man has much the advantage over another who has cultivated no habits of intercourse
with

with heaven. He is never alone. That divine companion, with whom he walks, is always at his side. To other friends he has often to say, Farewell ! other connections frequently call for the parting tear ; but of his most near and valuable relative, of his most amiable and faithful friend, he has never, for a moment, to lament the absence.

Although it may be said, that mental intercourse with a Being, awful from his infinite superiority, cannot excite, in a human creature, that fond and affectionate sensation which is inspired by an amiable equal ; and though it must be acknowledged, that the presence of an invisible Being, which is rather to be reflected upon, and inferred, than perceived, cannot operate upon a corporeal nature, and raise the animal spirits, like the company of one whose face we see, and whose voice we hear ; yet any one, by habitual attention to it, may so learn, at length, to realize to his apprehension, and, as it were, to feel the presence of the Deity, and to contemplate his character with so lively a complacency, that, when the sigh of solitude is ready to rise, his languid attention shall be agreeably roused and interested, and his drooping spirits revived by
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the thought, that the most excellent of all beings is as really with him, as himself is present upon the spot which he occupies.

In this respect, a devout man has an advantage over all who have cultivated no intercourse, who maintain no friendship, but with their fellow-creatures. He can carry cheerfulness with him into all his solitudes. He has a remedy for melancholy, whenever it is ready to steal over him. The departure of company is the return of religion; and he takes leave of man but to meet with God.

Let cruelty confine him in some subterranean cell, or immure him in some solitary tower; let no kinsman, no friend, no human creature, be allowed to visit him; let the implements of epistolary correspondence be denied him; let not the distant murmur of society be able to reach his gloomy recess; let him be forbidden to hear the voice of his keeper; let the hand that brings him his bread be invisible to him; even in such a sepulchral imprisonment, even in this interment of his heart, he would find solace in the society of that invisible visitant, from whom no confinement is any seclusion; and with whom

no contrivance of man can intercept the intercourse of piety.

Let the tempest dash his vessel on a rock ; let him escape, accompanied by no other survivor, to some undiscovered country ; where no human footstep has ever printed the ground ; where no creature that hath life is seen to move ; where the voice of neither beast, nor bird, is to be heard ; where all the echoes have slept from the beginning of time ; even upon such a shore, if such a shore there were, the solitary wanderer might look up to heaven and say, I have yet one associate left ; if there be none other, there is one Inhabitant of this place ; in this dead solitude the Author of all life is present ; I am still in the company of the most amiable of all beings.

Secondly, God is present every where, as the conductor of all things. The omnipresence of the almighty Ruler qualifies him for the most perfect and equitable dispensations towards all the innumerable multitude of his subjects ; and leads us to see, in the strongest light, how exactly executed, as well as wisely contrived, every part of the great plan of Providence must necessarily be.

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An earthly governor, however patriotic in principle, and wise in council, in how great a degree soever a father to his country, and a discernor of what it is that makes a country happy, must depend upon the diligence and fidelity of his servants for the proper execution of his commands. He cannot keep his eye upon every province of the state. He cannot be present in every court of judicature. He cannot be a witness of the manner in which the several subordinate officers of his kingdom discharge their duty, through all the descending departments of power. Much injustice may be practised, which he knows nothing of; and innocence may send forth many complaints that never reach his ear. But He who sways the sceptre of heaven and earth, fills heaven and earth with his presence. He issues the command and sees it executed. He overlooks all the complicated operations of his government. He directs what is to be done, and oversees it while it is doing. Whatever instrumentality or ministration he employs, he also inspects. Every thing is transacted under his eye. No confusion can ever occur.

The subject of a human government, however equitably administered in all its subordinate

nate parts, is yet exposed to violence and injury. Although the arm of perfectly righteous law were ready to defend him as soon as he should call for it, the enemy of it might attack him, where his cry could not be heard. The sword of human justice cannot be always at his side. No civil community can supply every member of it with a perpetual guard. But the divine Protector of good men is “a very present help in every time of trouble.” He is able not only to redress, but to ward off, wrongs; not only to punish, but to prevent, injustice, whenever it is proper to prevent it. He not only hears the cry of the oppressed, but sees the approach of the oppressor. He beheld the danger, before the distress arrived. When the wicked triumph over the good, it is not because their Guardian is away; but because, in the wrong that is done them, there is nothing really and essentially injurious to them; nothing but what, at some future period of their existence, they themselves shall probably perceive the propriety of, and be sincerely thankful for.

A good man, therefore, has the most abundant reason to rejoice in the care of Providence, in every place. He cannot go where
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the shield of Heaven shall not follow him. When mankind have lost him, God has him still in his eye. Should the earth open and swallow him up, God is present in its deepest and darkest caverns. Let him sink into the midst of the seas; let “the floods compass him about;” let “all their billows and waves pass over him;” let “the depths close round about him,” and “the weeds be wrapped round his head;” God shall go with him down into the dread abyss.

Hast thou a valued friend, or relative, in some distant part of the globe? and dost thou sigh sometimes to think, how many mountains rise, and how many billows roll, between that friend and thee?—Let thy solicitude be relieved by the thought, that, in every region, the same almighty Providence reigns; and that no real harm can any where happen to any honest man.

Thirdly, God is present in all places as the witness of moral conduct. “The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good.” “There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from God.” Were the designers of evil to dig a passage to the
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centre,

centre, and, buried from the eye of man, and the penetration of day, to sit in midnight council there; even in that deep recess, every individual in the circle would be seen, every syllable in the dark consultation would be overheard, by the omnipresent Witness. Nor can any virtuous and generous transaction, of however private a nature, escape the observation, or lose the plaudit, of the divine Spectator. When modesty conceals from the public eye the bounty benevolence bestows; when delicacy hides from the object it relieves, the hand that administers the relief; the generous secret is known to Heaven, and by Heaven it shall be, one day, proclaimed and applauded.

The consideration of divine omnipresence, in this connexion, may serve to assure us of the clearness, accuracy, and conviction, with which the last judgment shall be accompanied. The Dispenser of that day's justice, in illustrating the characters assembled before him, will want the testimony of no witnesses; will be held in no suspense by opposing evidences. Himself was present, when every action, that comes before him, was perpetrated. He will acquit, or condemn, not according to what he presumes, or to what he infers, concerning
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the merit or demerit of men ; but according to what he has seen, and known of them. The virtuous, therefore, have no false witness to fear ; nor the wicked any eloquent advocate to trust to, when they stand before the tribunal of God.

But the principal use I wish to make of the divine omnipresence, so far as it relates to moral inspection, is to consider it as a forcible and continual appeal to that sense of honour and shame, which is implanted in our nature. Were any one habitually to hold in his mind the consideration, not only that infinite power will hereafter punish or reward him, accordingly as he acts well or ill in this world, but that even now, at this very moment, the eye of infinite penetration, and of infinite purity, is stedfastly fixed upon him, he would find it the strongest imaginable check upon every impropriety of conduct, and irregularity of thought ; and the most spurring of all incentives to the performance of honourable actions, and the entertainment of generous sentiments. Praise and blame form no small part of human pleasure and pain. There are many who have performed handsome actions, for the sake of exciting the applause of man-

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kind,

kind, which, but for that inducement, they would have left undone: and multitudes have been guilty of dishonourable conduct, to which they would not have consented, if they had not depended upon its being kept a secret from the world. When the mask drops, does not the countenance it covered fall?—Can detected villany lift up its eye?—Dares he, who has lost its esteem, look the world in the face?—Does not folly blush before the grave rebuke of wisdom?—Is not the presence of a man, eminent for piety, and for worth, a restraint upon licentious conversation?—Do not “the young men see him, and hide themselves?”

“But men are visible observers, and audible reprovers. We read indignation in their eyes; we hear it in their voices; we see it in their manner. The divine spectator is unseen. He keeps perpetual silence. Whether we act well or ill, no expression of divine approbation, or displeasure, is presented to our senses. When cruelty tramples upon innocence, no thunders murmur; no lightnings flash; no earthquakes rock the angry ground. Or when an act of generosity is performed, which kindles all the rapture of gratitude,
and

and all the enthusiasm of applause, no celestial glories encircle the head of him that did it ; there comes no voice from heaven to say, it is well done." We should, however, reflect, that, although we can neither see, nor hear the divine disapprobation, when we do wrong, that it does as actually exist, at the moment in which we do it, as the indignation that frowns upon the brow, that flashes from the eye, of man ; that a pure and holy witness of all we do is as truly present upon the spot where we act, overlooking every motion both of our bodies and our minds, as if we beheld a miraculous manifestation of his presence.

The regular and vivid recollection of this truth, is the best shield that can be held before the heart of man, to repel the attacks of temptation. Were a dissipated youth, in an hour of riot and folly, by some circumstance led, during a pause of the uproar, to call up before him the image of his absent father, venerable in age ; strict in manners ; severely virtuous ; whose doctrine had " distilled as the dew " upon him, in the days of his innocence and purity ; were he strongly to imagine the holy man an indignant and disappointed spectator of his pupil's degeneracy ; I

cannot but figure him to myself, holding down his head, for a moment at least, in the presence of the angry apparition ; and blushing before the offended and afflicted shade. Let him, then, who would preserve himself pure and spotless, as he passes through this dangerous world, never forget, that he who is holier than all, never, for one instant, takes off his eye from his inmost thought.

In a peculiar degree will the consideration of the divine omnipresence operate, to counteract the fear of that contempt, with which the licentious look upon religious principles and sober manners. Is any one tempted to profess opinions which he does not entertain, or to comply with practices which he does not approve, and to which his inclinations do not lead him, by an idle dread of human derision ? Let him bring down God to his side, by remembering that he is by ; and oppose his approbation to the laughter of fools. Fortified by the felt presence of the Deity, he will soon learn to scorn the scorers, and to pant for no applause but that of conscience and of heaven.

To these reflections I will only add, that the constant thought of an omnipresent God,
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is not more an inducement to become virtuous, than a support to them that are so, under the loss of their good name. When defamation breathes upon their reputation, and sullies its lustre; when ignorance and prejudice load them with unmerited reproaches; rejoicing in the presence and approbation of that great Being, in whose esteem no malevolent misrepresentations of men are able to injure them; they can support with patience the departure of that fair fame which is justly dear to every social nature, and meet the eye of misjudging mankind, with an unabashed and steady countenance.

To conclude: It is not possible for us to discuss any religious subject, without feeling ourselves called upon to bless God for that religion, which teaches us to ascribe the attribute we have been contemplating, as well as every other great and glorious property, to the object of our worship; which assures us also, that he who sees all we do, and think, and feel, regards with an indulgent and merciful eye, and makes every proper allowance for our imperfections, without which encouragement, the inspection of infinite purity were an insupportable thought, to beings so imper-

fect as we are ; and which opens upon us the prospect of a world, where the Almighty will make more magnificent displays of his presence ; enable us to perceive it, perhaps, in a more clear and lively manner than we can now form any conception of ; and where, it is probable, that he will bestow upon them, who have improved their present limited faculties to the purposes of piety and charity, such an addition of activity and power, as shall enable them to extend their presence to a larger compass, and to fill with their influence a wider sphere. God grant that this may be the experience of us all, for his infinite mercy's sake ! Amen.

Reflections drawn from the Consideration that God is our Creator.

SERMON II.

It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.

PSALM c. 3.

THAT we did not make ourselves, is most certain. That some one must have made us, is no less evident. That he who gave us being is capable of making all things, is as obvious as that he has made us. With the Maker of man nothing can be impossible.

To this great and august Being the Scriptures have faithfully conducted our inquiring thoughts. They reveal to us the ends at which he aims; the wisdom with which he designs; the omnipotence with which he executes; the name by which he will be

called. They first introduce him to us as the creator, and then, as the governor of the world. In figurative and poetical language they represent to us the first production of this variegated globe and these over-arching heavens. In accommodation to our humble conception, creation is divided into steps and stages; and the slow eye of human imagination is made to accompany the motions of omnipotence. With wonder and with awe we find ourselves present at the nativity of Nature! We behold the departure of ancient darkness, and welcome the first dawn of the beautiful day! We see disorder and confusion assuming the amiable forms of proportion and symmetry. Earth, and sky, and water, in magnificent succession, come forth before our eyes. Plants spring up; animals are born; and last of all their terrestrial lord appears; the flower of the creation, and the image of the Creator.

To this great and glorious maker of all things the eye of Scripture is continually directed. His attributes and his actions occupy every page. He is the great agent in all its history: He is the illustrious theme of all its poetry:

poetry : and the whole of the various and animated volume is dedicated to Deity.

To the praise of this almighty Author of nature the harp of David is perpetually tuned. The sacred composition, out of which I have taken the passage, I this moment read to you, is full of devotional sentiment, and has all the appearance of flowing from a heart sincerely rejoicing in the existence and government of God. It begins with the abrupt vehemence of a mind, big with religious sensibility, and impatient to pour out its feelings. It breaks out at once into passionate exclamation, and invites the gratitude of all nations to the God of all the earth. “ Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness ; and come into his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God ; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves ; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise ; be thankful unto him, and bless his name.”

Give me leave to fill the time, which lies before us this evening, with a few plain and
obvious

obvious reflections, arising out of the consideration that God is our creator.

First, The contemplation of God in the light of a creator cannot fail to excite in us the most profound veneration. This idea of Deity is adapted to plunge us into the depths of that astonishment, into which it is pleasing to the mind of man to be thrown by a sublime object. He who has pleasure in looking at what is grand, in the highest degree, will hither repair to receive it. He that delights to have his mind distended to the utmost stretch of admiration, must come to this idea for his delight.

It is impossible to think of the maker of all things, without being fixed in all the stillness and stupor of astonishment; whether we consider the amazing multiplicity and magnificence of his productions, or the complete sense in which he is the author of them, compared with the imperfect sense, in which man is the maker of what are called the works of man. If some of the greater works of man excite our amazement, how much more is his idea adapted to awaken it, who made the materials out of which those works were framed;

framed ; who formed the fingers by means of which they were fashioned ; and who inspired the understandings by the light of which they were designed. If we admire the inventors of inanimate machines that move, with what admiration must we think of him, who made “ the moving creature that hath life.” All the works of all the human race combined, all the fabrics they have constructed, all the systems of matter or motion they have composed, how complicated soever their parts, or extensive their dimensions, or beautiful their appearance, or powerful their effect, or excellent their uses, are proofs of a faint and feeble power, compared with the production of a fly. All the engines which human ingenuity has framed, whatever the variety, or the vigour, or the value, of their movements, display a hand that shrinks into nothing before the energy, that rolls the blood through the veins of a reptile ; that communicates to a worm its faculty of creeping upon the earth ; that indues the meanest creature which moves and feels with its wondrous power of willing and perceiving. Where is the artist, beneath the sun, who can breathe into insensate clay the breath of life ? who can kindle a soul of

the dullest degree? who can animate, for one moment, one particle of dust?

Secondly, The consideration that God is our maker makes it evident, that he must be our preserver. This inference cannot be made with respect to any human artist; because no human artist is the framer of any thing, in that radical and strict sense, in which the Almighty is the former of all things. That which man has made may continue to be what he made it, when its maker is distant; when its maker is dead. The work of man may subsist in the absence, may survive the dissolution of its author: it may exist for successive ages, and for successive ages remain “a work to wonder at,” when the hand, that gave it its beauty and excellence, has lost its cunning for ever. The statue may continue to *mimic* life, when centuries have rolled over the sculptor’s grave. But though the breathing stone may continue to breathe, when he, whose touches taught it to imitate animation, is breathless himself, the breathing animal cannot breathe a moment, without the vivifying influence of him who first breathed into him the breath of life. The moving machine, which man sets a going, may continue to go, when its maker
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is motionless for ever. But the moving creature that hath life, cannot move a moment, without the presence and operation of him, who put it into motion at first. The movements of a clock proceed without the presence, or the knowledge of its maker. Its wheels revolve; its finger circulates; its bell sounds; while he, who instructed the curious machine to be the index and the tongue of time, is a great way from it, and incapable of operating upon it. He is not by when it proclaims the hour; it strikes without his assistance; it stops without his bidding. When he has put it together, it passes from his hand, and from his eye. The powers he has imparted to it are now its own. Its operations are independent of his support. The creature of his craft is forsaken by its creator. Its preservation devolves to other hands; and by other artists, as well as by the author of its existence, its occasional obstructions may be removed, and its accidental injuries repaired. But, in the animal machine, not a single operation can proceed, for an instant, without the agency of him who constructed it, and set it at first.

For want of deeply reflecting upon this
difference

difference between the forming hand of the creature, and that of the Creator of all, we are some of us apt, perhaps, carelessly and inconsiderately, to conceive of our continuance in life as depending upon certain powers and properties in our animal composition, which were originally communicated to it by its author, but which are *now* entirely its own; inherent in itself, without hanging on the divine support. We do not, with sufficient closeness to the idea, consider, that he who put together, and put into motion, the great machinery of nature, is its author in a sense, which requires the incessant action of his hand, in order to hold it together, and to support its operations.

The productions of man are his only by courtesy. We compliment and flatter his skill, when we call it creative. The power, with which he operates in the earth, is but a knowledge of the power of nature. In the compositions that come from his hand, he is no more than a compiler. God is the original author of what he puts together. He is the maker of us, and of all things, in the most comprehensive and radical sense. He is the maker of the materials, out of which he made

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us. He is the maker of those properties and principles in things, which man finds ready to his purpose, and of which he avails himself in his mechanical contrivances and combinations. He is the maker of those laws of matter and motion, upon which our continued animation immediately depends. Of those laws, the maker must be the executioner also. The first cause must act in that which is called the second, in the production of each particular effect, throughout the whole compass of nature, and through all the long annals of time. The second cause can be no other than another name for the first. That kind of power, which we ascribe to a creature, may be delegated by one creature to another; but the Fountain of all power can send no portion of it away from himself; he can communicate no power to any thing, that can act by itself, alone, and apart from him. He must be, every moment, present, to empower the power of all other things, or what is said, and what seems, to be their power, to produce the effect, whatever it be, which is produced. The great cause of all things can depute no other cause, either animate, or inanimate, either human, or angelic, to supply his place, in
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any single point, throughout his vast dominions. The master, who is the maker of his servants, must, every instant, support every one of them ; and be, every moment, necessary to enable every one of them to perform the service which they yield him. The almighty monarch must execute his own commands. The Lord God omnipotent must be his own minister. “ The great, is the ONLY potentate.”

It is not so proper to say, that the Creator has communicated a principle of life to the animated world, as that he is himself the great principle of universal vitality. It is not so accurate to say, that he has laid down laws for nature to observe, as that he himself perpetually operates with that benignant regularity, which is necessary to the welfare of his living works. He is the great spring and impulse that actuates all things. He is himself the attracting power that holds the particles of all bodies together, and combines all bodies into the beautiful systems we see them compose. He is himself the living soul that inhabits, and animates every living thing ; that propels every drop through every vein ; that produces every pulsation of every artery, every

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motion of every limb, every action of every organ, throughout the whole animal kingdom. Every operating principle, through the ample compass of things, is God, that moment willing, God, that moment acting. He is the life of the world: at once the maker, the inspector, and the mover, of all things. Water we call the element of one animal; air, we say, is the element of another: the vital presence of God himself is the universal element, in which all living creatures “live and move and have their being.”

This is the voice of reason, and philosophy, as well as of Scripture. He that made all things must be every moment necessary to the support of every thing. As, according to that particular constitution of nature, under which we live, when you lift with your hand a body high in the air, if you wish to prolong its elevation, you must not only lift it thither, but hold it there; as, if you take away your hand from under it, that instant it falls; so, according to the eternal nature of things, the Being that called us into existence, must every moment hold our soul in the life to which he has raised us. If he withdraw his hand, we drop. “In his hand is the soul of every living
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thing, and the breath of all mankind." Whatever we subsist upon, subsists, itself, upon him. All that sustains us, it is God that sustains. Our dependence upon him is of the most comprehensive, complicated, and profound nature. Whatever name we give to its prop, God is the staff of every life. That, whatever it be, on which it leans, leans upon him. When your seasons are fruitful, it is not only he who covers your vallies with corn, who causes to rise the suns that ripen it, who prevents your bread from failing ;—but who gives to that bread its nutritive power. When your seasons are healthful, it is not only he who preserves your air from pollution, but who empowers the purest air to supply you with life. When your slumbers are sound, it is not only he who protects your pillow from pain, but who imparts to sleep its restorative property. The civil polity that defends your person from violence, is the result of wisdom which he has illuminated, and of passions which he has implanted. The medical art that raises you from the bed of sickness, proceeds from understandings, which his inspiration hath given, and is supplied with materials, which his hand hath furnished. The
arm

arm that saves you from violent death, is an instrument made; and moved, by him.

So completely is our breath in the hand of God. He is the soul within us; he is the shield without us: the word by which we live; the word by which we die. So the Scripture tells us it is; so reason tells us it must be. Man, the partial maker of a single thing, possesses but a partial power over it; God, the perfect maker of all things, must be every moment necessary to the support of every thing.

The habitual recollection of this close and intimate connexion between the giver and the receiver of life, between the living God and the living creature, is what I would earnestly recommend to all before me, as being adapted, in the highest degree, at once to entertain the understanding of contemplative, and gratify the heart of affectionate, piety. The perfectly uninterrupted, and the infinitely extended activity of divine power, in the preservation of universal nature, presents to reason a contemplation, of all others the most sublime; while religious sensibility is soothed by the idea of being completely in the hand of a Power, to

whom it feels the most animated love, and in whom it reposes the most tranquil trust.

Thirdly, The consideration, that God is our creator, is calculated, if it be properly entered into, to remove from the mind every shadow of mistrust of his loving-kindness, and tender mercy to us. It is he that hath made us, is a complete answer to the inquiry, whether or no he wills our welfare. No one can doubt the divine benevolence to man, and interest in his happiness, without first forgetting that man is the work of God. He cannot forsake the work of his hand. We proceed from him; we must be dear to him. The production of his perfections must be the object of his love. The former of our bodies, and the father of our spirits, cannot but be the friend of our welfare. He that made us, must have made us to be happy.

Fourthly, The reflection that God is our creator, while it inspires, when separately indulged, the most perfect confidence in his love, calls, when connected with the contemplation of our construction, for our warmest gratitude. If, to the recollection that God is our creator, we add an attention to the being he has bestowed

bestowed upon us, our conviction of his benevolent design in our creation will be completed, and our trust accompanied with praise. The inference, that he must be our friend, which, with justice, we draw from his having made us, the manner in which he has made us will abundantly confirm. The more we consider the being which God has given us, the more we perceive in it the seeds of happiness, the signature of divine benevolence; the more we are convinced, the curious and wonderful structure of human nature was built to be the mansion of felicity and peace. So great a blessing is the being he has conferred upon us, so many are the sources of enjoyment which it contains within it, that the external circumstances are very rare, which render happiness, upon the whole, impossible to us. Many are the circumstances which we allow to make us miserable, but there are few that force us to be so.

The most striking indications of the goodness, which guided the hand that fashioned us, crowd upon our eye, the moment we direct it to the fabric of our nature. Is not the benevolence that constructed us conspicuous in those senses, which are not only instruments

of utility, but likewise inlets of entertainment? in that fitness and relation of our frame to the system of things by which we are surrounded, which renders those objects and operations, in the world of nature, that are useful, at the same time grateful, to us; which makes all nature round us “music to our ear and beauty to our eye?”—Is it not still more eminently displayed in that understanding, which enables man to call forth so large a variety of accommodation from the materials which are thrown around him; to smooth and embellish the walk along which he is destined to pass to his grave; to explore the secrets of those works of nature, beyond the surface of which the inferior creatures cannot penetrate; to discern wisdom and skill, where only figure and colour are presented to their eyes; to perceive harmony and order, where they see nothing more than motion and change; to behold beauty and grace, not only in compositions of matter, but in features of mind, and in systems of conduct; to penetrate into the wonderful chambers of the human breast, and explore the mine of intellectual and moral wealth, the amazing magazine of happiness, which lies hid in hu-
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man nature; and to ply the most glorious and animating of all toil, that of digging for this inexhaustible and immortal treasure? that understanding, which converts the earth, but a table, and a bed, to other animals, into the school, and the observatory of man! where all beneath him, and around him, and above him, is fair instruction! where he may study the productions of the ground, or peruse the book of human life, and ponder the nature of man; or raise his eyes to the firmament that is spread over his head, and hear the heavens declare the glory of God!—If we seek for yet farther manifestation of the goodness that made us, shall we not discover it in those social powers and propensities, by which creatures, feeble and insufficient to the supply of either their animal, or their intellectual, necessities, when standing singly and alone, are attracted to cohere together in society, and to form at once that union of heads, and that junction of hands, by which alone the improvement of human happiness is to be promoted?—Is it not farther manifested in that faculty of habits, which enables us to derive promptitude, in the performance of actions, at first difficult, from the

repetition of them ; and reconciliation to circumstances, at first unpleasant, from familiarity with them ; without which, the improvement of human life, either by fine, or by useful arts, would be impossible ; without which, virtue would remain a beautiful theory, but an impracticable task ; and existence prove an insupportable burden, in circumstances, under which it is now consistent with comfort ? —Is not the divine attention to our happiness, in the structure of our nature, to be also discerned, in that ignorance of futurity, in which we are left, and in that propensity to paint it fair, with which we are formed ; in consequence of which, if infinite wisdom appoint us to pass through painful experience, infinite mercy, prior to our passage through it, allows us the happiness of pleasing expectation, and the curtain, which conceals the scene before us, becomes the canvass upon which fancy may sketch futurity in such forms, and paint it in such colours, as are most alluring to the eye of nature ?—And may we not find a yet farther proof, to seek for no more, of the benignity that formed us, in that power of memory, which is not only an instrument of knowledge and virtue, but also a
source

source of exquisite pleasure? in that wonderful mirror within us, which reflects the figure of the past? that mighty magician in the mind, that conjures back departed events! pulls them into his presence, from whatever distance they have flown to, by the potency of his mysterious spells! commands the suns that have long gone down, to rise over again; and the pleasures that have taken their flight, to spread a returning wing! that powerful faculty, which enables man to hold fast the fleeting years; to fix the volatile moments; to bid time stand still, and the past become the present! which enables the old man to renew his youth; to rekindle his ardour; and to repeat his life! Thus, while, in the morning of life, the pictures of hope adorn the darkness of futurity, and make that darkness their tablet; in the evening of our day, the pencil of memory is employed to lay its enlivening colours upon the dead and gloomy wall, that bounds the pursuit and the expectation of man upon earth.

To the bestower of such a being our most lively gratitude must belong. Were he not the cause of all that happens to us, as well as the author of our existence, for all the happiness

pineness we have received ever since our nativity, our principal gratitude would still be due to him, from whom we received our capacity of happiness. “ Oh, come then, let us enter into his gates with thanksgiving, let us come into his courts with praise.” Of the fountain from whence we flow let us not be forgetful. To the human *preserver* of your life, when exposed to imminent danger, you are all sufficiently thankful. If, by his skill in medicine, he save you from sickness, which every other professor of the healing art had pronounced to be incurable; if he snatch you from the jaws of the destruction that was yawning to swallow you up from without; if he descend after your sinking body into the abyss of water, when it had well nigh gone over your soul for ever; if he bear you through the flame and smoke of midnight conflagration, at a moment when the consuming element was surrounding your unconscious and curtailed senses; if he stand between you and the impending sword of battle; if he fly to your aid, when the arm of lawless violence was lifted up against you; if, in any of these ways, he deliver you from death; you survey your deliverer with no cold regard: you
6 regard

regard him with all the rapture of gratitude ! you pay him enthusiastic thanks ! you remember him with immortal love ! you record his name in the annals of your house ; you write it on the table of your memory, in letters that are not to be worn away by time ; you think no return can be too great which it is in your power to make him. “ He saved my life,” is a declaration, which has been made by multitudes, at the distance of many years from the deliverance, with emotions of gratitude. The salvation of his life is a service, which the man of wealth has rewarded with boundless munificence ; with domestic generosity ; with all the gush and flood of uncontrolled return ! These strong expressions of gratitude, which are made by mankind in general, to the humanity which *preserves* their life, and which forcibly shew the value which they set upon it, loudly call for their gratitude to the goodness that *gave* it.

Fifthly, If it is God that hath made us and not we ourselves, to him it becomes us to give the glory of whatever gifts of nature we may possess. There is no one weakness to which man is so prone as he is to pride. To feed this passion, he diligently explores every point
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in his situation, and in himself, in search of nutriment. Sometimes external and accidental distinctions excite within him extravagant ideas of his own dignity. Sometimes he plumes himself upon personal endowments, either of a corporeal, or a mental nature. He glories in the comeliness of his features; in the symmetry of his frame; in the activity of his limbs; in the vigour of his muscles; or in the superiority of his understanding; in the clearness of his comprehension, in the brilliancy of his imagination, and the vivacity of his wit.

The single reflection, that God is our creator; that whatever we are, it is he, and not we ourselves, that hath made us so; is sufficient to throw down the pride that stands upon either of these foundations.

God is the proprietor, as he is the author, of all our endowments, whether of body or of mind. Whatever excellence we inherit from nature, is not ours, but his. With as much propriety might we ascribe eloquence to the quill, rather than to the writer; or ingenuity to the machine, rather than to the inventor; as take to ourselves the praise of any personal superiority, with which our

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Maker may have distinguished us. We have as much right to erect our pride upon one part of the Almighty's works as upon another. We have as much reason to be proud of the splendour of the sun, of the enamel of the meadow, of the grandeur of the ocean, or the magnificence of the firmament, as of any display of divine power and skill, which we perceive in ourselves. All around us, and all within us, is equally inscribed with the name of God. He is the author of all that is excellent. To him belongs universal praise. He who gives to himself the glory of any native distinctions he finds in himself, robs his maker of the tribute that belongs to him.

The antient ignorance which worshipped the works of God, and bowed down before the sun, moon, and stars, is deserving of our pity: but he is guilty of unpardonable idolatry, who, being instructed in the knowledge of the one living and true God, that "made the heavens and the earth and all things that are therein," pays homage to himself; and forgets that, if he be a more glorious creature than many around him, he is still no more than a creature.

It is common for moralists to expose the
8 folly

folly of those, who are disposed to indulge the elation of pride, upon account of any thing of an adventitious and *extrinsic* nature, by insisting upon the precariousness and uncertainty of such possessions. They are painted with wings by him that would humble the proprietor of them. The teacher of humility to the possessor of riches, talks to him of the possibility of their flight, and rings in his ear the sounding of their departing pinions. To damp the pride of which of our possessions, may not the same consideration be employed? Our constitutional distinctions, are they without their wings? Though inherent in ourselves, independent of the world, safe from the fickle climate of mercantile and political life, are even these immoveably fixed in our lot? are there no changes to which they are exposed? are there no winds, capable of piercing to the place they occupy, and sweeping them away? He that gave, can at any time resume, his gifts, whether they go by the name of gifts of fortune, or gifts of nature. He has often resumed the latter, as well as the former. How frequently is the man reduced to sudden imbecility, whose flesh appeared to have been of brass, and whose
strength

strength to have been the strength of stones ! How often has the active limb that leaped as an hart, lost its bounding agility for ever, and beauty for ever been blotted out of the comely countenance by sickness or by violence ! Nor are these the only properties of our nature that partake of instability. Alas, where is it, at what line, in the possessions of man, that vicissitude stops ? Where is the point, in all the little region of his happiness, or his honour, to which, but no farther, changes come ; where the giddy whirls of accident are stayed ; and beyond which all is serene security, and sanctuary from uncertainty ? There is no such point. His pride has no such place to set its foot upon, and say, “ This ground is immutably mine.” Not only his riches take their flight ; not only his pomp and power depart ; not only his liberty is taken from him ; not only his friends forsake him ; and his health bids him adieu ;—his understanding is liable to go from him too.

This most melancholy and most humiliating of all the desertions which man experiences, befalls him with a sufficient frequency, to frown upon intellectual pride.

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The number of mansions, erected for the reception of ruined reason, is large enough, loudly and eloquently to lecture the pride of reason, in every human breast. From this dark shadow of intellectual adversity, not even the brilliant and the learned head is secure. We have seen the Father of lights recall the ray, he had let fall upon it, from the luminous and splendid understanding. He has left the sparkling wit, to wander into madness, or to wither into idiotism. The eminently civilised, the highly cultivated man, the lamp of his friends, the light of society, has sunk below the savage ! has been degraded from the rank of rational creatures ; changed from a scholar, from a philosopher, and a bard, into an animal to be kept in awe by brute violence ! converted from a subject of fame, into a spectacle to vulgar curiosity, or to pensive compassion !

Where shall our pride find a resting place ? We hold our most intrinsic property by a precarious tenure. Not only wealth and power, but wisdom and wit, may make themselves wings, and fly away. Even these experience the turning of the wheel, and partake of the revolution that reigns around us. We are
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not only liable to lose our possessions, we are liable to lose ourselves.

Instead then of stopping the praise that should rise to heaven, for any of those gifts of nature, which the God of nature, as he gave, can, whenever he pleases, take away ; instead of stopping the glory that should ascend to God, and distracting it from its proper course to ourselves ; let us give it the way it ought to go, and cheerfully ascribe to the Author of all excellence, whatever excellence of nature we may any of us have received from him.

Sixthly, As the consideration that God is *our* creator, renders it impossible for us to be proud of any personal excellence which we have inherited from nature, so the reflection that God is the maker of *others*, should lead us to pay a proper respect to all mankind, and prevent us from despising any because they are poor. The respect arising from this reflection is intimately connected with the practice of justice, in our intercourse with those, who are our inferiors in situation. Contempt is the parent of injury and of oppression, both in public and in private life. The tyrants that have trampled upon a people, before they

set their foot upon them, were led to look down upon them, as an herd of insignificant and contemptible creatures. The lordly oppressor of the rustic neighbourhood, the little tyrant of the poor man's fields, has been ever in habits of looking upon them that have no riches, as having no rights; as beings beneath his notice; without claims to justice; as no more than dust, whom he may walk over without doing them wrong; whose most quiet complaint is to be considered as provocation; and whose mildest remonstrance to be regarded as insolence.

The cure of this conduct is the consideration, that "the Lord is the maker of us all." "If I did despise the cause of my man servant, or my maid servant, when they contended with me, what then shall I do when God riseth up? Did not he, that made me in the womb, make him, and did not one fashion us in the womb?" This short and simple reasoning leads to a decent respect for all mankind, whether high or low, whether rich or poor. The moment I consider any thing before me, whether it be a man, or whether it be an insect, as the work of God,

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that moment I regard it with respect. If a piece of painting or of sculpture, of however inferior merit, be ascribed to some eminent name, and have sufficient marks of authenticity upon it, though but the essay of his youth, or the play of his hand, it is held in veneration; and considered, by every lover of the art, as a valuable thing. If a piece of poetry, of however light and trivial a nature, could be proved to be the production of Milton's or of Shakespear's pen, though only the inferior and feeble offspring of their infant muse, it would be read with reverence. And when I open my mind to the consideration, that any creature, of however inferior and humble a class, is the composition of Almighty God, it commands my respect. It is the curious organization, it is the wonderful workmanship, of the great Master and Father of all art! It is his beautiful design! It is his nice execution! It is in the style and manner of Omnipotence! All the artists of the earth combined cannot produce any thing to be compared unto it.

But, in regarding mankind in the humblest classes of life, we have to reflect, not only that they are the creatures of God, but

that they have received from him the same nature as ourselves. As the poor are made by the same hand, they are made in the same image, as the rich; cast in the same mould; exhibiting to the curious eye of reverent inspection, exactly the same complication of parts and powers; the same figure and faculties of body; the same passions and capacities of mind. Who shall dare to despise the admirable and highly finished fabric, which the Lord God Almighty, all whose works are great and marvellous, has put together in so exquisite a manner, because the threads that cover it from the weather are coarser, or more decayed than his? At what does the critic look, when he would estimate the merit of the writer, upon whose work he sits in judgment? at the elegance of the letter in which it is printed? at the fineness of the paper upon which it is presented to his eye? or at the beauty of the plates with which it is embellished? No certainly: he looks, and looks only, at the literary work itself. And, in the same manner, the man of true taste and just discernment, in estimating man, respects him not as rich, not as powerful, but as man.

The trappings of man are the work of

man ; the work of a weak worm. The apparel which he wears, it is man that wove ; the house in which he lives, it is man that built ; the vehicle in which he rides, it is man that constructed : but man himself is the work to be wondered at ; man himself is the work of God ; the astonishing work, which man can neither make, nor mend. The great man may call his workmen around him, and make what alterations he will, in his outward possessions. He can command them to pull down his barns, and build greater ; to pull up his trees, and plant others ; to scoop him pools of water, in whatever parts of his grounds he pleases ; to design his gardens and his orchards, according to his fancy ; and to make him great works of various kinds, so as to give him to outshine his surrounding neighbours, in this various and extended dress of his little being : but if he be dissatisfied with any inferiority in the formation of himself, he may assemble all the artificers in the universe together ; the collected skill of all their hands cannot add one cubit to his stature, or make one hair of his head either black or white.

In the sight of him who thus considers all

mankind, a crime of how enormous a nature, of what frightful magnitude, must the oppression and the destruction of any of them appear ! With what an eye of amazement and horror, must such a man look upon their, not merely inhumanity, but bold impiety, who have presumed to trample upon the noblest terrestrial productions of him, unto whose works there are none that are like ! whose treading has been, not upon that dust they were made to tread, and which nature has subjected to their feet, but upon the prostrate images of their maker ! who have thrown down the tallest inhabitants of the earth, trampled upon creatures whom the Creator crowned with glory and honour, and made the immortal likenesses of Almighty God their ground ! who have either crushed beneath the foot of protracted cruelty, and gradually ground to dust, by subjecting it to a series of corroding cares and miseries, or employed the sword of unrighteous battle, with one rude stroke, and with dreadful repetition, to break into pieces that curious construction, upon which the divine Artist had expended such consummate wisdom and skill !

Seventhly, If it is God that hath made us, we
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may be very certain that he has made us to answer some wise and valuable end. Every artist has some end or other in view in what he produces. The mechanic has some useful design to answer by the machine upon which he bestows his invention, and as soon as he has constructed it, he applies it to the purposes for which he made it. It is God that hath made us; God only wise; that has made nothing in vain; that has crowded happiness into his creation; that has not contented himself with producing any creature merely to contain felicity within himself, but to be contributory, in some way or other, to the good of the creation. He has made no inanimate thing to exhibit detached, unconnected excellence. He has made no living thing solely for the sake of its own single felicity. He has made the sun, not to dazzle the sight with surpassing splendour, not to decorate the sky with useless beams, but to nourish vegetable and animal life. He has made the waters, not to flow with idle majesty along, but to give drink to every beast of the field, and nutriment to every fruit of the earth. He has made plants, not to bloom with unprofitable beauty, but to furnish food to the animal creation. He has made animals, not only to

sport and play, but to afford subsistence to one another. He has formed the inferior animals to serve, or to feed, or to clothe mankind. —And for what end has he made man? To receive the tribute of nature in recumbent state? To sit at his ease upon the summit of this sublunary scene, and accept the ascending incense of all things? To be useless in the midst of surrounding utility, and to slumber, while all things else are full of labour? Surely not. He was not made, any more than others, to live only to himself. He also was made, as well as the other members of it, to minister to the good of the creation; to act the part of a providence and a protector to the creatures that are in his possession; to concur with his fellow-men in improving the state of human life, and promoting the public good of mankind; to be ready to distribute whatever benefits he possesses a power to communicate; to be attentive to the cries, and obedient to the calls, of surrounding necessity, whether the audible ones of animal, or the silent ones of moral, indigence; to consider himself as sent into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and thus, by a course of generous activity, to qualify himself for
other

other spheres of usefulness, in a future state, and to take an immortal part in the execution and development of that all perfect plan, which the great father and friend of all has formed, for the accomplishment of the greatest possible happiness.

We are none of us complete in ourselves. We are parts of a whole ; we are members of a body. God has given strength to the strong, not merely to preserve them from sickness, or to crown them with longevity, but to render them capable of protection and social service. He has given wisdom to the wise, not to glimmer in their own breast, like the lamps that illuminate the chambers of the grave, with a fullen, unsocial, sepulchral splendour ; but to throw out illumination upon society, and give light to all that are in the world.

Let none of us dare to defeat the generous ends of our Creator, by suffering our faculties to slumber ; rejecting the part he has put into our hand ; retiring from the post in which he has placed us ; sinking into insignificance, and permitting ourselves to become cyphers and shadows in the creation of God. Let us disdain the idea of lying motionless, the withered
members

members of the social frame, the shrunk and lifeless limbs of society. Let him, if such an one be sitting here to night, who has thus allowed himself hitherto to stand idle, immediately awake from the palsy of his powers, put himself in motion, and enter upon the performance of his proper office.

To conclude. If it is God that hath made us, and not we ourselves, we may be certain, that he will make an equitable allowance for those infirmities, which are inseparable from our nature, when he shall convene mankind before his bar, and pronounce the sentence of justice upon the assembled nations of the earth. We may rest assured, that he who hath made us all, and who knoweth the nature he has given us, does not expect from any of us such a perfectly faultless character, such an entire freedom from all flaw and imperfection, such a sleepless vigilance of mind and superiority to all moral surprises, such an unflagging flight and effort of virtuous fortitude, as is utterly out of the reach of the faculties he has bestowed upon us, in the present state of human cultivation. “It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.” “He knoweth, therefore, our frame; he remembereth
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that we are dust." He requires no more tribute from us than he has put it into our hand to pay. He will not imprison poverty for a debt it cannot discharge. He will not lay upon the shoulders of impotence a heavier burden than they can bear. He does not demand angelic virtue at the hand of dust and ashes. He, who has given no wings to the worm, expects it not to soar.

So far, upon this point, we may safely push our inferences from the consideration, that God is our creator. But there are those who would carry them to the most extravagant lengths. There are those who throw out of their hand the reins of self-government; who allow their inclinations an unbridled course; who suffer their passions to rush into all excess of riot; and who say to the monitor of their conduct that would stop them in their mad career,—“Stand off, thou slave of prejudice, thou fool of superstition, it is God that hath made me thus. These passions are natural to me, and therefore the indulgence of them is innocent. To whatever is pleasant to my nature, the author of my nature invites me. The inclinations, with which I comply, it is not in my power to oppose.

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They carry me along with an irresistible force. He that implanted them within me impels me, by means of them, along the path in which they are bearing me. I have no power to stay their course. I have no bridle they will obey."

So might the charioteer, drawn by spirited courfers, toss the reins from his hand, suffer them to carry him whithersoever they would, and then excuse himself for rushing irregularly along, and overturning and trampling upon all that stand in his wild and lawless way, as the excesses of the sensualist strike, in their frantic course, against the laws of social justice (who, notwithstanding the vacant apology with which vulgar judgment would cover his conduct, is the enemy of society, as well as his own), by crying out to him that should call him madman as he passed, "It is no fault of mine: I cannot help the mischief of my wheels: I am run away with: there are no reins in my hand." It is true there are not; but there might be; there are none there, because he has thrown them out of it.

How pitiable a spectacle is a rational creature, thus lost to reason! thus benighted at

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noon-day ! thus bewildered in a plain path ! Let no man deceive himself. In looking at one part of our nature, let us not overlook the other. Let us survey ourselves on all our sides. Let us not forget, that he who gave us appetite and passion, gave us also reason and conscience. He who remembers we are dust, remembers also, that his inspiration hath given us understanding.

The God within us stands up, and says to every man, in every age, what, in the beginning of time, he said to the first ; “ Of all the trees in the garden, thou mayest freely eat ; but thou shalt not eat of that. The fruit that hangs upon it is forbidden thee. It is blooming to thy sight ; it is delicious to thy taste ; but its juices are poisonous ; it is impregnated with death. It will unnerve thy vigour ; it will extinguish thy vivacity ; it will impair thine understanding ; it will shorten thy life ; and thus, at once destroy thine own happiness, and rob society of thy services, by weakening the powers, and deducting from the period, that were put into thine hand, to be employed in the assistance of thy fellow-creatures. That such are its fatal effects, is familiar to thine observation.

But

But too many experiments have been made upon it by thine infatuated race. If thou thyself have tasted it, thine own experience tells thee, it were madness to taste it again : it is placed within thy reach, it is painted to thine eye, that by triumphing over the temptation to pluck it, thy virtue might be at once illustrated, and invigorated. Forbear to put forth thine hand. Dare not to touch the smiling death. Turn away thine eye from the pleasing perdition. Resist, and rise to heaven. Overcome, and live for ever." Amen.

On the comparative Sum of Happiness and Misery in human Life.

SERMON III.

He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

LAMEN. iii. 33.

IN the existence of a being, whose benevolence is without blemish, and without bound, it is, in the highest degree, desirable to be able to believe with confidence. Separate from all selfish considerations of personal security and welfare, under the wing of omnipotent benignity; considered as an object of disinterested contemplation, it is the most entertaining and animating image that can meet the eye of reason. It is delightful to reflect, that there lives a being, in whom all that excellence, which exists in our conception, really

really resides: that we need not apply to poetry for the personification of theoretic and perfect goodness: that we have an opportunity of tasting, as often soever as we will, in the highest possible degree, the pleasure which accompanies the exercise of esteem. It is recreating, when the eye is weary of looking upon the unseemly and offensive forms of cruelty and injustice, which human conduct is continually presenting to it, to take it off from the painful spectacle, and fix it upon an object infinitely adapted to regale and to refresh it.

And, admitting to be true, what the unbeliever in such a being maintains, that a vigorous mind requires not to be prompted to the practice of rectitude by the promise of reward; that the intrinsic beauty of virtue stands in need of no auxiliary allurement to attract a strong understanding to it; that a wise man will not pause a moment to enquire what is its dower, in making his choice of that, unto which “all the things that may be desired are not to be compared:” allowing the truth of this, yet who will deny, that there is something infinitely more calculated to inspire and to spur the generous ardor of a
lover

lover of virtue for its own sake, in the *living* figure of moral Perfection, smiling visible in the benignant and amiable aspect of creation; moving majestic in the harmonious courses of nature; displaying the divinity of her form in the awful gracefulness of her steps; and drawn out into a full exhibition by the immensity of her sphere; who will deny, that there is infinitely more of moral inspiration in this animating spectacle, than can be found by him, who is unable to perceive, in the appearances and operations of things around him, this perfect Rectitude realized and breathing before him, in the fairest *dead* idea which his understanding can delineate; in the most beautiful *inanimate* model which his speculation can carve?

The afflictions of human life have formed a cloud, which has intervened between the goodness of God, and the eye of man; and thrown a shade over the contemplations of Piety. They make, no doubt, a part of the experience of almost every individual, of the observation of every eye, and of the intelligence of every day. Some of them, it must also be acknowledged, are of a peculiarly mournful and tragical nature; such as wring the soul of

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pity;

pity ; such as cause the tongue that tells them to falter, and the ears of all that hear them to tingle.

Reason, however, informs the thoughtful, and revelation assures the believing, that the Dispenser of adversity is the author only of good. The volumes both of Nature and Scripture contain the most animating testimonies to the infinite benevolence of him, of whose appointment, and not of the dust, out of whose wisdom, and not of the ground, the afflictions come forth, and the troubles spring, unto which man is born.

Our text informs us, that “ he doth not afflict willingly.” He takes no pleasure in the sufferings of man. He doth not inflict sorrow for its own sake. He appoints the afflictions of life as the means of producing, not only an overbalance of good in the end, but such a sum of it, as could not have been obtained by any other means. They are essential parts of a system, the object of which is the greatest possible quantity of happiness. They are inseparable from a plan, which is not only good upon the whole, but the best that could be. There is, therefore, a necessity for them, in the nature of things, in order to arrive at
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this end. To this necessity the most mighty, and the most merciful, submit. "He doth not afflict willingly." He doth not, in any one instance, wantonly impose pain; or, in any one case, inflict a greater portion of it than the occasion calls for. Not a single needless sigh ascends from the human bosom. Not one unnecessary tear flows down the face of man.

Some account, though probably not the whole, and all our observations concur with their account, the sacred writings have given us, of the uses of adversity: and what they have said upon the subject is at least sufficient to set the heart at ease from all disquieting doubts of the infinite purity of the divine intentions, in the darkest dispensations of providence. They have revealed to us that state of recompense, with the glory of which the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared; and for which, they represent these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, as designed to educate us.

To educate us for it, how well they are adapted, will be denied by no one, who has contemplated the characters of mankind in connexion with their histories. This bene-

ficial effect of affliction, almost every man has, either felt in himself, or witnessed in others. Upon this point, the language of all moral writers has echoed the sacred pages; and the school of adversity is a popular and proverbial picture; a metaphor in every mouth, and much older than any of us.

Still, however, righteous retribution is a remote object, and moral discipline is an abstruse idea. A future state stands before the mind, whose faith describes it, a faint and obscure figure; like the blue hills that bound the landscape, that fade into sky, and melt into air. It requires reflection to recognise, in that which distance has so much diminished, and so much dimmed, an object which really possesses large dimensions, and vivid dyes. The afflictions of mankind, on the contrary, are close to the eye, and forcibly strike it with all the strength of their colours, and all the extent of their size. And, that Adversity is the nurse of Virtue, though an article of moral science, and though a truth to which popular assent is given, may not be always sufficiently present to the mind of those, by whom, in the moment of meditation, it is clearly seen; or seen, with sufficient clearness, by all who
assent

assent to it. That affliction is friendly to the human character, is often, from custom, confessed mechanically, and with vacancy of conviction; is frequently rather said, than seen; is more a saying, than a sentiment. To perceive the pernicious operations of uninterrupted ease, and unruffled repose, upon the human mind, and the several ways in which adversity remedies the vice, and promotes the virtue, of man, calls for some exercise of consideration: and to collect them before the mind, upon every appearance of affliction before the eye, so as to have a vivid and clear view of its moral benignity, requires some effort of memory.

On the other hand, the distresses which demand our attention are distinctly seen, the moment they are presented to us. Swift and instantaneous is the conviction, that our fellow-creatures suffer:—with slow and tardy step, arrives the reason why. We are quick to feel; we are quick to see; but slow to understand. In such circumstances, it may sometimes happen, more especially when any degree of animal melancholy depresses the intellectual faculty, that, when scenes of distress occur to our view, the feelings of sympathy

may preoccupy the seat of judgment, and pronounce upon the ways of providence, before the understanding is ready; so as to occasion intermissions of faith, and fits of infidelity, in the believing breast, and cause the feet of the upright reason to slide.

We shall, then, take an important step towards preserving ourselves from religious inquietude, from this quarter, if we take care, that we do not represent to ourselves the quantity of unhappiness, which there is in the world, to be greater than it really is. It will be so much the easier for us to acquire, and to maintain, in our minds, a firm belief in the immaculate administration of the almighty Governor of the world, if we do not suffer those shades of adversity, which seem, to the superficial and the first glance at the piece, to be blots upon it, to look bigger, or blacker to our eye, than they actually are. I shall not, therefore, think my time thrown away, if I can suggest to you a few considerations, that may serve to clear the picture of human life of any part of that shade, which does not belong to it: not only because, by such a dispersion, I shall throw additional sunshine over the bosom of Piety, but likewise over that of

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Benevolence ; and diminish the tears of Compassion, as well as the doubts of Faith. To those who are disposed to penetrate as far as reason is able to carry them, in the inquiry concerning the divine views in the afflictions of men, and in the vindication of the ways of God towards them, this can be no improper preface. I would walk over this threshold, before I went a step farther into the subject.

In estimating the measure of misery which the world contains, we may admit mistake both concerning the sum of that CIRCUMSTANCE which inspires it, and the degree in which the circumstance is accompanied by the SENSE of it.

We are liable to imagine, that there are more painful SITUATIONS in human life than there are, from a variety of causes. We are so formed (and in this part, as in every other of the human fabric, the wisdom of the hand that constructed us is conspicuous), as to be much more deeply impressed by scenes of distress, than by scenes of contentment and happiness. Those that rejoice want nothing of us but to rejoice along with them ; those that weep, beside our tears, want often a hand to wipe away theirs. Nor is congratulation

lation so necessary to the happy, as condolence to the distressed, whose cause we cannot remove. For this reason our Creator has ordained, that sympathy with sorrow should be a more powerful feeling than sympathy with joy. In consequence of this, in contemplating human life, the afflictions which are scattered over it are the appearances that strike us most. These are the strong parts of the picture, the figures that project from the piece; that catch, and occupy the eye: and, without attending to the forms of felicity, which are far more numerous, but which make more faint impressions upon us, we take the character of the scene from those parts of it that are most prominent to the eye.

Writers of plaintive romance have co-operated with this tendency of the misery of human life to press forward to the attention, and leave the happiness of it in the back ground, by perpetually bringing the former before the eye of their readers, and preferring it as a subject of representation. Aware that distress is a more striking and interesting object to the human mind than felicity, they have presented a multitude of sad and tragical scenes to the imagination; the collective impression

pression of which, assisted by a supposition, perhaps, that the fiction has its foundation in fact, and took its hint from truth, melts and blends itself, in a mind possessed of a lively fancy, with the image of actual life: what has been strongly imagined mixes itself, in the memory, with what has been really seen or heard: and thus the world of shadows and phantoms stands before the eyes of those, who are in habits of perusing the pages which paint fictitious affliction; as connected with the region of reality, and constituting a part of the prospect of nature. Poets also, and sentimental writers, influenced, in the same manner, by the persuasion, that gloom is more allied to eloquence than gaiety; and, that to complain is more moving than to rejoice; in the reflections upon human life which have fallen from their pens, have endeavoured to excite that sigh of melancholy which soothes the sensibility of pensive spirits. Many religious persons have likewise contributed to impress those minds, that have been subject to the influence of their sentiments, with dismal ideas of human life; misled by an imagination, that frequent expressions of dissatisfaction with sublunary scenes are the mark of a pious spirit; and

and that continual complaint of the imperfection of happiness below, is the best proof we can furnish that the affections are fixed upon things above.

All these causes have operated to magnify the figure of human afflictions; to lead the imagination to dwell and rest upon the pains of life, and to take off the attention from its pleasures. These causes of misconception upon this subject call aloud for counteraction. While, therefore, these are conspiring to confine your eye to the dark parts of human life, to thrust its afflictions before you, and to keep back its brighter scenes; its brighter scenes let me be permitted to put forward; to push into your view that human happiness, which is so apt to retire from your attention; and to entreat you to take notice of, what perhaps you may not have sufficiently reflected upon, or be enough in the habit of recollecting; what is yet manifest, at the door of the inquiry into the comparative good and evil of human life; that, whatever be the sum of misery in the world, there is a much larger sum of happiness.

The weather is sometimes foul; but it is oftener fair. Storms and hurricanes are frequent;

quent ; but calms are more common. There is some sickness ; but there is more health. There is some pain ; but there is more ease. There is some mourning ; but there is more joy. There is complexional depression that asks, “ wherefore is light given to him that is in misery ? ” but it bears no proportion to the native cheerfulness, which is open to the agreeable impressions of surrounding nature. Multitudes have been crushed under the foot of Cruelty ; but greater multitudes have remained unmolested by the oppressor. Many have perished with hunger and nakedness ; but more have been supplied with food and raiment. Some have counted the days of captivity ; but the majority were never in prison. Numbers have lost their reason ; but larger numbers have retained it. The list is long of the forsaken, and the forlorn ; but still longer is the catalogue of those, that have never failed, in some one or other, to find a friend. Sometimes, we are told of towns, agitated to pieces by the terrible quaking of the ground ; but more frequently, of cities that know no enemy but Time. Sometimes, we hear of ships that are destroyed by the storm ; but more commonly of vessels that
arrive

arrive safely in port. We have read, and read with horror, of failing harvests ; our hair has stood up, our pulses have stopped, over the horrible picture of famine ! the craving of factitious Delicacy for food, offensive to plain-fed Nature ! the frightful conflict between the force of affection, and the phrensy of want ! between the agonies of hunger, and of the heart !——but, fruitful seasons, and shouting reapers, and “ hearts filled with food and gladness,” are the cheerful forms, with which mankind have been familiar. We have trembled to contemplate the terrible figure of Pestilence, “ walking in darkness ;” travelling through the air in awful invisibility ; striking with an unseen hand, and strewing the street with dead : but the accounts, that have most occupied our attention, have been of benignant constitutions in nature ; of qualities in things that are calculated to recall departed health, and heal the diseases of man ; of restorative temperatures of air ; of kindly and genial climes ; of medicinal herbs, and of physical fountains. A melancholy proportion of mankind have perished by the sword ; or taken from its edge the worse than mortal wound ; or pined in the sickness attendant on its way ;

or deplored the plunder and desolation it has spread over their plains; or, at a distance from the theatre of its ravages, been pierced through, by its stroke, with sorrows far sharper than its point:—but the greater part of mankind have passed their days in the seat of peace; sat under their roofs in serenity and security; reaped their fields without any fear of the soldier's sickle or his flame; exercised their affections in social unions, that have felt no cut but from Nature's hand; and resigned their breath at last in the quiet and domestic bed.

If we thus survey the checkered face of human life *at large*, we shall find its bright spaces more numerous than its shadows. Congratulation is more exercised than pity. The countenances that have sorrow upon them, are fewer than the faces which do not want to be wiped. And if the *whole* histories of *individuals* whom we see in circumstances of distress were to be laid before us, perhaps, we should find few of them, in which there was not a greater number of pleasant than painful passages: in which there was not, upon the whole, more cheerfulness than depression; more tranquillity than trouble; more corporal ease than sufferance. Whatever pain, what-
ever

ever care may lie in wait for the man,—childhood is careless and sportive; “a stranger yet to pain.” Whatever clouds remain for the brow of manhood, the forehead of youth is usually clear and smooth. The first years of almost every life, how dark and stormy soever it afterwards becomes, are all sunshine and serenity. Then, at least, how many soever the sicknesses, the sorrows, and the solitudes, the “months of vanity,” and the “wearisome nights,” that await maturer years,—then, at least, every pulse is health; every pillow is peace; every feeling, rapture; every object, novelty; every prospect, hope!

Now, although my present business is not to vindicate the goodness of providence, but merely to prevent from looking to our eye larger and darker than it really is, to reduce to its true size, and dilute to its true shade, that apparent blot upon it, which remains afterwards to be proved to be *no more* than the appearance of a stain; yet, thus much, this is the place to say; That, that happiness, which manifestly prevails in the present system, is such an indication of the character of the author of it, as will not allow us to ascribe the mixture of misery, we observe in it, to any
mixture

mixture of malevolence in him. He, who so often blesses, cannot *once* “willingly afflict.” For his severity, whose tender mercies are so numerous as we see them to be, there must be some satisfactory reason, whether we see it or not. A character composed of striking kindness, and wanton cruelty, is too inconsistent to be credible.

If we only adopt the same mode of reasoning, in judging of the divine character, which we are all of us accustomed to make use of, in deciding upon those of men, it will be impossible for us to suspect him of *any malice*, who has discovered *so much mercy*. When we hear a fellow-creature accused of having committed an action, of a complexion directly opposite to the strongest colours of his character; when it is reported to us, that any one, in whom we have seen the marks of a singular prudence, has acted, upon any occasion, with egregious indiscretion; or, that any one, in whom we have remarked repeated instances of an excessive caution and timidity, has taken an extremely rash and head-strong step; or, that a person, who has discovered, upon a variety of occasions, an uncommon bravery, has acted a peculiarly cowardly and dastardly

daftardly part; or, that a man, of whose mildness and gentleness of manners, or of whose generosity and munificence, in circumstances that shut out every doubt of its sincerity, we have witnessed numerous and striking displays, has conducted himself, in any case, with an iron severity, or shewn a sordid illiberality;—we immediately, either disbelieve the fact, or conclude that there are some circumstances in the case, concealed from us, which make that conduct to be of a piece with the rest of the character in question, which appears to be so directly contrary to it. We are loth to admit, that any one can have departed so widely from himself, as to have contradicted the most striking and prominent qualities of his nature. We say, “it is not like the man; let him tell his own story; judge no man before he be heard.” Now, let the same rule of judging be applied to the conduct of providence; let the same prevalence of good obtain the same credit and trust, under appearances of evil, which we are in habits of granting to human characters; and we shall be in little danger of suspecting the supreme benignity of any deviations from the path of goodness.

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Every thing in nature has a settled character; has its fixed properties, and is consistent with itself. “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place both sweet water and bitter?” Is there an herb to be found, that is, at once, healing, and poisonous? Is there an animal, that is, at the same time, innocent, and noxious? Even man, capricious whom you call, inconstant, inconsistent man, never discovers that inconsistency, which he, who accuses him of any cruelty, ascribes to God. All the contradictions that appear in the conduct of man are reconcileable to unity of character; are to be accounted for, in perfect harmony with it, by variations of situation and circumstance, which occasion a change in his conduct, while his character remains the same. There may be discord between his words and his actions; but there is no such thing as duplicity of character; that is one. His actions may disagree with one another, but they all accord with some single principle that predominates in him; they all consist with one settled temperament of mind. The mutability of his animal system, or of his external situation, may produce occasional starts and sallies from opposite sides of his prevailing

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temper.

temper. Soothed by the sensation of peculiar health, or pleased with the posture of his affairs, his family may find him more than usually kind, and his petitioner more than commonly complying : irritated by corporeal pain, or crossed by vexatious accidents, he may wound the ear of domestic Affection, and send the hand of Supplication empty away. Excited by services received, he may serve one with unwearied zeal ; exasperated by injuries, he may pursue another with unrelenting rage. The partialities arising out of intimacy, or blood, or party, may make him kind to this man ; the antipathies produced by opposite opinion, by envy, or by fear, may render him cruel to that. He may act the part of an affectionate father to some, and of a parental oppressor to other, of his children, accordingly as they are possessed, or destitute, of engaging gifts of nature. In one situation, he may perform an office of charity, in compliance with the call of decency, and in respect to the eyes that are upon him ; in one more secret, he may insult the suppliant, and oppress the poor. He may obey the dictate of honest humanity, when the service it enjoins is easy, when the sacrifice it exacts is small ;

small; and consent to act in the most direct and barbarous opposition to its impulse, when the temptation to violate it is powerful. These contrarieties of conduct may meet in one constitution of mind. These are branches that may shoot from one root. But, before we can charge even man with that self-contradiction, which he, who arraigns his benevolence, imputes to the Being, who himself possesses infinite happiness, and who has produced the sum of it we see; who has done so much good, to which his inducement must have been the most disinterested and ardent goodness; and who is immutably secure from all motive to do any evil; before we can find, even in unsteady and changeful man, any example of such incongruity, we must see him, in the same moment of private satisfaction and felicity, blending, in his speech, blandishment and asperity of expression: We must see him, discovering to the same man, while retaining the same sentiment of his character, now, all the enthusiasm of friendship, and, now, all the heat of malevolence: We must see a parent uniting, in his behaviour to the same child, at the same moment, fond caresses, and furious blows: We must see a potentate taking a generous and patriot delight,

in the smiles and the plenty of half his subjects, and tasting a malignant pleasure, in the burthens, and groans of the other half. Such a volatility and flightiness of temper, as this mixture of properties would imply, has never been known in the annals of human caprice.

He, then, who has sent from him that happiness, which is evidently predominant in the present system, and which can possibly be ascribed to no other source than the purest generosity, cannot be capable of willingly afflicting the children of men. Whenever he does afflict, it must be with an ultimate view to blefs.

From this truth, which meets the first glance at the checkered picture of human life, that its lights are more numerous than its shades, let us pass to a few considerations, which will cause its shades themselves to lose much, perhaps, of the gloom, which at first sight they may seem to wear. We are liable to imagine the misery of human life to be more than it is, from not being aware of the degree of INSENSIBILITY to circumstances, painful in themselves, which there often exists in persons, whom we perceive in such situations; and whom we contemplate with a degree

gree of pity for which their actual sensations do not call.

Of comparative insensibility to circumstances that excite our unmoderated pity, one cause is *time*. It is a law of our nature, that familiarity with what at first was most afflicting, wears away the sense of it. Hence, we have often to look upon the unfortunate situation, when the sensibility of it is in a considerable degree departed. The figure of adversity still stands before us, but it is a dark apparition only; the substance is not there.

In consequence of a total inattention to the tendency of intimacy with situations from which a stranger to them recoils, to render them, not only supportable, but even consistent with happiness, pity has been sometimes given even to happy men, considered merely as animal creatures; and some, that were real objects of compassion, have been regarded with more than their case has required. He whose life is made up of repose and recumbence, and who, in consequence of the excessive delicacy he has derived from the perfect softness of a situation, that is all over velvet, looks out from his seat of ease, with an eye of compassion, upon them who have been

condemned from their birth to laborious employment, confined to the rough accommodations of life, and exposed to the keen severities of nature ; bestows his pity upon happiness superior to his own ; upon him who finds no weight in his burthen, perceives no coarseness in his food, complains of no hardness in his couch, and feels no bleakness in the blast. If he, who experiences a sudden reduction from opulence to comparative poverty, is, for a moment, to be numbered with the miserable, it is only for a moment, that he belongs to the class. Although, upon first finding himself in the rank to which he has not been habituated, he may refuse to be comforted, indulge the ravings of despair, and snatch the instrument of death ; if he have patience to survive the first shock of the change, the exotic spirit becomes, in a little time, naturalized to the new situation ; and is as happy in it as the natives of the condition to which it is sunk. He, who does not consider this lenient efficacy of time, will regard the fallen trafficker, with a pity that continues to bleed over him, long after the fracture, which his peace sustained from the fall, has been healed.

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But time not only possesses a power of reconciling the mind to situations, that are uneasy only to those, who have long lien in the lap of luxury ; it is also capable of wearing away the asperities, and gradually blunting the edges, of seats that are painful to all, and that extort pity even from the stern philosopher, who has no tear for the loser of superfluous possessions ; for the exile from a mansion, for whom a roof is ready, which, though not so lofty as that he has left, is as capable of excluding the inclemency of nature ; and for whom a table remains, which, though no delicacies load it, is covered with all that health requires. Habitue has a power, not only of softening the hardest pillow ; lifting the lowliest cot ; refining the coarsest bread ; converting inconvenience to ease ; and making the weather's inclemencies mild ; it is able to dull the point of circumstances that pierce to the soul of happiness.

We hear of one, who is condemned to count, not only the days and months, but years, of personal confinement, either by the infirmity of his own frame, or by the cruelty of his fellow-creature. He who walks whithersoever he would, looks upon him, who

has lost this invaluable liberty, as upon a wretch, by whom it is wonderful that life can be borne ; to whom it is strange that light should have been given. In the bosom of such a one, he imagines, there must reign a gloom, into which not so much as a glimmer of comfort can ever come. Nature holds out variety of entertainment to the senses of man—but he is forbidden to range her scenes ; to admire her beauties ; to hear her songs ; or inhale her fragrance. Mankind meet together, in private circles ; in public assemblies ;—but he cannot join their select companies, or make one in the concourse that is called by harmless pleasure, or interesting business, or eager curiosity. Yet, even upon darkness like this Time lets in ray after ray, and gradually consoles the captive. When Nature has lost the lively remembrance of her gayer enjoyments, and sprightlier pleasures, more flat and insipid amusements acquire a power of cheering the heart. As the brilliant forms of happiness, which once it knew, fade to a fainter, and fainter hue, in the eye of Memory ; as they retire to a greater and a greater distance in the picture of the past ; objects of duller colours, that enliven the darkness of the present hour,

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and that derive a double light from the contrast of the surrounding shade, become capable of communicating a calm and mild delight. To the prisoner of protracted weakness, or of unrelenting injustice, the visit of a friend is a festival ! the acquisition of an entertaining page is a prosperous event ! And he, whom despotic Power had forbidden, for many a lonely year, to see the face, or hear the sound, of Friendship, has learned, at length, to find fellowship in the society, and amusement in the motions, of the minutest and meanest animal.

We are told of an unhappy creature who, during long periods of time, is not only deprived of the pleasures of corporeal activity, but who is also a stranger to ease ; who is condemned to pain, as well as to solitude. He, whose sensations are all gay and pleasurable ; whose heart, in the fulness of health, laughs and sings along with surrounding nature ; and whose leaping pulses have never known what it is to languish ; regards such a situation with an eye, that cannot endure to rest, so much as a moment, upon it ; and that represents it as utterly insupportable. Yet he, who has long been in it, is not without his solace. Time has lulled his sense of his
pain,

pain, though it has not been able to lessen its degree, so as to have made patience under it a much easier task, than at first it was to him, than it would be now to you. While the rigour of its severity to his body remains unsoftened and the same, it has so far relented, as to have relaxed its hold upon his mind; as to admit of occasional releases of his attention from it, and of compliances with the call of objects that yield him pleasure.

We observe pass along the street, a poor, hoary, bending, dependent upon casual charity for the bread of the day: whose want of sight, and whose want of friends, is imperfectly supplied by the patient fidelity of a domestic animal, which serves, at once, for his companion, and his guide. “Poor wretch!” —is the immediate and involuntary exclamation of all the humane, that meet him in his melancholy walk. As he passes by us, all the pity we possess awakes within us. We think of his darkness with horror!——

“Seasons return; but not to him returns
Day, or the sweet approach of ev’n or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer’s rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine:
But cloud instead, and ever during dark
Surrounds him!”

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The reflection is a natural one for us to make. He once made it himself: but he makes it now no more. Midnight is become familiar to him. He has forgotten, that “the light is sweet, and that it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun.” As he pursues his way through the midst of his fellow men, we take notice of the reception he meets with from them. He asks an alms;—the refusals are frequent;—that is little: Perhaps, from scoffs, and from spurns, his wretchedness cannot sometimes save him: Perhaps, from violence and severity, his grey hairs cannot always protect him. *Your* pride feels for the honour of an insulted man: your compassion cannot contain the tear which his helplessness extorts: but he has long since let fall his last over human unkindness: the fire which indignity once kindled there has long ago ceased to redden his face: and the humane spectator of the treatment he receives, feels it more than he.

Various are the situations in human life which, to you who are surrounded with brighter circumstances, and which, to them who enter into them for the first time, wear even a midnight gloom; but which, to those
who

who have continued in them for some time, have assumed a more lightsome aspect; and are become the seats of sober, though not of animated happiness. To him, who, from a funny situation, sends his eye through the openings into a thick wood, the sylvan cavities seem of a raven dye, and appear totally to exclude the day; amidst the meridian blaze, they resemble so many caves of darkness: and he that, suddenly, from the glare of noon, passes into a deep umbrage, feels a perfect night fall upon his path: but, in a few moments, the scene clears up; his eye recovers from the shock of the change; he finds he has not entirely lost the day; that he has only exchanged its gayer, and gaudier appearances, for a more solemn light, and a graver verdure. In the same manner, the heart, that is suddenly removed from the luminous, to the gloomy situations in human life, is at first oppressed by the gloom, and perceives nothing but darkness; but after a time, the gloom grows less; the place looks lighter; and the night has brightened by degrees into moderated and dusky day.

Another comforter of a large proportion of mankind, under the pressure of painful accidents,

dents, not always perhaps sufficiently noticed by us, is that perpetual *employment* which is necessary to their subsistence ; and of the consolatory efficacy of which the inactive have no conception. He who has leisure to lament his misfortunes, who has nothing to do but to recollect what he has lost, is much mistaken if he imagine, that the busy sufferer of the same losses, is a sufferer in the same degree. Occupation dries the eye with a hasty hand, by turning it away from the object that would draw its tears ; by denying it time to drop them. The soldier, that sees his dearest friend fall in the battle, finds, in the business of the field, an irresistible diversion from the sorrow, into which, in an inactive moment, he would have melted. He must reserve his tear for the hour of repose. His eye cannot fill, until his arm shall rest. Till then, as the soldier's dust must wait for a grave, his shade must wait its tributary grief. And those lives which consist of a continual current of occupations, forcibly carry, along with their stream, the attention that would stop to mourn over any of those misfortunes which, in more still and stagnant situations, excite the most lively, and lasting sorrow. Afflictions
even

even of a tragical form, which would plunge those, who perpetually repose upon the couch of ease, into a distress that might terminate in madness, or settle into a melancholy that would unfit them for the discharge of their duties; and which, whenever they hear of their occurring to the occupied classes of society, they commiserate with all the agony of pity, make, nevertheless, but very fugitive and fleeting impressions upon such persons. They are shocked by the circumstance; for a moment they are miserable; but business calls; they must obey; they have no time to droop; and have recovered their peace, before their more indolent neighbours have ceased to recollect the circumstance with a sigh, and repeat the tale in expectation of a tear.

The support and solace that are frequently derived, under the sufferings of life, from *Social Connexions*, do not always stand forward to our view, when those sufferings are presented to our eyes. How sweet to the afflicted is the silent tear, are the soothing tones of Sympathy, none but they that have suffered, and been thus consoled, can say. And thus consoled, by some one or other, the majority of mourners have been. Where is the
man

man that has wept, and found no one to weep with him? These social consolations are of a secret, and silent nature: they make no noise, like the misfortunes which they remedy: they appear not, along with them, in the front and surface of the situation to which we look: they lie concealed in its recesses, and retire from our view. We hear of sickness, but we see not into the room that is the seat of it; we perceive not the affection that is attending there; whose tender office it is to enliven its languor, and smooth its bed; to “explore the thought, and explain the asking eye.” We are informed of shipwrecked fortunes; the crash resounds, and reaches every ear: but we follow not the ruined man in his retirements from the world; we trace not his silent retreat to the hearts that stand open to receive him; our eyes go not after him in his secret entrance into that temple of Friendship, which is his sanctuary from the pursuit of Sorrow. We behold the virtuous victim of Calumny, robbed of his good name, injured, perhaps, if his life be public, in the public estimation; we regard him, if our judgment have escaped the general delusion, and go not with the voice of the multitude, with all the

depression of pity, as an outcast from human love; without thinking of the circle of those, whose good opinion of him is protected by intimate knowledge of his merit; that circle of an affectionate few, to which he is able to retire from the frown of the many; within which he sits in peace, and, cheered by its genial warmth, listens to the tempest of evil tongues without it, with all the serenity of one, around whose house the wind howls, and the rain drives, without being able to penetrate to his pillow, or to his hearth.

A frequent cause of comparative insensibility to painful circumstances, for want of being acquainted with which, in the cases in which it exists, we bestow upon them a degree of pity for which they do not call, is *natural constitution*. Misfortunes, of the same solidity, do not fall with equal weight upon all heads. They do not produce the impressions upon some of those, whom we contemplate and pity under them, which they would make upon us. Some persons are possessed of a complexional philosophy, an animal, and native fortitude, proceeding from the strength of their nerves, and the sprightliness of their spirits, which enables them to endure,
with

with scarcely a sigh, what would reduce others to despair. By unfortunate turns in traffick, the merchant who was a prince, shall be hurled, in a moment, from the heights of opulence, and precipitated from the very pinnacle of prosperity to the depths of poverty. Another would feel his soul shattered and shivered to pieces by so violent a fall. Your imagination paints him all bruised, and broken in spirit, unable to lift his head, or support the load of life: but his heart springs up again unhurt from the ground, and returns to its pursuits with an undaunted industry, and an undiminished ardour of enterprise. By some merciless creditor, one, who is not able to pay him a farthing, is thrown into prison, until he pay the uttermost. Many would enter it with the despondency that rejects all consolation: but he beholds the door of it shut upon him with little diminution of his vivacity. Valuable friends expire; beloved kindred close their eyes for ever; promising children are put into the grave: you would go to it in agonies; for many days, and many nights, tears would be your melancholy meat: but there are those, who, though kind relatives, and faithful

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friends,

friends, deficient in none of the relative duties; yet, from that spring within them, which cannot lie long under the pressure of any thing, but elastically lifts itself up, and tosses the load away, will endure such losses as these, as well as all others, with little dejection.

This constitutional capacity of bearing themselves above the waves of misfortune, Nature has communicated to different men, in different degrees. Upon being plunged into that sea of trouble, into which when some are precipitated, they continue a considerable time under it, others emerge in a moment. One buoyant passion, however, which powerfully operates, to prevent the waters from overwhelming him, and the stream from going over his soul, belongs to every human creature. While *some*, in the very moment of deprivation, are peculiarly susceptible of agreeable and consolatory impressions from *present* objects that still remain, *all* are able to find comfort in the prospect of *futurity*. “Hope springs eternal in the human breast.” Man, when most bereaved by adversity, is seldom deprived of hope. Whatever possessions fly from his hand, whatever friends

friends desert his side, hope still stays behind; still sticks to his heart; his ever cleaving good; not to be divided from him but by the violence that splits his reason, and separates him from himself; his ever faithful friend, that “never leaves him, nor forsakes him;” the brother of all his adversity; the star of all his nights; the cordial of all his sickness; the casket of all his poverty; the angel of his prison, before whose luminous form he feels in fancy his fetters falling off!——In vain adversity throws her weights upon the springy passion. They cannot oppress it for more than a moment; in a moment it is up again. In spite of protracted delay, in spite of repeated disappointment, it continues to smile; it promises on; and persists to paint futurity fair. He whose days have long been dark, looks forward still to brighter. The prisoner who has numbered many days, and many nights, of captivity, sometimes suspends his sighing, and says to himself, “I may one day yet be free.” The sick man, who for many a year has sought for health in vain, sets out for some new spring, at which as yet he has not drunk; or some new air, the healing breath of which he has not yet inhaled; in the fond hope,

that there the fugitive may at length be found.

To these causes, which lessen the pressure of adversity upon the heart of man, may be added eminently *virtuous character*, accompanied with *confirmed faith* in the wisdom which governs the world. The afflictions which befall the amiable and excellent, are the seeming stains upon the conduct of providence, which appear the darkest to our eyes, prior to our examination into the good ends that may be answered by them. Before, however, we enter upon that inquiry, it will be our wisdom to stop one moment to reflect, that those, who least deserve to suffer, do actually suffer less than others, from the same arrows of adversity, upon a supposition of the same natural sensibility in the point at which their aim is taken. He who believes all that the Gospel declares, and who feels all that it inspires; who, in every incident that occurs, beholds a step in the harmonious and majestic march of all things to the greatest possible good; and who possesses the public spirit which can greatly console itself, under private sufferings, by the contemplation of general welfare; is not to be overcome by the stroke
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of calamity, like one who is a stranger to this expectation, and to this spirit. He that is most disposed to “rejoice with them that do rejoice,” and “to weep with them that weep,” is best able to say, with honest generosity, to the mourners of his own misfortunes, what he that wept over Jerusalem addressed to her daughters, as they wept over him,—“weep not for me.”

It is time I had done. I have been longer than I intended; but I shall not think I have lost my time, if, by these considerations, I shall have brightened a little the appearance of human life to your eye; and thinned, in any degree, that cloud of human miseries, which is apt to look thicker than it is, and which is apt to obscure and overcast our view of the divine benevolence. Let us carry these considerations in our minds. While we explore with reverence the ends of providence in the afflictions of men, let us, as much as possible, facilitate the task, and lessen the effort, of faith in its infinite goodness, by habitually reflecting, that the sum of their affliction is less than at first sight it seems, and that it is less than the sum of their happiness. Amen.

The Consolations attendant on the Conclusion of a virtuous Life.

SERMON IV.

*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright :
for the end of that man is peace.*

PSALM xxxvii. 37.

“**P**EACE, oh Virtue! peace is all thine own”—So sings one of your poets, whose boast it is, that his pen was not long without a serious object, but was soon directed to moral truth; so say the philosophers of all nations, and ages; so says the book of God; and so his servants, in all situations, have found it.

Wicked men are not without their pleasures. The worst of men are not without their transports. But that still, and steady enjoyment, to which we give the name of

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peace;

peace; that pleasure which is a stranger to tumult and to interruption; which is varied only by placid raptures, and by gentle sorrows; that reign of joy, that establishment of bliss, that rest and repose of it in the bosom, which nothing disturbs; that uniform flow of cheerfulness and satisfaction, which the author of the proverbs calls “a perpetual feast;” in a word, that never stopping stream of calm and quiet joys, which consists of a smooth succession of sweet reflections to sweet sensations, and soothing prospects to soothing recollections,

“Which runs, and as it runs, for ever shall run on,”

is the portion only of minds, whose passions are well governed, whose powers are usefully employed, and whose trust in infinite wisdom and goodness is steadfastly fixed. The season of sensuality, the moment of triumph, the mood of mirth, return to the slave of sense, and to the votary of the world: they that drink at other springs than those from which uprightness draws felicity, receive from them shoots and sallies of supply: but piety and virtue are the only fountain that sends forth incessant waters; the only well which is perpetually

petually springing up; and which he that carries within him can never thirst. The intrusions of care, the insurrections of passion, the reproaches of conscience, the fears of futurity, the deprivation of objects and absence of occasions, interrupt the current of all enjoyment but that which flows from this source.

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright.” Behold him in each situation that deprives others of all the happiness they have, and take notice of his peace. Enter his door in the day of his adversity; in the day of his deep affliction; when the hand of God has been put forth, and touched him in the part, where he least could endure to be wounded. You expected to hear the groan of despair: you came prepared with arguments to combat a grief, that should wildly laugh at your consolation: you came to watch over a desperation dangerous to his reason, and to prevent him from putting a violent termination to his days. With such expectations you enter his house; but, before you leave it, your pity changes to respect, and admiration. You behold a weeping, but you see a patient and placid figure, silently looking up to heaven,
and

and smiling through the tears of nature, upon the hand which, he believes, will one day wipe them for ever away from the face of innocence and virtue. “Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darknes;” while the wicked, when their light is put out, are left in total shade. A night, in which the moon is overcast, differs not more from a lowering day, than the adversity of a vitious, from that of a virtuous man. Black, and dismal are the intervals, in which the beam of prosperity is intercepted from them, who are strangers “to the sunshine of the breast;” while the clouds that gather in their sky, upon whom the light of religion and virtue has arisen, though they may dull the day, yet cannot make it night.

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the END of that man is peace.” Let us, first, contemplate his peace, under the weight of those years which bend the inclinations of man, along with his body, towards his grave: and next, in the hour of death, rendered repulsive to nature, by its arrival before life has lost any of its charms.

Behold him, first, when the days are come, in which nature has no pleasure. At this

comfortless season, when the freezing blood almost forgets to flow, and the frigid fancy has no more colours left, to lay on surrounding things; when all the glow and spirit of existence is gone; when the summer is ended; when the sun shines faintly upon the scene; when the leaves fall off from the bowers of delight, and all the bloom and splendour of human life are for ever over: in this cold and naked winter of his days, the upright man is warmed by genial thoughts, that repel the damps, that cheer and cherish his heart, and supply the absence of animal ardour. Though dead to the pleasures of sense, unable to “taste any more what he eats, or what he drinks,” or to “hear any more the voice of singing men, or singing women;” the remembrance of a life devoted to duty is “meat to eat,” with which he may yet regale himself: the voice of an approving conscience is music, to which man may listen with delight, at his latest hour. Though his understanding is too feeble for investigation or invention, it is vigorous enough to convince him of the rectitude and excellence of that virtue which he has practised. Impaired as his memory is, he is able to recollect, with sufficient clearness, that

that his conduct has been ordered aright. It may have lost much of its retentive power, it may drop the names of persons and things, it may suffer recent circumstances to slip from it; but it lets not go the good actions, which have given the leading colours to his life; these cannot escape it; it holds them fast; and his mind hangs over the hoard with more than a miser's joy.

The old, we observe, are ever narrative. Their discourse is continually recurring to persons and to things, to pursuits and pleasures, that composed their earlier history. To long accounts of departed days, their companions must lend a patient ear. The imagination, having nothing more to do with the future, goes back into life, and fondly dwells upon the past. The young can cheer themselves, in circumstances of sorrow, or of pain, by looking forward to fairer days; but all the comfort of the aged, so far as sublunary scenes are to supply it, must be derived from the recollection of those that are gone by. It is their sole consolation, in solitude, to ruminate, and in society, to relate, what they saw, and what they felt, and what they acted, in former days. Thus, by the help of memory,
they

they endeavour to rekindle fires that have long gone out ; to recall pleasures that have long been flown ; and to live life over again. But, in the picture of the past, which the mind of man thus delights to place before it, in that moving scene, with which it is in the power of his memory to animate the still moments of inactive age, what object can entertain his eye so well, as a regular career of active, and generous virtue ? Will he not look back with a livelier delight, in those days of review, upon duties done, upon just and generous offices discharged, upon weeping faces wiped, and broken hearts bound up, and human happiness increased by his contributions to it, than upon private pleasures however sprightly, adventures however romantic, enterprises however sparkling, successes however brilliant, or friends and companions however captivating and however dear ?

Unsupported by the remembrance of some sort of excellence or other, nature, one would suppose, must sink, at this season, under the mortifying sense of that reduction of human dignity, that falling off of all the honours of humanity from her, that attenuation both of intellectual and corporeal being, that gradual
melting

melting away of body and mind, which old age exhibits. Weak and impotent ; unable to do either good or harm ; neither useful to his friends, nor formidable to his enemies ; a dependent upon them, of whom he was once the protector ; the survivor of all his vigour ; the shade of what he was ; the relic of himself, and the ruin of a man ; what a nothing is he, who, in his old age, is no more than this ! who, in this state of partial annihilation, is unennobled by his former self. Such a one must surely feel his utter insignificance, his shadowyness and nullity, to an infinitely painful degree. Filial offices may support his infirmity ; his bending body may find a staff ; but what shall prop the dejected pride of man, bowed down by the sense of his decaying capacities, but the power of finding some form or other of past merit, upon that tablet of memory, where the colours of former excellence, whatever it was, continue to stand ; where the bloom of departed endowments, whatever they were, refuses to fade.

In whatever way any one has been able to signalize himself, the remembrance of the excellence to which he attained, continues to sustain his sense of honour, when his infirmities

ties forbid him any longer to excel. The drooping pride of declining nature is continually returning to past superiority for support, when it can find no more stay in present eminence. The aged rustic, when the annual sports of his village come round, is contented to be but a spectator of those feats of strength, or sleights of art, for which, he has to recollect, that he was once renowned, though he is now disabled; and in which he can recount, though he can no more renew, his triumphs. The hoary foldier, when no longer able to go out to battle, fights on by his fire side; and, as long as any one will listen to him, repeats his exploits, and “flays the slain,” and wins over again the victories which he and his comrades have won. The decayed artist consoles himself, under the idea that his hand has forgotten its cunning, when he remembers the monuments of it which he has produced. The retiring statesman illumines the shades of privacy, and the glooms of age, with the recollected beams of his past political glory. And the writer, when able to instruct, or entertain the public no more, sooths the sense of his incapacity, by throwing back his
thought

thought upon the pages, for which the literary world is indebted to his pen.

At this season of human life, when the memory of former honour is the food, upon which human sensibility to it is reduced to subsist, poor is the sustenance which he is able to procure for it, who has merely to remember, that he was eloquent in the senate, or valiant in the field; that he has written what all have read with rapture, or painted what every eye has praised; compared with the richer food, which it is in his power to bring it, who can say, upon sitting down after the action of life, “I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy:” or who, if his situation in the world have not permitted him to raise such monuments of his virtue, is capable of saying to himself, under the humiliating consciousness of decay, “I have fought a good fight;” I have resisted temptation, and triumphed over it; I have communicated to my fellow-creatures all the benefit I have been impowered to impart; I have
given

given to misery all I had to give it; and my conscience testifies, that “in simplicity and godly sincerity I have had my conversation in the world.” None of the narratives of veteran Valour, or of hoary Experience, or of travelled Observation, can furnish such pleasing occupation to the tongue of Memory, or such entertainment to the ear of Curiosity, as this silent relation of Conscience affords to the secret soul of aged Goodness!

He whose excellence is confined to the energies of genius, when those energies are no more, is nothing; but he that shines with a moral splendour, retains that splendour to the last. His exertion in the cause of society may be past, but the principle that prompted it is present with him still. He is not the active man he has been, but he remains the worthy man which he was. The scholar's head may lose its clearness, and the artist's hand its skill; but the good man's heart retains its integrity for ever. Time has no tooth that can penetrate into Virtue.

But, uprightness not only presents to declining man a pleasing past, it opens also upon him an animating future. While Memory collects the laurels, which his honourable la-

bours have won, and with them embellishes the repose and imbecility of his age; Hope renews his youth, by telling him he is but in the infancy of his being. This, this is the best prop of bending age; the cordial that causes its cold bosom again to glow, and bids it bound again. Without the prospect of a happiness beyond the bounds of this world, how cheerless must be the heart of him, whose terrestrial hopes have reached their wall, and closed their wing for ever! The pleasures of the present state are almost over; the few that remain to him are embittered by weaknesses and pains; his former associates and friends have forsaken him and fled to their graves; the eyes, that once bent upon him the beams of affection, are for ever closed; of the faces that used to meet him with a smile, he can only trace the features, as he sees them forming in the faces of their children; he is left a solitary in the midst of society; another race rises up to explode his opinions, to deride his maxims, and ridicule his manners; his society is shunned by the sprightly and gay; his presence is considered as a damp upon juvenile conviviality; and upstart, saucy youth is ready to hoot him off the stage.

stage. In this situation—just ready to receive the dismissal of Nature from the present world, and almost pushed out of it by its insolent and impatient inhabitants, what a wretch is he, who has no other ground, on which his hope can set its foot ! who knows of no other beings that will bid him welcome to their sphere; of no other society, whose smiling forms, he can figure to himself, beckoning him with benevolent invitation to their abodes; who, he can imagine, kindly call him to them; and whose soothing whispers say in his fancy's ear, “ Sister spirit come away !” It is an image of misery, that might drain the eye of Pity of every drop, and dry up the fountain of her tears !

On the other hand, while the prospect of other worlds, in which he hopes to be happy, concurs with the recollection, that he has done all in his power to make his fellow-creatures so in this, and with the habit of benevolent attention to the comfort of those around him, which results from this course of kindness, to prolong the period of a good man's cheerfulness, and to counteract the souring influences of age upon his temper; and thus contributes to render him, when he

is old, as little as possible, either a burthen to domestic duty, or a cloud to social gaiety: and while their remembrance of the peculiarly generous support, which he formerly, perhaps, lent to them, upon whom he is now reduced to lean, tends to make them peculiarly patient of his pressure upon them: so, however heavily he may feel that he hangs upon them, and whatever impatience of his weight, and wish for its removal, may be betrayed by those that hold him up, his spirit is amply supported, under the depression of this idea, by the prospect of a removal to a region, where the kindest reception awaits him, from the generous spirits of the just, “an innumerable company of angels, Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and God the judge of all.” Animated by this hope, a good man has no more reason to be dejected, that he is no longer a young one, than the young man, that he is no longer a child. The young man rejoices in that world which is before him, and so also may the virtuous old man.

Such, and so bright, is the evening star, that gilds the close of a well-spent life. Let us, next, “mark the perfect man, and behold the upright,” in the hour of DEATH. If it
succeed

succeed to the infirmities of age, considered merely as the termination of human life, its “bitterness is past.” I place it, then, before. I will suppose him to expire, ere yet those “years draw nigh,” in which the clouds collect, and the light of life is darkened, and desire fails, and lightest things begin to be burthen some. I will suppose his summons from life to arrive, while it has still all its attractions; while nature within, is able to meet the smile, and to join the shouting, of nature without; while the senses are susceptible of vivid impressions from surrounding things. Death, in such circumstances, must be confessed to be a formidable event. To quit this ground, upon which we have stood so long; upon which we have seen so often, and with such delight, the flowers appear, the hills rejoice, and the vallies laugh and sing; to take an eternal leave of the light, so dear and so delicious to our eyes; to bid a last adieu to that beautiful sun, which has been so long beheld with rapture; and to drop our share in “all that is done under it;” to have knowledge of this system, by which we are surrounded, shut out, at once, at *every* entrance; to suffer, what, when confined to

one, is sufficiently afflicting, the deprivation of *all* our senses; to say to all the world, to all mankind, and all terrestrial things, what, it affects us with melancholy, to say to almost any single person, to almost any single thing, “Farewell for ever!”——there is in this, what it sinks the spirit of a man to think of. Our attachment to life is very strong; and, except when pain, at once insupportable, and incurable, preys upon his body, or some tragical stroke of adversity has broken his heart, “all that a man hath will he give for his life.”

When an exile takes his leave for ever of the country, where first he drew the breath of life; to which his habits have wedded him; where all his friends and relatives reside; and which is endeared to him by innumerable sources of present pleasure, and soothing recollections of past delight; as the vessel, that conveys him, bears him farther and farther from its lessening shores; as its distant scenery sinks lower and lower in his prospect, and fades to a fainter, and yet a fainter hue; as he takes his last look at the land, so well, and so long beloved, and strains his eager, aching eye to retain, what it is so loth to let go,
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the little, glimmering, almost annihilated speck, which contains all his connexions, and round which his heart continues to hover with patriot fondness; where are the words that can paint the sadness of his sensations! Yet, in this case, a man only takes leave of a small part of the earth. The world is all before him. Blue skies, and golden sunshine, and verdant hills and vallies, await him wherever he goes. The smiles of creation accompany him; human creatures meet him on other shores; other hands are ready to help him; and other hearts offer him a place within them. But the case of a dying man is unspeakably more mournful. He is going to be banished, not from a particular climate, or circle of friends, but from the light of heaven, and from the face of man.

In this moment of complete, and comprehensive exile, of expulsion from earth, and from day, “mark the perfect man, and behold the upright;” for to him it is a moment of peace. “Come see in what peace a Christian can die,” is an invitation, which every good one may send to his friends. At this hour, which tears him away from every friend, which cuts him entirely off from this constitution

tion of things, I need not say, by what the upright Christian is consoled. I have only to ask, what is there else that, in this situation, can console? Who, but such a man, can meet such a moment, without dismay? Who can endure to think, that his breath is going for ever from him, but the man, who is promised a revival to yet more animated existence than he has hitherto known? Who can bear to see himself upon the point of being turned out of this garden of God, to behold the angel of death coming to drive him out, to feel him laying his hand upon him, and hastening his lingering, struggling nature away; who can bear this banishment but he, who is able to fix the eye of his faith upon the gate of another, and yet a fairer paradise, standing open to receive him?

But, to a bad man, the stroke of mortality is not only dreadful, considered as a dismissal from life, but as a summons to judgment. Unqualified for happiness, he expects the dart of death, to be followed by the rod of punishment. What his punishment is to be, he knows not; and his very ignorance makes him tremble. The hair is most erect upon the head of Fear, when her object is hidden
from

from her eye ; when an evil stands before her, but she “ cannot discern the form thereof.” An image, however terrible, which the eye can compass, which appears before it, distinct, and defined, we are not so much afraid of. We measure its stature ; we examine its dimensions ; we see the size of it ; we know what we have to combat, and collect ourselves to encounter it. But an object that terrifies us in the dark, and which we vainly strain our sight to see, gives full play to the imagination, and affrighted fancy assembles all her colours to paint it dreadful ! Of many a man, who has had before him this prospect of an evil, awful and terrible from its obscurity ; whose education has rendered him inconsolable by superstition, under the sense of his ill desert ; whose conscience had been cultivated, only to put forth a sharper sting ; of many such a man, the distress—the distraction, in the hour of death, has turned even pale with pity every attendant upon that hour ! has stiffened the spectators into statues of compassion ! has deprived of the power of speech, the tongue that would have tried to whisper comfort ! The load of agony, proceeding from self-reproaching, and fearfully
expecting

expecting guilt, which the bed of death has sometimes borne, has been sufficient to afflict an enemy, and to kill a friend.

To these stings of the last hour, the perfect man is a stranger. As his pulses advance to their last throb, his silent soliloquy is such, as might set them going for ever again, were it in the power of any thing to prolong their beats. "I have finished my course," a course of candid, and honest conversation with mankind; a course of just and generous conduct; "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory that fadeth not away." His memory, it is true, as he reviews his life, his conscience, as it inspects his heart, discovers imperfections; but he relies upon that divine mercy, in which the Gospel instructs him to trust: and, thus fortified by christian hope, he expects, without terror, the stroke, that is to cut in funder the thread of life, and the cords of friendship. Thus supported, multitudes have walked through "the dark valley of the shadow of death, without fearing any evil." Thus armed, they have triumphed over the king of terrors, in his most frowning and tragical forms. The testimony of conscience, and the hope of immortal happiness,

piners, have proved sufficient to subdue the fear of axes, and of flames, and left the persecutor discontented with his cruelty, and baulked of his vengeance.

If, however,—for, though that book, which God has put into his hand, informs the good man, that forsaken sin shall be forgiven, and that “all in Christ shall be made alive,” yet, when the instant is come, in which the awful step is to be taken from expectation to experience, the idea of the bare possibility of being in a mistake, either respecting the sincerity of the heart, which divine penetration is going to try, or concerning the protraction of human existence beyond the tomb, may be sufficient, at some moments, to fill an honest man with tremors and alarms, which his days of health, and of distance from death, knew nothing of;—If—for it is a fearful thing to pass the point, which divides the region of certainty from that, of which we have no knowledge; the point that parts the world of experience from that, which, though we believe it to be, we have never even descried from a distance, seen through a glass, or beheld in description; on which no mariner has ever so much as touched, and of which we

have heard no traveller tell ;—to go, 'we know not *where*, and we know not *how* ;—to close the eyes, without the slightest guess, at what time, or on what scenes, they next shall open ;—to take a spring from ground, we feel to be firm, we perceive to be fair, that has long been beautiful to our eyes, and faithful to our feet, without being able to see the ground that is to receive us ; —to behold the door of this world just going to be shut upon the living soul within us, to be bolted and barred for ever against it, without discerning so much as the glimmering of any other gate that is to give it entrance ;—to have nothing before us but thickest darkness—to be benighted to an infinite degree—unable to see an inch of our way—without one single spark to light us ;—good angels ! guard us in that midnight moment !—Almighty God ! support us in that valley of shadow !——if, in that hour, notwithstanding what his reason and his Bible tell him, he who has practised what they both prescribe, should feel his heart misgive him ; all the comfort and support which attendant friendship and affection are able, in such a situation, to afford, such a man is peculiarly likely to receive ; as to those,
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with whom he has been conversant, his amiable manners cannot but have peculiarly endeared him.

Among the comforts of piety and virtue, at the close of life, this *social* solace is that, upon which I particularly wish to dwell. The supports afforded by faith and conscience, under the weight of years, and under the hand of death, are, no doubt, the most important props of declining, and of dying, man. But these, as they are the common topics of the pulpit, are the familiar objects of your reflection. In meditating upon the passage of the good man through the dark valley of the shadow of death, you are accustomed to contemplate the comfort he derives from the presence of God; let me direct your attention, for a moment, to that which he receives from the presence of man. The rod of religion, you are in habits of beholding in his hand; allow me to point your eye to the staff of friendship.

In drawing, then, the picture of that room, in which the upright man breathes his last, let your imagination fill it with the most affectionate comforters; assiduous to infuse fresh fortitude into his failing heart; to reinforce
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his fainting faith, if it should be oppressed by pain and weakness, or overpowered by the tremour of approach to the moment of decision; to sustain his sinking confidence towards God, and help him to take the victory over the grave, which the resurrection of Christ has given him; to add their testimony to the witness within him, if, in a moment of modest doubt, its voice should be faint and inaudible, that his life has been such as lays a foundation for peace in death; and to confirm, by their concurring assurances, his trembling belief that he shall rise again; in a word, to tell him, with a firm tone, the truths that, with such a tone, he told himself, in a firmer hour; to give him the comfort, the Gospel has given, when his mind may be too weak of itself to take hold of it; to administer Christianity to the fluttered Christian, and personate the unruffled reason of a rational creature, at a time when his understanding is discomposed.

And, as the good man takes comfort from the *words* of comfort, which such attendants upon his dying hour address to him, he takes it also from their *society*, in itself considered, and separate from the assistance their founder
reason

reason may lend him. The mere sight of such surrounding friends; as those by which such a man is likely to be encircled, is a silent persuasive to be of good cheer. The company of persons peculiarly attached to him is a cordial to the courage of man, upon the approach of his last enemy, as of every other. Surrounded by beings, by whom he is held to earth in an embrace, which strongly strains to retain, and reluctantly lets him go, he feels as he were fenced from harm by the circle of their arms. In every moment of timidity, the presence of a friend seems to us a sort of protection from all ill; it is often an actual protection from terror. And when we lie upon the bed from which we are to rise no more, Friendship is the genius of the chamber; the protector of the place; the angel that guards the room; that chases from it the foul spirits, Fear and Doubt, and forbids the fiend Despair from coming near our pillow.

Upon these accounts, there is no circumstance which nature more fondly looks for, in the final hour, than the company of an honest friend. Our imagination cannot look upon a more melancholy object, than a human

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man creature expiring in a land of strangers, or in a solitary place, on some desert shore, cut off, in that fearful hour, from all his connexions;—far from every familiar, domestic, and friendly face;—and looking round him, in vain, for some one, whom he knows and loves, not only to close his eyes, to compose his limbs, and commit him to a grave; but to cheer the last moments of life, and sustain the spirit of a dying man. It is a destitution most pitiable! and compassion, though in the company of wisdom and philosophy, allows her tears to flow freely over it.

In a situation, altogether as cheerless and depressing, many a man has died, who has resigned his breath under his own roof, and surrounded by his nearest relatives. Figure to yourselves the death-bed of a domestic tyrant, and say, if in all the round of nature, there is another scene so full of sadness! Behold him forlorn, and friendless, in the very centre of his connexions! an exile from home, in the bosom of his family! His chamber, whatever the number of attendants upon his body that may be in it, is all a dreary solitude to his heart! Menial service executes his will;—medical science sells him assistance;—

assistance ;—Avarice of his property observes the forms of affection ;—Duty discharges, perhaps, each decent office ;—Pity regards a wretch, with a relenting eye ;—Mercy forgets the offence of him, who can no longer offend, and requites inhuman cruelty with human kindness :—but Love is not in the room ;—Gratitude, fondly officious, and affectionately busy, is not among the ministers to his last necessities ;—Solicitude is not to be seen, sitting tenderly by his side, exploring his latent wish, supplying his rising want, supporting his sinking fortitude, providing a pillow for his uneasy mind, laying an arm underneath his anxious heart, or pouring a passionate prayer for the prolongation of his life, or for peace in his death. His heart is stabbed, while his weakness is sustained, while his pains are mitigated, by attentions which he knows to proceed, not from affection, but from forgiveness. Those, of whose blood he is the fountain, behold his vital current stop for ever, without sorrow ; and they who follow him to his grave, are mourners only in their garb. If any thing can give additional gloom to the last moments of a guilty man, surely it is this circumstance.

It is some consolation to that love of duration in this world, which is so natural to a being, believing, but not certainly knowing, that there is another, in the moment when he is upon the point of disappearing from mankind ; it is some consolation to an evanescent creature, when just going to vanish ; it soothes, in some degree, the conscious shadow as he flees, the humbled vision as he flies away, to look at the tear that tells him, he has made an impression in his passage, and that his memory shall not prove so fleet. “ His remembrance,” says one of Job’s comforters, in recounting the calamities of the wicked, “ shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street.” There is something in this idea of oblivion, this total obliteration from the earth, this mortality of remembrance, as well as cessation of breath, which sinks the spirit of a man even lower than his grave. To be forgotten as soon as gone—is it not enough to disturb the ashes of the dead?—To be remembered, when he is no more ; to be sometimes recalled to the memory of the living, when he is removed from their sight ; to be wished alive again, by some of his survivors, when he is numbered with the
dead ;

dead; is among the fondest desires of mortal man.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?
On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

He who dies in the company of those who wish him dead, must be considered as meeting death with its deepest shadows about it: and of his last moments, the pain and depression are mitigated but in an imperfect degree, who is attended, in them, by those who think of his departure with little more than indifference: who behold it with a mournful eye; who would prevent it if they could; but who will forget it to-morrow. By such, the majority are attended in their concluding hours. The expiring man of pleasure sends, perhaps, for the companion of his pleasures. He comes obedient to his call. He is sorry to see him in that situation; he hopes he is not in so much danger as he apprehends; he testifies, and he feels, some degree of grief at the idea

of losing him ; nature cannot part with an old associate without a sigh ; as soon, however, as he sees him no more, he no more remembers him : he returns to his laughter with the living ; nor is his mirth, amid the roar of the table, chastised, for a moment, by the image of him, who yesterday shared it with him. He who has past through life with decent manners, with sober order, and common good nature ; whose native temper, free from infelicity, has procured him no enemies ; but whose negative and indolent goodness has given birth to no glow of esteem, and no ardour of friendship ; assembles round him, when he is going to quit the world, his kinsmen and companions. They surround him with a look of sorrow ; Consanguinity sheds some tears ; Intimacy looks back upon the past with a tenderness till then unknown ; Humanity herself heaves some sighs to see a fellow creature passing away ; Religion, perhaps, throws a solemnity over the scene, and the pensive face of Repentance appears in the group : but no countenance is seen in the circle, that tells the dying man, he shall not soon be forgotten : no cheek is wetted with the silent vouchers to a grief which, when
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the place that sees him shall see him no more, promises him a lasting one in the heart from which they flow. The impression of his death is fugitive as the hour of it, and his memory descends with him to his grave.

Social consolation more substantial than this, falls to the lot of him, in that moment when comfort is wanted most by all, whose eminent worth and singularly engaging qualities have procured for him the peculiarly lively affection, and animated esteem of all with whom he is connected. More soothing solace is prepared for him, in that hour when he resigns his spirit into the hands of him who gave it. By the kindest accents Consolation can pour into it, his ear is saluted, in that moment of solemnity. He revives at the soft whispering of comfort, as the fainting traveller is refreshed by the gentle gales of Nature. And, although, when he looks around him upon the expressions of heart-felt anguish that appear in every face; although, when he puts forth his hand to give, and to receive, the parting pressure of friendship, and feels a tear fall on it from every eye; though, when he listens to the suffocating sob that bursts from the breast of broken-hearted Affection,

to the eager supplication that ascends for his life, or the frantic grief that protests against his death; though these agonies of those he esteems and loves, give him a generous pain; that pain is mitigated by the thought, that the sorrow, which is now so violent, will soon mellow into no unpleasing melancholy; and along with that pain there is mingled an honest pleasure, while he reflects, that he shall not all die; that his warm idea shall live in the hearts of his friends, when his ashes are cold; that his memory shall be preserved, when the worm is feeding on his dust; and that, how humble soever the stone that tells where he lies, the worthy and the good, to whom his goodness and his worth were known, shall strike their pensive bosoms as they pass it, and call their breast his burial place.

These social supports are experienced, in a peculiar degree, in the hour of death, by him, into whose power almighty Providence has put it, to perform numerous and splendid offices of benevolence, to spread his wing over a wide space, and gather under the shadow of his protection a multitude of objects. As such a one lies upon the pillow of mortal languishing, he has to look not only upon
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the promises of remembrance that are painted in the faces that encircle his bed, he sends his eye beyond his chamber's walls ; he looks round upon a larger circle of mourners without them ; he beholds a neighbourhood in tears ; he hears the general groan that receives the report of his departure ; he represents the hearts that he has caused to sing, suspending their song, as his funeral procession passes by ; he figures the orphan paying a grateful visit to his grave, and dropping a tear of filial sorrow over the spot where his father sleeps. By the expectation of these honours that await his name, when he is no more, his heart is warmed, in the cold moment of mortality. And surely of all the honours the living can pay to the dead, these are they which most soothe the hope of a dying man.

The pomp of plumed procession to the tomb, the pride of sculptured memorial erected over it, may excite the admiration of the spectator ; but one honest tear in the eye of a single survivor, is infinitely more ornamental to the memory of the dead. The oration of the priest may be flattering, and the epitaph of the poet contain an elegant com-

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pliment, but the silent sigh of the widow and the fatherless, is the most eloquent panegyric upon departed man.

Such, then, is the peace of the perfect man and the upright, when he takes his leave of the world. Memory places before him the pleasing picture of the past. Faith stands beside him like an angel of light, and turns the shadow of death into morning. Friendship hangs over him with all the benignity of a ministering spirit ; while Gratitude, at distance, points to her heart, and tells him he shall be there interred.

Who is there here so insensible as not to exclaim, “let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” I wish it were in my power, to prevail upon all before me, to pursue that conduct which will secure to them, the comfort I have attempted to describe, in that moment, which will want all the comfort it is in their power to provide for it. I will not say to you, death is a solemn, and a tremendous moment. You know it to be so. You feel that it is. Your imaginations paint it terrible. Your hearts tremble, and your pulses flutter, to hear the word pronounced. By these sensations that
follow

follow the sound of the word, these silent and solemn calls of Almighty God within you, while I stand here in his presence, I conjure you to prepare for your last hour, and to prepare for it in a proper manner, by devoting all the energies of your nature, by dedicating your days of ardour, to the service of God and society. A reformation, however real and radical, accomplished late in life ; or a few faint and languid acts of goodness, scattered over the course of it ; will not be sufficient to inspire that peace at its close, to which I have been calling your attention. However contented the heart of man may be with the recollection of cold and scanty contributions to the happiness of the creation, as a foundation, either for self-approbation, or for the expectation of divine, in the midst of a fulness of animal joy ; when the total reduction of all other delight renders the mind entirely dependant upon that which is derived from the remembrance of past virtue, and the prospect of the rewards that await it after death ; then, in those moments of sensual famine and drought, when all other food is withered, and all other fountains are dried, Nature, to be satisfied, must find a plentiful provision

provision of religious and moral enjoyment : Conscience will want a series of such actions as she can approve, in order to content her eye : and Hope, whether she look to a place, in the mansions of God, or in the memory of man, will require a copious concurrence and conjunction of generous actions, to form a ground sufficiently firm for her feet. I sincerely wish you all what, and what alone, will supply a mild and lunar light to the evening of your life, when all the gaudier beams of day shall be gone ; what, and only what, will irradiate the shadows of your dying hour ; the remembrance of such an uniform and connected career of virtuous conduct, as shall lay a foundation for the steady and unhesitating hope of coming forth from your graves, at the call of Christ, to everlasting life, and of finding a monument, in this world, in that noblest of all mausoleums, the bosom of the grateful and the good. Amen.

Right

Right and wrong Judgment the Origin of Virtue and Vice.

SERMON V.

And unto man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.

JOB xxviii. 28.

IT cannot have escaped the most careless reader of the Scriptures, that it is usual with them to express moral excellence by terms, which, in their stricter sense, signify intellectual merit ; and to rest the pretensions of mankind to good sense and sound intellect upon the practice of piety and virtue.

Are not, then, intelligence and goodness, are not sapience and probity, frequently found separate from each other ? Are we not accustomed in conversation to distinguish, and

do we not perceive a distinction, between a good man, and a wise man? Do we not meet with men, whose pretensions to understanding no one will dispute, yet whose claims to virtue no one will allow? Do we not sometimes see, and sigh to see, proficiency in science, and progress in vice; penetration of understanding, and depravity of disposition; exhibited in the same person?—And, on the other hand, are there not those, whose good intentions are by all acknowledged, and by all applauded; yet who, in consequence of intellectual confusion, are continually perplexing and embarrassing the virtuous business in which they engage? who look to a good end, but are bewildered in the way? whose views recommend them to the respect, while their mistakes expose them to the smiles, of mankind?

The truth of this does not destroy the propriety of the terms, so frequently employed in the sacred pages, to express moral worth. For, although understanding and virtue are distinct, and separable things; though pre-eminence in either by no means implies superiority in the other; though moral eminence may, and sometimes does, accompany intellectual

lectual mediocrity ; and though, on the other hand, the beam of Genius may shine with a beautiful brilliancy, where the flame of Virtue cannot be seen : yet, as the understanding is the fountain of virtue, wherever it does exist ; as a virtuous choice is the act of a good one, and that act of it, for which the inspiration of the Almighty hath given it to man ; and as vice, on the contrary, proceeds from a wrong judgment, from an understanding that is unsound and disordered upon one subject, and that subject, of all others, the most interesting to man ; it is, for this reason, the custom of Scripture, to represent the understanding as consisting in this its principal office, and most important effect. Virtue owes her birth to the understanding, and the child, without impropriety, takes the name of the parent.

That virtue proceeds from rectitude, and vice from error of judgment, we do not all, perhaps, perceive with sufficient clearness. By the terms of distinction we are in habits of using in familiar discourse, when we are speaking of the intellectual and moral characters of mankind, we are some of us, possibly, in some measure, diverted from discerning the
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derivation of right, and wrong conduct, from just, and false opinion. We speak, in common conversation, of a good head, and a good heart; and we are carelessly led by this local account of intellectual, and moral excellence, to conceive of good sense, and good living, as proceeding from different departments and provinces of our nature; and fancifully to consider them as having their source, where we thus figuratively assign them their seat.

Perhaps too we are, in some degree, led to conceive of moral character, as having an extraction totally foreign from the intellectual part of the human composition, by the frequent, but superficial, mention of the opposition of passion to reason, as being the cause of the irrational conduct of rational creatures, with which, in accounting for such courses in such beings, divines and moralists are accustomed to content themselves, in compositions intended for the popular ear, or for the popular eye. This frequent direction of the attention to the appetites implanted in our constitution as being the enemies of virtue, but not to the nature of their inimical operations upon it; this repeated pointing of the eye to the cause of vice, but not to the manner
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in which the effect is produced, leads it to turn altogether away from the understanding as having any concern in the production of it, and to look solely to passion as its origin. Hence it is, that many persons are induced to imagine, in all cases of human misconduct, a disagreement between the passions and the understanding; to conceive of the former as overcoming, by the counteraction of a mechanical and physical force, the contrary leanings and pulls of the intellectual power. They do not perceive, that the opposition of appetite to reason does not consist, in contradicting and overbearing the right determinations of the understanding, but, in indisposing and disabling the understanding for forming a right determination; that the hostility of sensual desire to moral rectitude operates, not by overpowering, but by preventing, right reason; and makes man criminal, by first rendering him irrational.

It is common to say, a wicked man acts contrary to the convictions of his understanding. This is partly true so far as, but no farther than, the office of the intellectual faculty consists, in dictating to man what is his duty, considered separately from what is his interest;

interest; or in pointing out to him the propriety of virtue, as that which is due from him to *others*, as what he owes to God, and to society. In this view of rectitude, the confession may, with propriety, be put into the mouth of a criminal character,

“ I see the right, and I approve it too,

“ Perceive the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.”

Even in this view, however, of the erroneous conduct of rational creatures, the source of it must be sought in intellectual deficiency: for in this contest between animal desire and moral discernment, the former can only prevail in consequence of the imperfection of the latter. If our duty and interest did not go together, as they do, that degree of perception of the rectitude of virtue, of which an intelligent being is capable, would determine him to give it the preference. He who pursues the wrong, furnishes a proof, that though he perceives it, he does not perceive it with sufficient clearness; that though he sees the right, he sees it not by so strong a light as might be thrown upon it; that though he approves it, his approbation is imperfect. If it amounted to that animated view of its
beauty,

beauty, which reflection is able to produce in a rational nature, it would necessarily lead him to elect it, however destitute and unendowed it might be. If his conviction of the deformity of vice were of that vigorous kind, of which an intellectual nature is susceptible, it would repel him from it, in whatever attractions it were arrayed. If “what duty dictates to be done, or warns him not to do,” stood before his understanding, in all the strength of their intrinsic colours, such a picture of these opposite practices would irresistibly impel him to “shun this more than hell, to pursue that more than heaven.”

But considering the understanding of man as his director in the path of private welfare, to which view of the subject I mean at this time to confine myself, regarding it as the judge of what he owes to *himself*, it is with the full consent and approbation of his understanding, that he enters, if he do enter, into the path of the wicked. He believes—it is his *opinion*—that such a course of action, upon the whole, contains more good to him than the opposite line of conduct. He wants conviction of this eternal truth, the most necessary to be known by man, and which, one of our poets tells us,

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it is enough for him to know, that his social duties, and his true and ultimate self-interest, are indissolubly bound together, under the righteous government of God.

A virtuous man, it is not denied, may possess a smaller portion of understanding than another of an opposite character; but in *this one instance*, the former acts from rectitude, and the latter from error of opinion. Upon this particular point, the good man discovers a clear discernment, and the bad man a clouded judgment. A little enlargement upon this truth will not terminate in empty and unprofitable speculation, but will lead to practical improvement and useful impressions.

There are three points upon which the virtuous and vicious classes of mankind differ in opinion, respecting the pursuit of private happiness; upon which, the latter are led into erroneous and mistaken views; and upon which, the enquiries of the former are conducted to judicious conclusions and a rational decision of the question.

The first of these respects the reality of those consequences of human conduct, which Religion teaches us to expect in another world. Upon this head of the enquiry into

the wisdom of acting well, it is only a part of those whose practice is wrong, that are to be charged with wrong opinion. As unbelief in a life to come cannot be said to be peculiar, neither can it be said to be common to all of them that neglect to prepare for it. As judgment to come is doubted by some, in whose conduct nothing can be discovered that might be supposed to make them tremble before the reasonings which defend the doctrine, so it is believed by the majority of them, who lead a life upon which it frowns. Many, however, there are, in whom, as some sinister sensation, either the pride of opposition to popular tenets, or a wish that there were no future state, produces an opinion that there is none ; so that opinion encourages the indulgence of irregular desires, and promotes confirmation in licentious courses : and who, whatever respect may be due to the understanding of the philosophical infidel, being solely influenced by ill passion in the discussion of the subject, and consequently satisfied with the slenderest foundation for the sentiment to which their hearts incline ; as they take up the side of unbelief with much less to say in support of it ; as they conceive

that scale to preponderate with much less weight within it, while it contains only arguments of the lightest kind, which Reason, in a moment, finds to be wanting; while there is in it indeed nothing more than the small dust of sophistry, or perhaps than the empty breath of words, and the airy levity of wit; may be accused of discovering a contemptible irrationality in their decision, without any incivility to the more thoughtful and more reasonable unbeliever.

And, as some of those who reject virtue are to be accused of thus irrationally relinquishing faith, so, perhaps, in every mind that lets the former go, there is some little relaxation of its hold of the latter. When faith is not renounced, yet, perhaps, it is not retained so fast by those who do not retain integrity too, as it is by them that add to it the virtues it inspires.

Of the immoral class of mankind, while some suffer themselves to be led into a belief, that there is no after state, others are seduced into such loose and irregular sentiments of the divine mercy, as, upon the supposition of a succeeding scene, promise impunity to impenitent vice.

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That, upon this subject, the licentious thinker is in the wrong, and that he is in the right, by whom it is believed, that the Governor of the world “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge it in righteousness,” it is not my present object to prove. My design, in enumerating the opinions which are entertained by the good and the bad, upon the comparative policy of virtue and vice, is, not to evince the rectitude of the one, and the falsehood of the other, but, assuming that, which I suppose the persons, whose character is before us, to be only prevented from perceiving by disaffection to the truth, or the want of sufficient attention to it, I am only to state, that such opposite opinions are actually entertained by these opposite parties, and that these different sentiments are the sources of their respective courses of conduct.

That this opposition of opinion exists between them, upon this branch of the examination into the practical wisdom of man, I need employ no words to convince you. But it may not, perhaps, be so obvious, at first sight, though, upon a little consideration, it will appear equally certain, that there is a real difference of opinion between the vir-

tuous and vicious part of mankind, upon the point I am going to mention next; which is, upon the supposition of their both believing in righteous retribution beyond the grave,

Secondly, The comparison of present temporary, with future and eternal happiness. Is it possible, you will ask, that there should be any real difference of opinion upon this subject?—Must not a happiness, not only unbounded in duration, but inconceivably superior in degree to any thing that earth can offer to the acceptance of man, must not such happiness, upon the first sight of the subject, appear to every creature that has received from the Father of lights but one single ray of reason, more worthy of pursuit than the temporary, and comparatively trivial pleasures of sin?—No doubt, the plainest understanding is competent to decide aright, upon a case so clear, in one moment—provided that moment be a cool one. But, while the objects of Avarice, or Ambition, or Voluptuousness, are pressing upon the senses of those whose desires they have strongly excited, they wear to the eye such large and luminous appearances, as to deceive the understanding of the dazzled admirer into an opinion, into a decided persuasion,

sion, at the moment, that they are superior in size and in splendour to the eternal, but the remote rewards, which Religion promises to the virtuous after death.

The understanding is subject to the same illusions as the sight, respecting the dimensions of its objects. Distance of time produces an error in the mind, respecting the sizes of the good and evil before it, answering to the ocular deception concerning the dimensions of visible objects, that is occasioned by distance of space. The eternal and unutterable felicity of the life to come, vast as in reality it is, looks less, from the distance at which it stands, than the much smaller, but the immediate enjoyment, which this world promises to them that confine their wishes to it. Present pleasure, though but a petty torch, yet as it is held in the hand, and is close to the eye, shoots forth bright and ruddy fires; while Heaven, although a solar orb of immense magnitude, with all the paleness of a distant star, faintly twinkles to the sight, and appears but a point of light. On the other hand, pains that are present, whether the mental disquietude occasioned by the keen desire of some terrestrial object, or the

corporeal sufferings from which man is tempted, either, by stopping in the path in which Duty bids him proceed, to shrink back, or, when they occur to him in the irresistible course of things, to make his escape by trespassing upon prohibited ground, seem, to the mental sight of him who yields to these temptations, to be bigger evils than the threatened consequences, in the world to come, of compliance with intemperate appetites of present pleasure, or of duties omitted to avoid, or crimes committed to remove, the misery of the present moment.

Nothing is more frequent than to hear men say, perhaps we have said it ourselves, the pain of this hour is worse than all I ever endured before; when perhaps it is inferior, much inferior, to what has been formerly suffered by us. The obvious reason of this error is, that the past pain is removed to a distance from the mind; that distance has lessened its apparent magnitude. To the same mistake, for the same reason, we are subject, in our comparisons of present pain and pleasure with future good and evil. The threatenings of Scripture are terrible words; the punishment of sin which Reason pictures to the

the imagination of man, is a formidable image; but the present evils which may impend over the prosecution of virtuous and generous enterprises, or which may be shaken off the shoulders by vitious and dishonest practices, press so powerfully upon the feelings, or upon the fears; and the present pain, produced by the desire of an object of which it is become enamoured, is so tormenting to the mind, and stings the bosom with so sharp a point, that deliverance from these present tortures appears to him, who is either terrified or allured from his duties, to be a more eligible lot than the avoidance of any other evil, or the security of any other good, that is remote and in reversion. As the immediate participation of the plainest bread is preferable, in his eye who suffers the extremity of hunger, to the most sumptuous food for which he must stay, so immediate release from any great uneasiness is apt to look, to the human mind, a larger good than any that lies beyond the grave.

This opinion of the superior size of present, to that of future objects in reality much larger, has a considerable share in producing the sacrifice of immortal to momentary pleasure.

sure. Nor is this the less an opinion in the strictest sense of the word, because the error of it is capable of being corrected by the exerted reflection of the most moderate understanding. While it remains uncorrected, it is as truly the opinion of the mind by which that reflection is not exerted, it is as much a mistake, as the delusion that should lead a child, as yet untaught by experience, to imagine the cottage, by the side of which he stands, to be a greater building than the church, the spire of which its remoteness has reduced to the size of a spire of grass.

Error is not the less error, because it proceeds, not from defect of understanding, or from deficiency of evidence, but from want of due consideration. Voluntary ignorance is as real as that which is inevitable. The insanity, which the mind has brought upon itself by intemperate passions, is as much madness, as that which is inherited from Nature, or occasioned by tragedy. Whatever the cause, the effect is the same; Reason is dethroned; Imagination reigns.

The third question in the enquiry into the true interest and happiness of man, in the determination of which, the wicked discover

cover an erroneous, and the virtuous a right judgment, is, which of the two opposite courses of good and evil conduct contains, upon the whole, the greatest sum of *present* happiness. Those who make choice of the paths of sin, not only believe, but are sure, that they shall derive more immediate happiness from it than a virtuous life is capable of yielding them. With respect to their preference of present, to eternal happiness, they are not so decided and undoubting, they are not so established and grounded in error, as they are upon this point. Upon that question, they have their intervals of hesitation; they have their periods of perfect escape from the fallacy under the influence of which they act; in which injured Truth, banished by Passion, returns from exile, and complains of the injustice done her. In moments of retirement from human life, and of removal from those objects, which have excited the desires that bias their judgment of good and evil, they sometimes may, and, no doubt, they often do, perceive the superiority of the possessions which Religion proposes to their pursuit. Their delusion, upon that point, is confined to the presence, and operation upon
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their passions, of those terrestrial objects, by which it is occasioned, along with which it retires, and along with which it recurs. But, that the present pleasures of sin are superior to those of virtue, is a sentiment which they firmly entertain, at least in the outset of their career, which they coolly and soberly adopt, which they owe, not to the mist of Passion by which are misrepresented, but to the shade of ignorance in which are concealed, the objects of the judgment.

I pass by, under this head, those mistakes of the pursuers of happiness in crooked paths, whether proceeding from inexperience of the courses of things, from want of close observation of human life, or whether from the blinding operation of appetite upon the understanding, which respect those temporal effects of vice and virtue upon human welfare that are of a more visible and striking nature. I pass by those erroneous judgments which, in relation to terrestrial retribution, are of the nature of those we have considered under the foregoing heads, relatively to retribution beyond the grave. I pass by the infidelity of the sensualist, of the hypocrite, and the knave, in the await for them, with whatever frequency

quency they may have fallen upon others, of those punishments in health, in reputation, in property, or in person, with which such characters are denounced by the common sequels of such histories, but, in his personal security from which, the sanguine individual derives a confidence that opposes and repels all the conclusions to which the usual courses of human life conduct a judicious eye, from his supposed superiority to others, in strength, either of constitution, or of resolution to relinquish in time the irregularities that destroy it; or in the management of that mask which has fallen off from so many blushing faces; or in the address of that dishonesty by which so many have been brought into desolation. I pass by also the imprudent preference discovered by the rioter, the prodigal of opulence, or the indolent dependant upon industry, when incapable of excluding from their foresight the consequences of their conduct, in comparing the gay, the shining, but the short delights of sensual excess, with the “long health, long youth, long pleasure,” which temperance tends to procure; in weighing the fleeting satisfaction of sloth that is soon to be roused by the arrival of ruin, with
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the lasting ease of the competence with which the hand of the diligent is rewarded; or in balancing the light and momentary pains of abstinence, or of exertion, with those of sickness, of want, or of imprisonment.

I confine myself to those false views of the comparative happiness of virtue and vice in the present world, discovered by the electors of the latter, which proceed from unacquaintance with the influences of these opposite characters upon the *mental*, and their more secret and *occult* effects upon the animal enjoyment of man; that erroneous judgment which springs, not from deficiency of attention to evidence that is before the mind, but from the want of proofs themselves; proofs, which, though they are to be procured, have been never collected and presented to their understanding, either by themselves or by others: in short, that wrong judgment which arises from ignorance; ignorance of the nature of man, of the nature of happiness, and the absolute necessity of virtue to the happiness of such a creature.

He who determines to lead a life of indolence, or of licentious pleasure, or to devote his days to the pursuits of avarice, or of ambition,

bition, does not *know*, at the time that he forms this determination, that the certain attendants upon intemperance, if it should not be attended by untimely mortality, are satiety, languor, and dull enjoyment; the death of vivacity, if not of life; the expiration of the spirit, if not of the breath of existence: that the infallible and invariable effect of inactivity is melancholy: that the immoderate desire of superfluous possessions, even when crowned with prosperity, must be accompanied with anxiety, with dissatisfaction, and, while a single superior can be seen in the fortune, the fame, or the power, upon which the supreme affections are placed, with the fretfulness of envy: that evil passions cannot, even in the smoothest situations in which human life can lap them, find a secure asylum from the roughnesses that irritate and torment them: that Conscience, even when most successfully muffled, must, at moments, recover her voice, remonstrate with all her authority, and reprove with all her thunder, so as to disturb the repose of the most tranquil, and embitter the reward of the most successful guilt. Such a one does not know, when he thus dedicates his life to Folly, in
consequence

consequence of having received no convincing instruction from others, and having made no close observations himself concerning human nature, that temperate pleasures, innocent employment, moderate desires, generous affections, and an approving conscience, compose the greatest present happiness of which man is capable.

Upon entering the world, he is deceived by the dresses, he is dazzled by the glare of things. He “looketh upon their outward appearance,” and is imposed upon by their plausible surfaces. He mistakes height of station, for superiority to care; affluence of possessions, for fulness of joy; the arm of power, for capacity to execute whatever inclination can prompt. He has no idea of the indigence which it is possible for the rich, or of the impotence which it is possible for the great, to experience. He has heard of the toils of Virtue to obtain her serious and sublime ends, but not of the toils of Voluptuousness to invent some new pleasure, when the world of it has been exhausted by excess. He has heard of the sigh of Sorrow, of the sigh of Sympathy, of the sigh of Penitence, but never of the sigh of Sloth. He has been
told

told of the weight of calamity, but not of the weight of time. He has often been informed of the wants of mankind, but has never been led to number among them the want of something to do; a want as legibly inscribed in many a melancholy countenance, and as painful to Nature, as any other necessity. He has seen the sensualist at the banquetting board, but never in the flat intervals that separate the seasons of animated entertainment. The song of his mirth, the roar of his riot, have reached his ear; but not the groan of his solitude, but not the lamentation of his listless hour. He has beheld the fire of his kindled look, in his excited moment; but he has not witnessed the dim eye, and the dead dejection of his aching head. He has seen the rich man's house, the rich man's table, the rich man's fields, the rich man's friends, but he has not looked into the rich man's heart. He has imagined the pleasure of flattered, but not the pain of mortified, pride. In contemplating the master of the palace, he has thought only of Hezekiah indulging domestic vanity in the disguise of courteous hospitality, and shewing to the admiring guest "all the things that are in his
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house ;” but Ahab returning home “ heavy and sore displeased,” is an appearance which has never presented itself in his picture of grandeur. In painting to himself the image of Ambition that has climbed with successful feet, or of Lust of fame, when crowned with its laurel, he delineates, in his mind, a serene and satisfied figure, looking down with delight from the heights of station, or listening with transport to the tabrets of praise : he has not noticed, in such situations, the wrathful and ruffled form of Jealousy, darting from her dark eye malignant looks, and casting from her hand the furious javelin, at a larger sharer in the breath of celebration, or in the ribbands of honour.

But, if the selfish courses of human conduct, whatever the particular direction which they take, and with whatever success they be attended, contain so much disquietude and dissatisfaction, must not those who make choice of them, after a time, discover the error of their choice ? and will not a rectification of the mistake be followed by a reformation of the manners ? If this be a just representation of the path of vice, must not disappointment, after a time, reclaim them
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that have entered into it? Will not that instinct, which points to happiness, convert to virtue the unsuccessful searcher after it in vice? There is in all error, and especially in that which leads mankind astray from duty, a strange tenaciousness of its hold, in proportion to the time in which it has had possession of the mind. It obstinately adheres to the head that it enters. The sons of Folly even experience fails to teach wisdom. Infatuation, like a sad fatality, attends them, and fixes their feet in the paths they have chosen. Those deceitful paths, as fast as they disappoint, are adapted to renew, the expectations they possessed the power to raise. The fond and easy faith, which, the plausible appearances in them that promise happiness, have won, when it faints in that moment of arrival to them which discovers them to be phantoms, is in an instant refreshed and revived by a succession of other forms that promise as fair. Although the worshippers of the world experience that care, that envy, that discontent, which must ever accompany the confinement of the affections to it, their eyes are perpetually upon objects, successively pre-

senting themselves as their predecessors fail to keep their promise, that are to cure them of their care, that are to ease them of their envy, to put an end at last to their discontentment, and satisfy the desires that have been so often disappointed. Though the lovers of pleasure never fail to find, that the heavy hour, the blank spaces and gloomy voids of life are continually recurring, yet they look forward, in those languid moments of it, to its sprightly and spirited periods; they have never experienced the superiority of that sensual happiness which the sober enjoy; they have never tasted that uniform and temperate vivacity which is “a perpetual feast;” and, in the long intervals of listless sensation, through which they droop under the load of life, the understanding partakes of the body’s languor, and is too feeble to reflect upon the folly of such courses. The lap of voluptuousness dissolves the intellect of man, and takes away from him the very power of reflection. And, although the idle invariably find it more difficult to support unoccupied time, than the industrious to bear the burden of business, yet they are not aware that indolence is the cause

of their depreſſion. They are not happy, but they know not why; they wonder that they are not.

And, ſhould a ray of moral conviction break through the mental darkneſs of the diſſipated, or the indolent man, they do but exchange the error, which led them to look for happineſs in ſenſuality or ſloth, for that ſpecies of deluſion in the ſearch after it, which we have conſidered in the preceding parts of this diſcourſe. The preſent pain to the one, proceeding from that forbearance of ſuperfluous pleaſure which, to him who has been accuſtomed to it, is accompanied with the agony of famine; and to the other, from that effort to riſe which, to thoſe who have reclined till their natures are become inert as inanimate matter, is the ſevere train of intense toil, to which nothing but neceſſity can prick the ſides of ſloth; the immediate pain to ſuch perſons, from ſuch a rent of their inclinations from their courſe, appears ſo formidable an evil to their eye, as not to be counterbalanced by the proſpect of that uniform cheerfulneſs and regular flow of pleaſant ſenſations, which, though to be expected with certainty from a change of conduct, yet cannot be hoped till

that change is become habitual; and which is, therefore, removed to some, though to but a small, distance from the present moment.

Upon the whole, then, it must appear evident to every one who will think for a moment upon this subject, that the immoral conduct of intelligent beings is the effect of wrong judgment; that those who choose the path of vice, however acute and penetrating, however clear in their conceptions, and right in their conclusions, upon other subjects, they may discover themselves to be, upon the question of their own welfare, act under the influence of intellectual cloud. Every living thing is a friend to itself. Every sensitive creature, so far as it perceives the difference, must prefer a greater degree of happiness to a less. Of two sorts of food that are set before a brute animal, it will select that which is most agreeable to its nature. If, of two creatures that it fears, it must meet one, it will face that which is the least formidable to it. It is the instinct of every animated being, it is the maxim of every creature that is capable of a maxim, of two things that are good, to choose the greatest; of two that are evil, to take

take the least; and nothing but a mistake, a real deception respecting their sizes, can possibly account for any rational creature's election of the larger evil, or preference of the smaller good.

I proceed to the practical improvement of this subject. It places before us a powerful motive to virtue, and the proper method of attaining it.

It forcibly urges us to the moral cultivation of our nature. What can more powerfully spur the pride of man to the practice of virtue, than the consideration of the origin of vice? It is the offspring of parents of which it has reason to be ashamed. It is of base extraction. Ignorance and error are the authors of its being. There are things, of which even they are ashamed, who are said to "glory in their shame." They who plume themselves upon their vice, blush to be convicted, or to be accused, of that, of which their vice is a proof, and from which it proceeds. Immoral characters may be accompanied with knowledge upon some subjects, upon several subjects; but it springs from the want of it upon one, and that one the most important of all. It may be joined with philosophical,

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lofophical, with political, with literary information; but it fprings from ignorance of the fcience of happinefs, from ignorance of the fecret of content. It may be connected with a relifh for polite letters, and for elegant arts; but it proceeds from the want of tafte for truer and far finer entertainments than mufic, or painting, or eloquence, can fupply. It may be attended by that knowledge of the manners of men, which pilots the paffenger through the world clear of its deceit; that penetration into human characters, which puts it into the power of the politic, to take hold of the hearts of thofe whom they wifh to make the inftruments of their defigns; that difcovery of other's weakneffes, which conftitutes the wifdom of the crafty: but it is produced by the abfence of that more deep and dignified knowledge of man, which relates to his general nature, and which lies in fuch a view of the fecret ftructure of his mind, as leads to a conviction, that it is made to be the manfion of virtue, and that, until thus tenanted, it muft poffefs the drearinefs and vacuity of an uninhabited houfe.

Intellectual weaknefs, in all its forms, mankind are accuftomed to defpife. Confiftency
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with this disposition should surely direct their contempt to vice. You smile at them, who are continually over-reached in their secular covenants, and who make contracts in which they are losers. Many indulge their mirth upon this want of acuteness, in cases, in which they inconsiderately and unjustly impute it to the object of their laughter. They allow themselves to deride, though there the derision is certainly without foundation, the savage that gives gold and shining stones, for beads of glass and childish trinkets; for he parts with that which is no rarity to him, for that which is. But he, surely, is an object of just and rational derision, who gives away what, in the eye of Reason, is “more precious than rubies,” what “cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir,” for a few idle baubles; things of little worth in the estimation of the wise and the manly. You ridicule him, whom ignorance of mankind, and credulity of every fair and plausible profession, are perpetually exposing to imposition in his commerce with the world; why should he escape your ridicule, who credits the promises of happiness that are made him by courses of conduct, which will not keep their word, and which
wiser

wiser men well know cannot keep it? You look down with intellectual compassion upon the believer in religious fictions; why not, with an equal degree of it, upon the superstitious searcher after happiness? upon him who, in all the spirit of fable, supposes an unseen Genius of particular spots and places in human life, a Protector of certain situations in society from care and disquietude? upon him who, with all the credulity that leads the idolator to imagine a Divinity resident in figures of wood or stone, conceives Happiness, that divine and sacred spirit which dwells only in the bosom of Wisdom and Virtue, to be encased in particular condition, to be enclosed in silver and gold, or enshrined in walls and lands and trees and other inanimate things? You regard with pity the rustic astronomer who imagines the moon to be larger than the stars, or the boy that supposes his bonfire to be bigger than either; upon the same ground let him be regarded with pity, in whose estimation the objects of this world are things of greater magnitude than those of the next, only because they are nearer to his eye.

A wicked man discovers a puerile and infantine

fantine ignorance in the art of self-preservation. As the child plucks poison from the bush, and knows not, what is known to every *man*, that the beautiful berry is death, that the fruit is fatal as it is fair; as the fearless infant would insert its hand in the lion's mouth, without knowing it to be the jaw of destruction; so the wicked man takes hold of moral evil, nor knows it for his bane, and his destroyer.

Every beast, and every bird, is endued with a knowledge, and with a dread, of the animal that preys upon it; and consults its safety upon the first sight of the foe to its life. The fowls of the air hide themselves, when the hawk appears in the firmament of heaven; and the lion's roar is a signal for flight to every beast of the forest, of which not one of all the number requires a repetition. But an immoral man is an infatuated animal that knows not his natural enemy; that runs in the way of his devourer, and courts the destruction from which all other creatures flee.

Let, then, the pride of our nature lead us to the virtuous improvement of it. If intellectual dulness and confusion be a subject of human shame, let us avoid the most glaring instance

instance of it that can be given by man, the greatest blunder that can be made in the business of life, the preference of vice to virtue. It is but a poor compliment that is paid to them, of whom it is said, that they have all sense but common sense; yet this is the utmost encomium that can be pronounced upon any, however right, upon other points, their opinions may be, whose life is in the wrong.

As this subject powerfully prompts us to the cultivation of virtue, it points out to us the proper method of doing it. If vice be owing to ignorance and error, virtue must take its rise from information. In cultivating the temper, we must begin by cultivating the understanding. If the heart have gone astray, we must recall it, by first reclaiming the wandering judgment.

The fundamental mistake which occasions the misconduct of mankind, is the supposition, that vicious practices contain more present happiness than the opposite courses of conduct. To prevent, or to correct, this error, recourse must be had to serious reflection, upon the nature of man, and the nature of happiness; a knowledge of which will lead to a conviction

tion of the absolute necessity of virtue and piety to the present, as well as future, happiness of such a creature. Nor is it possible for any words I am able to employ to express, of what importance it is, that this examination be entered into, in the morning of life. Happy is the youth that engages in this enquiry, generous is the parent that assists him in it, ere yet dissipation shall have sunk the understanding into that state of debility and dulness, ere yet sloth shall have “cast it into that deep sleep,” in which there is an equal want of capacity for the discovery of truth, and of the resolution that is necessary to the accomplishment of moral recovery.

When a determination in favour of virtue is acquired in this first step of the enquiry into the wisdom of doing our duty, the discussion is at an end; the resolution is formed; the choice is made.

But, upon the supposition that we cannot satisfy ourselves with respect to the superiority of the present happiness which Virtue promises to her votaries; if an imagination have taken possession of the mind, that the objects of human life are capable of contenting it in the absence of all attention to the cultivation
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of the temper ; in this case, virtue must owe its birth to a vigorous conviction of the consequences of human conduct in the world to come, and to a judicious comparison of temporal with eternal things.

In this moment of retirement from the world, while temptation is away, and while passion is silent, I call upon him whose deviation from faith is accompanied by departure from duty, I call upon him in the sacred name of Truth, and in the name of that Pride which renders him ashamed of error, to suspect that his religious infidelity is the fruit of wrong affection ; that his understanding is the dupe of his inclinations ; that passion was in the chair, when he sat in judgment upon Religion. I adjure him, in this cool and unbiassed moment of absence from the world, to admit the possibility of this imposition of his appetites upon his reason, and to determine to call the doctrine he has condemned to another trial, and give it a second hearing. Upon him also let me call, whose faith, though not renounced, is dead and unproductive of good works, to open wide that eye, which is probably but half unclosed, upon the evidence of the scene that is to succeed upon the disappearance

pearance of the world, so as clearly to see it and to take the whole of it in. And him, likewise, whom the illusive forms of human life have imposed upon by their proximity, and persuaded that they are larger than the vast but far off objects of Faith, let me earnestly exhort, in this retired and dispassionate moment of abstraction from earth, to employ the proper methods of rectifying what, now while he is out of the world, he will acknowledge to be a mistake, and of securing himself from the recurrence of it when he is in the world again.

To prevent the deception to which we are exposed concerning the respective dimensions of momentary and immortal objects, in consequence of the difference in their distances, the method is obvious. The errors of the mind respecting the size of its objects are to be corrected in the same manner as those of the eye. I behold an humble hut at the distance of a few yards. I see a superb palace at the distance of as many miles. The former looks larger to my eye than the latter: yet I am not a moment deceived. I immediately and mechanically associate with the remote edifice, minute as the distance has made it,
ideas

ideas of grandeur. What is the reason of this?—I have stood close to it, or to buildings of the same order. I have been struck with the sublimity of their height! the swell of the walls! the multitude and majesty of the pillars! I have gone round about them and told the turrets thereof. These impressions, which have been often repeated upon my senses by the present object, remain upon my mind, when it is most remote from my eye. I remember its appearance, when I stood by its side; I retain my veneration, when it seems but a speck in the landscape. It is thus we acquire the art of vision, the science of sight. By a similar method we must attain the faculty of judging aright concerning the magnitude of things eternal. We must often, by intense contemplation, go up close to them. We must endeavour to reflect, so as to enter into the idea, upon the infinitude of the welfare that is implied in the immortal patronage of an almighty Power! upon that amazing magazine of happiness which is contained in everlasting discoveries of eternal, inexhaustible, entertaining truth!

Although we cannot approach, with our presence, celestial, as we do terrestrial, objects,

jects, so as to perceive their dimensions, and take their measure by the eye of experience; we may, by reflection, infer their magnitude with sufficient certainty. As the astronomer, by means of his calculations, discovers, in that star which seems but a shining stud in the robe of darkness, an immense ball, a vast globe of glory, superior in dimensions to that upon which he dwells; so the distant spectator of that sphere of honour and happiness which awaits the virtuous hereafter, and which, as it stands unconsidered in his creed, seems but a speck of light, assures himself, by the assistance of that computation and inference with which reason assists him to measure it, that it is an orb of amazing extent.

And while it is our wisdom, if we wish to guard against the delusive impressions of present objects upon our minds, in this manner to exercise our understanding, in our moments of retirement, in order to enlarge our views of the rewards that are promised to the righteous after death; so, if we would secure the efficacy of immortal objects upon our conduct, we must exercise our imagination to render present, what reason shall have thus

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rendered great. We must suppose to be come, what we believe is to come; figure to ourselves the effect which the final consummation of things will produce upon us; try to anticipate the sense we shall certainly have of the importance of the divine favour, when we shall hear the trumpet that convenes mankind; when we shall behold the assembly of nations, the convocation of ages, and the convulsions of Nature! We must call up this scene before us; leap the distance at which it stands, and bring it close to the door.

These representations of the grandeur, and realizations of the presence, of the final happiness of the just, will give it to make upon us the impression of a present object; cause it to swell to its true size, so as to excite in our breasts that pitch of desire, which is necessary to prompt the pursuit of it. By the frequent repetition of these impressions upon our hearts, in the hour of retirement and reflection, we shall fix them there at length, and retain them in the midst of the world. We shall then behold the things of it with that regard which is alone their due. We shall survey them with undazzled and undeluded eyes. They will

will suffer, as they ought, in the comparison with eternal objects, and sink to their proper rank in our estimation.

I sincerely wish we may all employ these methods of promoting our moral security; and may the Almighty crown with his blessing all our endeavours to promote our improvement in piety and virtue, and enable us to exhibit to all around us an example of that fear of God, which is the wisdom of man, and that departure from evil, which is the most valuable of all the acts of the understanding. Amen.

The divine Demand of moral Services
from Man proportioned to his natural Capacities.

SERMON VI.

She hath done what she could.

MARK xiv. 8.

OUR Saviour was now sitting in a house, in one of the villages in the vicinity of Jerusalem. A woman enters, with a box of ointment in her hand of a peculiarly costly kind. She breaks the box, and pours it upon his head, which was the method, as most of you well know, by which the Jews were accustomed to express their respect for their guests. This woman, whose name was Mary, was a person of a very amiable character. She and her family lived in habits of intimacy with our Lord. She had listened at-

tentively to his discourses; she had derived from them a sincere conviction of his divine commission, and a serious solicitude concerning the salvation of her soul. She was an object of our Saviour's peculiar esteem and friendship; and was under particular obligations to him, upon account of his having restored her brother to life, after his interment. Full of reverence and gratitude, she embraces this opportunity, and this mode, of expressing the sentiments that possessed her heart. Among the spectators of this action, there were some who discovered indignation at the idea of wasting, what, if it had been sold, might have supplied the wants of many poor. Our Lord penetrating the recesses of her soul, and seeing there the most sincere affection for him, and the most ingenuous desire to do him all the honour in her power, undertakes her defence. "Let her alone; trouble her not; she has well done; ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always; I shall not be long with you, grudge me not this little refreshment and respect, while I am. There is provision enough left for the poor; and ye may attend to their necessities, when I shall be out of the reach .

reach of your attention. This woman looks upon me as her best benefactor. She believes me to be the son of God; the friend of mankind; the saviour of sinners. She is willing to shew me all the respect in her power, during my residence in the world. This ointment, it is true, is of no real importance to me. The profits of it are more wanted by the poor, than the honour of it is needed by me: but she, that hath poured it over me, acts from the most pure and amiable principle. She feels for the poor as much compassion as any of you can pretend to; but the poor have not bidden her be of good cheer, for that her sins are forgiven her; the poor have not taught her to believe that she shall rise again; the poor have not restored her departed relative to her arms; the poor are not the authors of that faith and hope, that religious peace, and that domestic joy, which now reign in her breast. To the friend of her family, and the physician of her soul, she is willing to make some return. This is the only return she can make. She cannot render me any essential services. She is poor in power; she feels, she is poor even in thanks; she cannot utter half of what is in

her heart ; but she has done what she could ; and I am pleased with this expression of her gratitude and love. Although I derive no solid advantage from it, and though some appearance of extravagance and waste may accompany it, yet I see in it a beautiful mind, a generous meaning, that wins my approbation ; and for this honest act of hers, her memory shall share the immortality of my religion."

"She hath done what she could." The sentiment of this passage is briefly this ; sincerity is every thing ; compensates for every defect ; consecrates every action ; is the essence of all virtue, and the foundation of all good desert.

I propose, in the farther prosecution of this discourse, to consider this as the principle, upon which the divine estimation and acceptance of all human services proceeds. From these words of our Saviour I deduce, and shall endeavour to illustrate, this general proposition, that the Judge of the whole earth approves and rewards all the sincere and well-meant offerings of mankind to God and society, however accompanied with the imperfections which arise out of limited power,
unavoidable

unavoidable ignorance, or the moral frailties which, in its present state, are inseparable from human nature.

First, That deficiency in the services which we render to God and society, which springs from want of power and opportunity, if we diligently improve what we have, will occasion no diminution of the divine satisfaction in us.

There are those who possess distinguished opportunities of rendering *moral* service to mankind. Among these, some stand in that elevated station, which gives to good example a peculiar efficacy, and exhibits it to a wider circle. Opulence puts it into their power to procure instruction for indigent ignorance. The respect with which they are looked up to, in the rural neighbourhood where they reside, causes the moral advice, that drops from them upon their dependents, to sink into them with more than common weight. Their power of reward enables them to encourage good living and decent manners around them; to lead the villager to virtue, and put the rustic into the path to heaven. While others possess those eloquent lips, or that eloquent pen, with which the cause of rectitude is powerfully

powerfully pleaded. Those, who improve these opportunities, shall have their reward; but not a greater than theirs, who, animated by an equal regard for the moral welfare of mankind, are prevented, by incapacity, from shedding such beneficial influence upon it. "They have done what they could." They have panted in secret for the progress of truth and virtue in the world; they have lent them all the assistance it was in their power to lend them; and the Almighty Friend of truth and virtue shall finally approve them as much as if they had done more.

Many can do much for mankind in the sphere of *secular* charity. They can endow hospitals; they can give bread to multitudes; they can patronize genius; they can spread the shadow of a broad protection; they can scatter blessings over an extensive space. Some are capable of guiding the wheels of government with wisdom; of improving useful arts; of making important discoveries; of writing valuable books. If such persons exert such faculties, embrace such opportunities, from a pure principle of public spirit, they shall inherit the immortal favour of Almighty God: but an equal portion of it shall fall to
their

their lot, who, filled with equal philanthropy, but not favoured with equal powers of expressing it, have been able to bestow upon the necessities of society, nothing but their wishes, and their prayers; and who have given to Misery only that tear, which was all they had to give it. The applause of historians, the gratitude of ages, the admiration of posterity, is denied them; but their names are as legible in the book of God, as those that have been more in the mouth of mankind. “They have done what they could.” They would have done more, had Heaven enabled them to do it. It was in their hearts to do all that others have done; but their hands were bound. The poor, and the private man, whose benevolence has no splendid donatives to drop around it; whose name is not known, where the spire of his village is not seen; yet whom every inhabitant of it honestly loves, for his kind behaviour to all about him; who delights to see all around him happy; who endeavours to make them so as much as he can, by all the little attentions that lie in his power; who performs every office of humble humanity and courtesy, to which his bounded abilities extend; who takes pains to
hush

hush the animosities of his neighbours ; who sits by the side of Affliction and whispers peace ; to a portion of whose scanty pittance Want is welcome ; who, under his own roof, discharges every relative duty ; supports the head of sickness with a patient hand ; rocks the cradle of declining age ; and watches over the morals of careless Childhood ; he, who makes this amiable, though humble, figure, in the vale of life, affords a sufficient proof, that, were opulence and power his lot, he would be the father of his country ; the protector of innocence ; the patron of merit ; the encourager of arts.

“ This widow,” said our Saviour, “ hath thrown in more than all the rest ;” it is but little, but it is her little all.—Elifha, the prophet of God, was entertained by a woman of considerable property and rank. She treated him with uncommon hospitality ; she afforded him every accommodation in her house which he wanted ; she built an apartment solely for his use ; in the furniture, and in the situation of which, she, at once, consulted the simplicity of his taste, and the secrecy of his devotion. Her house was his home. He came when he pleased, and when he pleased he

he went away. All that he wished for, he had; and all was bestowed with the utmost respect, and the nicest delicacy. The son of this woman sickens and dies: The prophet prays to God for his restoration: His prayer is heard: Her son lives.—The predecessor of this man of God once solicited a poor woman for only a cup of cold water. Even of that she had but little, but a part of that little she freely gave him. Her child also dies. For his restoration the prophet prays. That prayer is also heard. Upon equal goodness, though its gift was less, an equal recompence is bestowed by Heaven.—Mary, full of affection for her Saviour, pours over him a quantity of expensive ointment. She could not perform any important office of friendship for him. She could not turn away from him and his religion the tide of vulgar prejudice. It was not in her power to protect him from popular clamour and cruelty. She was not able to pull one thorn out of the crown, that was soon to be put upon his temples; or to extract a single nail from those hands and feet, that were shortly to be extended upon a cross. But what she could, she did. She expressed her respect for her
Lord,

Lord, in the only way which was in her power; and her Master received this humble tribute of her love, in as gracious a manner, as if she had rendered him the most substantial and splendid service.

Secondly, The Judge of all, we are led to believe by the spirit of these words of our Saviour which we are considering, will accept the *erroneous* and *mistaken* services of his honest and well-disposed servants. Multitudes, in different parts of the world, unacquainted with that religion which enables us to entertain just conceptions of God and of duty, have fallen into religious and moral mistakes. But, although that Being, who has been declared unto us, they have ignorantly worshipped; although their contracted conceptions may have confined to images, and to temples, that Presence which fills all space, and is not far from any one of us; and though their systems of moral practice may have been in some respects erroneous; yet, if they have been careful to obey those clear and simple elements of morality, which the finger of Conscience has inscribed upon every human heart; if they have endeavoured to know all they could concerning their duties, and been diligent to do, so far

far as they have been able to discern, them; the righteous Receiver of our services will not refuse them his approbation, because they have not brought to the footstool of his throne the correct conceptions of rational piety, or to the shrine of society, the faultless offerings of enlightened benevolence.

There are certain general principles of religion, equity, veracity, and humanity, which are plain and obvious to all mankind; but different nations have differed in their application of these general sentiments to particular cases; and have entertained more or less enlarged ideas of their extent. But so far as the conduct of any has been consistent with their honest perceptions of moral propriety, they have found acceptance in the sight of God. Many customs, which to us appear in the highest degree barbarous and inhuman, have prevailed in the politest heathen nations. If the legislators, who gave them their sanction, were convinced of their utility, they were justified in giving it them: nor will any among the multitude, who complied with them, from that blind obedience to the custom of their country, and the authority of their superiors, above which it is only in the
power

power of liberal education to lift the human mind, be, upon that account, rejected by the Judge of all men, if, in the plainer points of duty, they have obeyed the dictates of that Conscience, whose words are heard to the end of the world.

Christ has commanded you to love your enemies ; it is a beautiful command ; it proclaims, as loud as any of his miracles, that he came from God.—Aristotle, uneducated in our school, told his followers, that forgiveness of injuries was the mark of a mean spirit : it was the lesson of frailty ; it was the precept of pride ; yet shall no honest Greek, who was just and generous in his general intercourse with society ; who was kind to his relatives ; courteous to his neighbours ; hospitable to strangers ; faithful to his friends ; grateful to his benefactors ; be condemned when he appears before the bar of Christ, because he happened not to be among his hearers upon the mount, or among the readers of that sermon, in which benevolence is extended to enemies.—Whatever calamity overtake yourselves, your friends, your family, or your country, you think resignation to Providence, and the possession of your soul in

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patience,

patience, to be your duty ; and so undoubtedly it is ; and blessed be God for that book which tells us so :—Cato, unenlightened by that religion which throws its light upon your path ; the inhabitant of a country in which patriotifm was all in all ; when he could ferve his country no longer, when he faw its “ term of freedom out,” thought it unworthy of a citizen of Rome to furvive her ; and faw no farther occafion for him, in a world that feemed to have been “ made for Cæfar :” yet, though he fell upon the point of his fword, no one, I am perfuaded, who is acquainted with his character, and with the fpirit of the Gofpel, will doubt of feeing that great and good man in heaven. When your friend fickens unto death, when your parent declines to the dregs of life, you think it right, and with reafon you think fo, to attend him to his laft gasp. The Tartar carries out the victim of decay, or of incurable difeafe, to an hut erected for him in fome folitary fituation, and leaves him to perifh there, from an idea, that domeftic attendance, and medical affiftance, only ferve to prolong the period of pain, and to lengthen a life that is no longer a bleffing. Yet if he do this from

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such a motive, neither this, nor any other mistake, if in all points he act according to the best of his knowledge, shall cut him off from the favour of God; shall shut him out from the city, which He has erected, for the final reception, and immortal residence of the just.—The Indian enters his pagoda, and adores an insensate image; he has never heard of that God whom we assemble to worship; but, if this be his only fault, the God we worship shall accept his homage as well as ours.

In our own country there are those, as in all there have been, who publish speculative opinions, upon religious, or moral, or political topics, which we may think to be wide of truth, and to be pregnant with mischief; but whatever errors any may endeavour to propagate, if truth be the object of their pursuit, though that they may fail to find, they will not have sought in vain for the favour of God. Many of our fellow-christians may appear to us to have fallen into practical mistakes, which we may conceive to be either directly injurious, or not so friendly to the interests of religion and virtue, as the modes of piety and of morality which we may have adopted. There are those among us who
 worship

worship God in silence; we worship him with words: there are these who compass his altar with multiplicity of rites, with magnificence of ceremony, with pomp of tapers, and with clouds of incense; we think that simpler forms and a more sober-suited devotion are to be preferred: multitudes imagine it to be their duty to attend upon public worship, if possible, every day in the week; it is our opinion, perhaps, that it is with more propriety confined to one: many suppose it a part of their duty to abstain from certain amusements and pleasures, which we may consider not only as innocent, but as tending to recommend religion to youth, and remove the prejudice of infidelity against it. Perhaps we are right; perhaps they are wrong; but if they be as honest, they are as acceptable, as we, in the sight of Heaven. No man shall ever lose the smile of celestial approbation, merely for want of success in his honest search after truth.

Nor, let me add, shall any of those, who, in consequence of defective capacity for the conduct of business, frequently impede the benevolent undertakings, in which disinterested benevolence leads them to embark, be the less applauded by the righteous Reader

of every heart, because their judgment was not equal to their generosity. They have done what they could. Though not eminently useful members of society, they are acceptable servants of God; if not distinguished blessings, they are honest friends to mankind, and the Father of mankind is theirs.

This exculpation of ignorance, however, is to be confined to that which is involuntary and unavoidable. He, who without being either honest, sober, industrious, or humane, hopes to be saved by an idle faith, is not ignorant, but deceitful. He does not seriously think as he says; he shuts his eye, and will not see the truth which stands before him. And, although some spiritual guides have held out their hands to lead him into this path of self-deception, yet it is not in the power of all the pulpits in Christendom, to drown that voice of God within us, which preaches justice and mercy to mankind.

Thirdly, Those imperfections in our conduct which arise out of the moral frailties inseparable from human nature, in the present stage of its progress, will not shut out any from the divine acceptance, who diligently improve the powers they possess. There is a
certain

certain degree of moral excellence, beyond which human nature, in its present state, is not able to pass. Perfection is a word of which we often make use; it is a word which the Scriptures also frequently employ; but, whenever it occurs, it is to be understood only in a comparative sense. Absolute perfection is entirely out of our reach. We may walk; we may run; but we cannot fly. Do what we will, pray as often as we please, meditate as frequently, struggle as hard, be as watchful over ourselves as we can, we shall, every now and then, either think something, or feel something, or say something, or do something, that will remind us we are dust, and fill us with sorrow and shame. But though this be the character of our nature, religious melancholy has no business in our bosom. God Almighty is merciful and just; he knoweth our frame, and does not expect more from us than we are able to pay him.

Yet let us not carry our ideas of divine mercy and human frailty to that dangerous extremity, to which some have stretched them. Let us not separate grace from justice; suppose that weakness will justify indolence; or suffer our knowledge that we

cannot do much, to degenerate into an imagination that we can do nothing. That man is a creature, surrounded by temptations which he possesses not the power to resist, that he has passions within him which are not to be governed by him, and that, however clearly, in his closet, he may perceive both the intrinsic propriety of virtue, and the prudence of them that practise it, yet that, when he quits the cool shade of retirement, and comes into the world, it is not in the power of either conscience or faith to break the spells, and dissolve the enchantment of the riches and honours and pleasures of the world; this is the language of those, who, along with morality, renounce religion. While many of the professors of religion indulge a romantic notion, that supernatural assistance is necessary to produce their reformation. They cannot, they contend, enter upon virtuous courses, until they are called by God. Calls of what other kind than those they are continually receiving, do they expect to receive? Are not the calls of God perpetually in their ear? He "speaketh once, yea twice, but they regard him not." What is every conviction excited in their minds, by whatever

ever circumstance, of the folly, or of the deformity of vice, of the comeliness, or of the discretion of virtue; what is every inspiring example of rectitude that passes before their eyes; what is every fit of sickness that causes their earthly tabernacle to totter, and warns them to provide themselves an eternal tenement; what is every mournful memento of mortality that moves along the street, while they are walking in it; what is every instance of rewarded virtue and corrected vice, which human life exhibits to their view; what is every painful consequence of their own misconduct, which themselves have experienced, in their property, or in their reputation, or in their health, or in their mental sensations; what is every proof presented to them by past, or by present times, of the necessity of mutual justice and humanity to the happiness of human society; what are all these, but divine calls to duty? but the various voices of God, inviting man to virtue? It is needless to say much upon this subject. There is in every man's breast a consciousness, which it is not in the power of his sophistry to stifle, that he can do well, if he will, without any other sort of assistance from the Author of

good, than what has been granted to him ever since he was born, and what he receives every day of his life.

To the man of pleasure and of the world, who, without entering into any theological theories, carelessly and thoughtlessly asserts, it is not in the power of man to act a virtuous part, I would beg leave to say, if such an one were within these walls, that, scarce as good men are said to be, there is a sufficient number of surrounding instances, to convince him, that it is possible for him, if he chose to make the trial, to acquire such a degree of virtuous settlement and security, as to be superior to all the ordinary temptations of human life; to establish in his breast such a prevailing influence of virtuous principles, as that the majority of his thoughts and words and actions, though not all, shall be such as himself and his celestial Judge can approve. So much man can do; and he who has done this, may have confidence towards the God and Father of Jesus Christ. His imperfections he may have; imperfections he must have; but these are forgiven him. He hath done what he could,

To what has been said I will willingly add two or three practical inferences.

I. We learn from this subject the manner, in which it becomes us to regard the endeavours of our fellow-creatures to serve us. Do any discover a benevolent or a grateful temper towards us? Although they may not be able to render us important services, or to make any valuable returns to us for the favours they have received from us, let us consider them as doing all they can, and love and esteem them as much as if they had done more.

Do any with more zeal than prudence do us harm, where they meant to do us good? It is no uncommon case: let us look upon such with the same eye, with which the God of heaven looks upon them that injure *his* cause, the cause of truth, of virtue, and of society, by sincere, but injudicious endeavours to serve it. Let the reflection upon what they meant to do, suppress the resentment excited by what they have done. Let not their mistakes conceal their intentions. Let not our vexation extinguish our gratitude.

II. This subject holds out ample encouragement to all to enter upon a course of
virtuous

virtuous conduct. The rewards of virtue are not confined to men of genius, or learning, or power, or opulence; to them that think accurately right, or to them that actually do a great deal of good in the world. This is the lot of only a few. But all men can mean well, into whatever mistakes they may fall. All men can learn to wish the good of others, though they may be able to do but little to promote it. All men can give what they have to give; and, blessed be God, all men have something to give; if not property, if not patronage, if not protection, if not knowledge, yet comfort and condolence to the afflicted, and congratulation to the happy, and a thousand little nameless attentions and diminutive kindnesses, which serve to exercise and to express a benevolent temper as much, and which collectively considered produce a larger sum of human happiness, than single services that make a more splendid figure by themselves.

The omniscient Judge searches the heart; and when all mankind shall stand before him in the last day, it will not be enquired, what they have actually done, but what they did from right motives, and what they would have done had it been in their power. We
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have all, therefore, whether high or low, whether rich or poor, powerful or weak, illumined or ignorant, equal encouragement, so far as relates to divine acceptance, to cultivate a virtuous temper, though not equal opportunities of expressing it at present.

And, with respect to the pleasure of expressing virtue, which those, who possess it, consider as a large part of its reward, we have reason to hope, that, if in this world we be diligent to cherish the spirit of benevolence, and to exercise it in every way which Providence points out to us, we shall be introduced, in a succeeding state of existence, to a more extensive sphere of social service. Upon him, whose present heaven it is to promote happiness, however small a portion of the power to do it may be now allotted him, as much as his heart can hold of that generous beatitude, shall probably be bestowed above.

III. This subject suggests consolation to those who have failed in their endeavours to do good. The father's heart will bleed, when, after all the anxieties and labours of virtuous tuition, he finds the child of his prayers, the prey of evil companions, and the victim of temptation to vice. The benefactor will
grieve,

grieve, when, through the folly of those whom he wishes to befriend, it is not in his power to serve them ; when he finds all his pecuniary assistance, and all his sober counsels, thrown away upon an indolence, which nothing can excite to industry, and an indiscretion, which nothing can reclaim to prudence. He, who engages in the service of his country, will sigh when his generous efforts are in vain ; when he finds himself crossed by the malevolence of the wicked, or the mistaken sentiments and incorrigible prejudices of the weak ; when he sits down after the fervent, but ineffectual struggle, he will feel the heart-fall of a noble depression. Such, however, after that temporary indulgence to this generous dejection, into which, for a while, they must of necessity sink, have to console themselves with the soul-cheering thought, that they have done what they could ; that Heaven sees their sincerity, though, in this instance, it does not want their service. Their repulsion in the pursuit of good, is no proof that the author of it rejects their allegiance to its cause ; or that he does not honour and approve them quite as much as others, whom he employs as his instruments,

ments in bringing good to pass. Divine justice shall reward their worth, though divine wisdom can accomplish its ends without it.

Let every good and generous, however weak and indigent, man rejoice to think, that though his breast can only heave with benevolent wishes; though, shut up in a narrow sphere of utility, he can only see, without removing, the evils of human life; though his arm cannot protect the oppressed, or his example reform the age, or his eloquence sway the senate, or his pen put prejudice and error to flight; yet let him rejoice to reflect, that, as he has done all he could, He that sees his heart, who is witness to its secret wishes, and counts its benevolent throbs, will consider as done all that he desired to do; that, in a future state, he will probably enable him to do more; and that, in the mean time, Providence will accomplish the wisest ends by means of all that happens in the world, and deduce final good out of present evil.

IV. Let us look round with love and respect upon all honest and good men, however confined in their sphere of utility. There is nothing contemptible in natural imperfection. They who do all they can are approved by
God:

God : let us approve them too. God does not despise the poor, the ignorant, the weak ; let not us despise them.

V. Let us rejoice to believe, that there is more benevolence than appears in the world. We must not imagine, that all the charity of the human race is comprised in the munificence that excites our admiration. We must not estimate the number of the benevolent, by counting the benefactors that pass before us. There is much philanthropy among mankind, of which no mention is made by fame. There is Goodness that sits in the shade, without being heard or seen ; that hopes and fears, that weeps and wishes, that rejoices and mourns, in silence and in secrecy. There is Kindness whose glow is rich, but whose gifts are scanty. The poor have many fathers that cannot feed them, that must content themselves with a father's feelings, without being able to put bread into their mouth ; the oppressed have many more friends than helpers ; and the sighing of the prisoner is pitied by thousands that cannot throw open his prison doors. Opulent and powerful benevolence is a conspicuous object ; it stands upon an hill ; it sparkles to the public eye ; but you see not
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the generous tear that falls in secret ; you hear not the generous sigh that ascends from him, who can only wish to wipe the faces that are wet around him ; you behold not the liberal heart, to whom fortune has been niggard of her gifts ; indigent generosity is hidden from your eyes, and only known to the heart that holds it. Let us give mankind credit for the virtue which we cannot see ; and console ourselves, amidst the scantiness of visible virtue, with the belief, that there is more worth in the world than we are witnesses of.

VI. Let us consider, that though God requires no more of any, than to do all they can, that thus much he requires of all ; and, therefore, that more is expected from us, as Christians, than from others. Where little is given, little is required ; where much is given, much is required. More than others we *can* do ; more than others we *must*. Our religion calls upon us to cultivate no confined, and local, but the most enlarged and unbounded benevolence ; not the geographical philanthropy of Greece and Rome, but the grand and celestial goodness which compasses the universe. It is our part, not only to dare to die, when duty calls us, but to dare to live till then,

how much soever we may loathe the light, and long for death. More exalted ideas of duty are communicated to our understandings ; more exalted degrees of it should warm our hearts. Superior examples of goodness are set before us ; superior admiration of it should prompt us to practise it. More glorious rewards are held up to our view ; a more magnanimous superiority to temptation, a more heroic contempt for temporary pleasures, becomes our duty. Let us roll these thoughts in our breast : and may the Almighty in his mercy grant, that we may all do as much as we can, assured that he does not expect any of us to do more ; and that we may be continually “ abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.” Amen.

Humanity, and Virtue recommended
from the Consideration of the evanescent Nature of Man upon Earth.

SERMON VII.

For now shall I sleep in the dust, and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.

JOB vii. 21.

A MORE melancholy reverse of fortunes cannot possibly be imagined, than that which is represented in this ancient poem. The piece opens, and discovers to us a man, surrounded, on every side, by the brightest beams of prosperity. But scarcely has the reader time to hail the happy man, before he is called upon to exchange his congratulation for compassion. The sun, that shone upon him in so full and direct a manner, and of which the

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seemingly settled rays appeared to sleep upon his head, on a sudden retires; and the blackest shades of ruin and tragedy collect around him. The messenger of evil tidings approaches the possessor of all this world can give, to inform him of the destruction of a part of his property. Misfortunes are said seldom to come alone: in a closer train they never trod upon each other, than in that series of sorrows which is here painted. To the report of this loss, another, and yet another, succeed: until, at length, the envy of the east is reduced to a beggar.—His children, however, his chief treasures, are numerous. In their affectionate arms, in their filial offices, the miserable bankrupt may find consolation. No: before he has time to recover from the stupor, into which the intelligence of his ruined effects had plunged him, his heart is assailed with the tidings of their death.

“What all my children? did you say all?”

And to make it yet a darker day to the auditor of this dreadful news, all destroyed in the cheerful hour of family-convocation. The day of domestic festivity is the day, when this rod of domestic affliction falls upon him.

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Still, with the help of health, the mourner might have learned so far to have forgotten the shipwreck of his fortunes, and the funeral of his family, as, after a time, to have recovered happiness. Alas ! even this last comfort that was left him, takes its flight, and follows the rest. “From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head,” he is spotted with disease, and racked with pain. To give the mournful finish to his affliction, the spirit of him that “sat as chief” is doomed to be derided by that insolence, which stands perpetually ready to set its foot upon the fallen. That deference for his judgment, which received his words as oracular wisdom ; which chained every tongue in his presence ; listened in silence to all that he said, and to all that he said in silence assented ; that respect, which rose up at his approach ; that fear of his frown, which made folly shrink from his eye ; and that incapacity of supporting his contempt, which inspired an incredulity of its existence, no expression or report of it could overcome ; are exchanged for the wanton and unfeeling scorn of base and servile minds : and instead of the respect of venerable age, he is degraded to endure the saucy levity of boys,

whose fathers he had been accustomed to regard as the refuse of mankind.

He has now nothing more to lose. In this situation, his friends assemble round him, to try the effect of their condolence and consolation upon him. On the first sight of their altered friend, they are unable to restrain their tears! For a while, they withhold the impertinence and impotence of words, from a grief, which appears to be so profound. For a while, they forbear to disturb his dumb despair, and reverence his sorrows in silence. At length, the mourner opens his mouth, to curse the hour in which a wretch was born; and to upbraid the tardiness of death. Many words are employed by his companions to silence his murmurs; but not one of them finds the way to his heart. He remains inconsolable; and pours forth a variety of lamentations, intermingled with many pathetic appeals to the pity of Almighty God. The chapter, from which I have taken the words I just now read to you, is one continued flow of plaintive and querulous passages; in which the man of sorrow freely indulges his grief, and addresses his complaints to heaven. He confesses that he has sinned; but implores his
almighty

almighty Punisher to take compassion upon a fragile, and perishing creature; and, in consideration of his few, and fleeting days, to remove his hand from him.

The words, of which my text consists, have something in them, to this effect, of which every man of feeling must have often felt the force; and which no man can read, without some emotion of tenderness. They are inexpressibly pathetic. “Wherefore dost thou not, oh protector of men! wherefore dost thou not pity, and forgive me? Make haste, almighty Helper! make haste to my aid, before I be gone for ever. My days are flying fast away. Make no delay to comfort a feeble creature, that is posting with a pace so rapid to his grave. *For now shall I sleep in the dust, and thou shalt seek me in the morning; thou shalt seek me to comfort, and to bless me, but, then thou shalt not find me, then, I shall not be.*”

This is not the voice of reason, considered as an address to the Almighty: it is the language of a broken heart; of a mind unhinged, and deranged by misery; a mind that feels, more than it thinks; it is the extravagance of

grief; it is the enthusiasm of sorrow. There is an air of pensive wildness in the words, which renders them infinitely mournful, and affecting to a susceptible spirit. The unhappy creature fondly addresses himself to the great God of heaven, in the forgetfulness of his grief, like a dying man, who calls upon his distant friend, to make all imaginable haste to come to him, and to comfort him. “Fly to me immediately; indulge not an hour’s delay; come directly, or thou wilt come too late: thou wilt seek thy friend in vain: he will have closed his eyes, without having seen thee: and thy presence shall be able to produce no expression of pleasure in his for ever fixed, in his mournfully inflexible, features.”

— Thus this afflicted man, full of the sad idea, that his days were fleeter than the wind; following the plaintive flow of his feelings; resigning his mind to the government of his grief, and indulging to a kind of melancholy fancifulness; in the distress and disorder of his soul, implores the Almighty to afford him some expeditious proofs of his pity, or, in a little while, when he should come to visit him with mercy, he would find him out
of

of the reach of it. “ For now shall I sleep in the dust, and thou shalt seek me in the morning; but I shall not be.”

The use, which I wish at present to make of this passage, is to consider it, as containing a striking and faithful picture of man in general; and as what, however disordered it seem, considered as an address to the Deity, may be put into the mouth of every man, as an address from him to his brother, with a propriety, at once, perfectly strict, and infinitely affecting! I need not take up any of your time to prove, what no one can want any additional conviction of, that the days of man upon earth, when multiplied to their largest number, are very few; and that, in most cases, they are rendered fewer still, either by afflictions and cares, of one kind or other, that gradually prey upon our nature; or by sudden and violent accidents, that cut us off in a moment, in the midst of life and health. We may look at man, in all his flower and prime, and describe him in these words of Job. Now shall he sleep in the dust. Now, almost immediately, shall he sink into his last slumber: his eyes have only a short moment to remain open: and then he

lies down upon his bed of dust, and sleeps too soundly, to be ever waked again, by all the noise that mortals can make over him; and ignorant of all that is done under the sun. In the morning thou shalt seek him, thou, whoever thou art, that seest him now, and art destined to survive him; but he shall not be. To-morrow, thou that beholdest him to day, shalt look around thee for him in vain! To-morrow thou shalt come, thou that seest him in his glory, shalt come, and find all his glory gone!

“In the morning,” may every man say to his destined survivor, “thou shalt seek me, but I shall not be.” No words are too strong to express the rapidity of the pace with which man passes to his grave. Now we see him, and now we seek him, but we cannot find him: the appearance is gone: the apparition has vanished. We saw such a form before us; we took off our eye; we looked again; and it was gone! The figure, we but now beheld, has disappeared! We seem to ourselves to have dreamed of having seen such an one. As a dream the image has fled away, and cannot be found; he has been chased away as a vision of the night.

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Thou shalt seek me, but I shall not be. How complete, when he is gone, with the exception only of distinguished individuals, is the disappearance of man ! Even the searching eye sees him no more. The inquirer after him cannot find him. The fugitive from human sight is entirely evanescent. His very remembrance passes away. He not only ceases to be, no memento remains of his having been. He not only is no more, it is forgotten that he ever was. The arrow has winged its flight ; and the air, through which it passed, retains no traces of it. The shadow is gone ; and has left no mark of its image : it has not printed the ground it occupied : the place, from which it has departed, presents no impression of its figure ; preserves no record of its projection over it. Society misses not its absent member ; the ocean has lost a drop. “ The place that knew him, knows him no more.” His very idea has departed from it ; he is not only gone, but forgotten. Like the hills and the valleys that received his frequent feet, and discover no signs of sorrow upon the discontinuance of his visits, cease not, in consequence of his absence, to “ shout for joy, and sing ;” like these

these inanimate companions of his solitudes, that continue to “clap their hands” and to rejoice, after his eternal separation from them, just as they did before; the inhabitants of the town where he lived, go on to push their pursuits, with an ardour, and to meet in sprightly circles, with a vivacity and a gaiety, over which his everlasting removal from the busy, and the festive sphere, has thrown no damp.

“Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?”—Where indeed!—Look around ye, on the day when his death is announced, in the place where his life was passed:—Where is he?—Seek him in the countenances of the neighbours;—they are without a cloud;—he is not there.——The faces, upon which he has closed his eyes for ever, continue as cheerful as they were before. His decease is reported in the social circle; the audience receives it with indifference, and forgets it in haste. The seriousness, with which it is told, or the sigh, with which it is heard, springs rather from human pity, or from moral reflection, than from social distress; and, in a moment, the current of convivial mirth recovers the fluency of its flow. The business

ness, and the pleasures of the place, proceed with their usual spirit; and, perhaps, in the house which stands next to that, in which he lies an unconscious lump of clay, in the cheerless chamber of silence and insensibility, the voice of music and of dancing is heard, and the roof resounds with jubilee and joy.—Wait but a few days after his interment: Seek him, now, in the faces of his kinsmen;—they have resumed their cheerfulness;—now, he is not there.—When a few years have circled over his sepulchre,—go search for the fugitive, in his dark retreat from human notice: his very relics are vanished: he is now not even there.—Stay a little longer, and thou shalt seek in vain for a stone to tell thee, in what part of the land of oblivion he was laid: even that frail memorial of him, of whatever materials it was made, has mouldered away.—“Man dieth,—and where is he?”

Such is man: whatever his appearance to day, to day how conspicuous soever to every surrounding eye, “in the morning thou shalt seek him, but he shall not be.”

From this passage, thus considered as holding out to us a faithful description of man in general,

general, let us try to extract a few reflections, in attending to which, I hope, we shall find our hearts improved.

First, The consideration of the few days which man has to spend upon earth, pathetically appeals to the *pity* of every feeling heart, in such a manner, as will not allow it to embitter any of them by injurious treatment. When we consider one another in the light of creatures, destined one after another to descend into darkness, and dust; when we reflect, that we shall all, after having run our little careers, and panted in our temporary pursuits upon earth, be swept off from the scene; and our eager enterprises, impassioned hopes, and humble pleasures, and humble triumphs, be swallowed up in the deep gulph of insensibility and forgetfulness; when we view one another in that shade, which this thought of our common mortality throws over us all; one would think it should melt us into mutual compassion, and tenderness of treatment toward each other: that it should soften us into pensive and gentle sensations; disarm us of all ferocity and hatred; and dispose us, instead of hurting one another, to soothe and comfort each other, by all the kind
offices

offices in our power. When a city is beset by an irresistible, and an exasperated enemy; and the wide-wasting sword is every moment expected within the walls; is that a time for the inhabitants to trouble the few moments of liberty, or of life, that are left them, by mutual animosities, and intestine hostilities? Surely then, if ever, it is a time for them “to dwell together in amity.” The enemy without is enough; nothing but friendship should reign within. Come then, my fellow-mortals, and let us determine to dwell in fraternal union among ourselves. Look round, and see how sickness, and pain, and death, surround us on every side, and lay close siege to our nature. Let us forget all private quarrels, and unite against the common foe. Let us resolve to repel from each other as many as we can of the natural evils that assail us all; to keep off from one another, as long as we can, the last enemy of us all; and to pity, and comfort one another, under the prospect of his certain approach, either sooner or later.

Milton has described the first moment of human enmity. He has painted the parents of mankind at variance with each other, after the loss of their innocence; when the sentence

tence of death, which had been passed upon them, was, every hour, expected by them to be put into execution. Upon this occasion, this first instance of animosity between mortal creatures, which he who has sung “of man’s first disobedience,” supposes to occur between them, by whose crime mortality was first incurred, the poet has put these words into the mouth of the mother of mankind :

“ While yet we live, scarce one short hour perhaps,
 “ Between us two let there be peace !”

The proposal cannot but be considered, as highly becoming the sad situation, into which they were fallen. Let me adopt this pacific proposition, which one of our first parents is thus pathetically represented as addressing to the other, with so beautiful a propriety, upon such an occasion, and let me address it this day to their descendants. “ While yet we live, scarce one short hour perhaps,” long, at most, we have not any of us to live, “ between us *all* let there be peace !”

Let every man consider his brother as a creature, whose days are hastening to an end, and pity will not let him use him ill : he will feel himself kindly affectioned towards him :

he will wish him well, with the warmest benevolence ; and feel a tender solicitude to shed as much sunshine upon his little day, and to disperse as many of its clouds, as he can. Who is there, that could meet a victim on its way to the altar, and see the knife of sacrifice in readiness, and indulge a desire to give the devoted animal a moment's pain, as it pursues its path to slaughter ? and can any one consider man in the light of a passenger to the grave, and endure the idea of throwing so much as a single thorn in his way ? No : he will rather fetch as many flowers as he can find to scatter along it ; and smooth away from it every asperity, which it is in his power to remove. He will not trample upon a creature, over whom he sees the uplifted foot of death. He will not bruise to-day, the worm that is to be crushed to-morrow. He will permit the fleeting shadow to flee away in peace.

However far we may be from entertaining such feelings and sentiments as these, before our brother sleeps in the dust ; if, in their absence, we are tempted, while he lives, to do him wrong ; as soon as we see him laid in his lowly bed, they are sure, with more or less force,

force, to arise within us. Then, they rush upon us in a swarm of stings; and revenge the injuries we rendered him. When it is too late to undo what has been done against him, by an adequate amends, then, that pity, which should have prevented us from doing it, takes possession of our hearts, and severely punishes us for having done it. That compassion, which we should have drawn from the consideration of our fellow-creature's rapidly approaching dissolution, when we see him actually no more, forces itself upon our hearts, without waiting for the call of consideration, and loudly upbraids the cruelty of our conduct. He, who could injure a living man, without remorse, has not been able, without remorse, to look upon his grave. Then, he has relented, and repented: he has sighed, and said to himself, "Poor, departed mortal! why did I embitter thy moment of existence? short has been thy dance of joy; it was cruel in me to damp, for an instant, the harmony of it! quickly hast thou passed away; I must have been a monster to disturb thy passage! a few short hours the God of nature gave thee, thou insect of a day, to sport and glitter in the sun; ah! wherefore, during

during any part of it, did I prove an interposing cloud?

And, perhaps, the most painful sensation, of which our nature is susceptible, is that, which is experienced by a sincere penitent, possessed of some share of native sensibility, when, in the melting moment of contrition for his past conduct in general, and in the generous moment of virtuous resolution to devote his future days to the discharge of his duties, he looks around him for some one, whom, during the slumber of his reason, and the dream of his folly, he had wronged, with an intention to make him all the recompense in his power; —but finds him vanished away from the world, and laid down in that house of silence, whence no cries of his can ever recall him; where none of his good offices can ever reach him; where he is equally unable, to revive his resentment by a repetition, or procure his pardon by a reparation, of the wrong he did him; and where the object of his past injustice, and his present repentance, sleeps too soundly to hear the sigh of his remorse, should he go, in the agony of it, and groan over his grave. Among the tears that, in the moment of conversion from vice to virtue, roll down his

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face,

face, this, which retrospective and impotent compassion calls into his eye, is a big, and a bitter drop; which he will often renew, and which, it will be long, before he is able to wipe away. The amendment of his manners shall procure him the peace, arising from the hope of heaven, and the pardon of his sins; but will not soon quiet the pain he feels, from the recollection, whenever he renews it, of having thrown one bitter ingredient into a creature's draught of joy, whose life, now it is past, appears to him so small a cup, and capable of containing so little! The regret of that action, as often as it recurs to his remembrance, shall ache at his heart, and put it out of the power of the penitent, to yield a perfect compliance with the encouragement of Christianity to "be of good cheer." Pity for the departed object of his cruelty shall rise up in his bosom, and oppose the pardon of it: social sorrow shall deny him self-forgiveness: the injured shade of a short-lived creature shall present itself to his imagination; and, in proportion to his improvement in the generous affections shall be the pain, which its silent reproaches excite in his breast.

Let him who has injured another, if he
would

would save himself from the sorrow of a repentance, in this respect, too late and fruitless, repair in time the wrong he has done; and do all he can to wipe from his brother's breast the impression of his past unkindness, by offices of good will and friendship. Let him make him what amends he may immediately. Let not a moment's delay be indulged. There is not a moment to be lost. Hasten,—fly,—or the fleeting creature will be gone. For soon shall he sleep in the dust, and thou shalt seek him in the morning, but he shall not be.

Secondly, The consideration of the fugitive and perishable nature of mortal man presses upon us, in the most powerful manner, the practice of piety and virtue, if we wish to render ourselves lastingly happy, or procure ourselves permanent honour. Human life is but a short term of happiness: if a sincere principle of love to God, and to man, be able to lengthen it, it must surely be our wisdom to cultivate it.—The career of human glory is cramped and confined; it lies in a little compass: if rectitude of life can give it an ampler scope, and swell it out to a more majestic sweep, our

ambition should determine us to act a virtuous part.

The suitableness of virtue to remedy the brevity of human life may be placed in several points of view, which very strongly recommend the practice of it to the pride, and to the prudence of man.

I. It may be considered as increasing the life of man upon earth. Under this head, I do not mean to insist upon that more commonly discussed topic, which these words perhaps lead you to expect, the tendency of virtue to multiply the days of human life, by means of that temperance in the gratification of the sensual appetites, and in the prosecution of the secular pursuits, which it prescribes. No doubt, virtue thus operates to prolong the life of man: but if this were all it did, its advantage would be trivial. This, however, is not all it does: for it teaches us to enjoy life. The enjoyment of life is that, which can alone render the length of it a blessing: and to enjoy life in the most perfect manner, is in reality to lengthen it. Life has its degree, as well as its duration: and an addition to the former is as truly an increase of it, as

an addition to the latter. To add to the spirit of life, is as really to enlarge it, as to add to the space of it. To live more, amounts to the same thing, as to live longer, than others. Upon a short life vivacity confers longevity. Among them who were born upon the same day, of some, who were committed to an early grave, the sum of allotted life has been larger, than that of others, who survived them the longest.

It is a common argument, in favour of redeeming as much time as possible from sleep, that he, who rises every morning at an early hour, is to be considered as making a proportionable addition to the term of his life. Sleep may be said to be so much deduction from the sum of human life. It is called the image of death: it may be called more: for the time, during which it detains us in its bands, it is death itself: it is a break and a blank in the life of man. He, that is asleep, answers to the description of the dead: he “ knows not any thing:” his “ love and his hatred are ceased:” during the season of his slumber, he has no consciousness of any portion, that he has in any thing under the sun: his pulse beats; his blood circulates; but his happiness

has stopped : he may be surrounded by sources of sensual pleasure ; but now his senses are sealed : he may be possessed of wealth, and power ; but he has forgotten, that he is : he may be blest in friends, and in children ; but, at this moment, he has lost them all : he possesses what he holds, as an inanimate substance the properties that belong to it : he has connexions, or riches, or honours, as his hearse will have plumes, as his stone will have ornaments, as his grave may have flowers upon it.

As the redemption of any portion of our time from this state of our nature is, therefore, with propriety, considered as so much addition to the sum of our life, so the excitation of our waking powers to that pitch of vigilance, which generous virtue implies, is, with equal propriety, to be considered in the same light. As sleep is a *temporary*, so a slothful, sensual, selfish life is a *partial*, death : it is a state of imperfect and paralytic sensibility. Such a life is destitute of many pleasurable sensations, that are as natural to man, and as necessary to the complete and perfect state of his nature, as those of sight, and sound : and may be said to be as inferior, in point of mental animation, to a life of vital

piety and ardent virtue, as the sleeping state of the animal body is, with respect to sensual activity, to its waking state. Moral sloth is the sleep of the soul; the slumber of those affections, the lethargy of those faculties, which give to life its principal spirit.

That state of mind, which is conformable to the laws of living laid down by the Gospel, the Scriptures are accustomed to express by the term life. Christians are described as “the children of the light, and the day,” that “sleep not as others,” that are watchful, and wide awake to the objects, which demand their chief attention; that are all alive and active; with all their powers in motion; all the faculties of their nature roused to their proper functions, and busy at their respective offices. The converted sinner is represented as being “born again;” as becoming “a new creature;” fresh life is infused into him; other pulses of pleasure beat within him; he glows with new desires, new hopes, and new joys. A pious and good man, by entering upon a wider field of contemplation, and of pursuit, than that, in which the powers of the selfish, and the sensual expatiate; by opening his mind to more vivid, and more various sensations;

tions ; by filling up his solitudes, those blank spaces in the existence of the indolent and the dissipated, with interesting reflections upon the perfections of God, and the prospects of virtue ; and by proposing to himself, in active life, a greater number of generous objects, that agreeably occupy his mind ; may be said to spread his being over a larger space ; to fill an ampler sphere with his existence ; and to render himself a more animated creature ; than persons who live only to themselves, and who lie dormant during a great part of their lives.

Upon this ground, I, at present, would press upon you the practice of virtue, with a view to remedy the brevity of life ; considering it, not as that which enlarges the space of it, but as that which crowds more life into the same compass ; not as adding to the number of our days, but to the number of our ideas ; not as multiplying our years, but the objects of our attention, and the sources of our entertainment. I recommend sensual temperance, not merely as prolonging the term of animal life ; but as promoting the activity of the senses, and consequently multiplying the pleasures of sense. I wish you to exercise moderation in secular pursuits ; not merely as that which
excludes

excludes the passions, that prey upon our nature, and eat away our life; but as introducing the generous dispositions which cheer, and cherish the soul, and which “make glad the heart of man,” more than any other cause in nature. In short, I would inculcate virtue, not as operating to promote a dead and inanimate length of days; to prolong the power of respiring air; to keep up the circulation of a purple liquid, through the veins of a curiously constructed fabric; to preserve the body of man from the necessity of being put into the ground; or, as operating to produce this effect, by an insipid series of abstinences and self-denials: but as supplying a perpetual succession of delightful and spirited sensations, which diversify and enlarge existence as it passes along; and as principally operating to prolong the period of it, by multiplying its pleasures. Virtue lengthens, chiefly because it sweetens, life.

If, then, you would live, I do not merely say as *long*, but as *much*, as possible, cultivate the sensibilities, enter upon the exercises, of generous, and energetic virtue. Virtue adds to man a new sense: it is necessary to complete

plete the proper number of inlets of pleasure, of organs of enjoyment, that belong to his nature. To be destitute of it, is to possess a maimed and defective life. You pity the blind ;—they cannot enjoy the beauties of nature : you pity the deaf ;—they cannot admit entertainment from the sound of society, from the voice of music : pity, for the same reason, the selfish ;—they cannot “ rejoice with them that rejoice :” most sad, and mournful defect ! —happiness, “ at one entrance,” and that the widest of all, “ quite shut out !” You commiserate the sick, and the lame, whose days are passed in the chamber, or in the chair ; —they cannot walk whither they would ; they do but breathe, you say, they do not live ; they are buried in confinement ; they differ from the dead, but in beholding the grave in which they are detained. Compassionate also them, whose affections are shut up in their own little affairs, and are incapable of roving, with delightful enlargement, over the many scenes of happiness, which the creation, in the present stage of its progress, exhibits ; and of expatiating in the grand, the unspeakably spacious contemplation of that
general

general welfare, which religion teaches us to expect, that the providence of God will ultimately produce.

“ Let us eat, and drink,” says the libertine, “ for to-morrow we die.” I urge the same consideration in favour of a virtuous life. Let us make the most of our little life, by leading it as it ought to be led. Let us press down into so small a measure as much happiness as it can contain, by compressing into it as much goodness as it will hold. Let us give to the joys, that have so short a time to flow, as brisk and sprightly a current as we can, by cultivating that virtue, which constitutes the vigour of nature, and the vivacity of life.

II. Of those who lead an eminently virtuous life, when their breath departs, the idea long remains behind them, in the remembrance of the good. “ The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.” Putrefaction preys at once upon their bodies, and upon their names. As their relics dissolve into dust, in the chamber of the grave, their remembrance is reduced to ashes, in the bosom of mankind. Those, who were not loved while living, are neither lamented,
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nor missed, when dead. The amiable and excellent, on the contrary, when they cease to be, continue to exist in the memory of those, among whom their little 'life was passed.

I have represented the fleeting nature of mortal man; his speedy departure out of the world, and his complete expunction from it, when he has left it. The Scriptures describe him as fleeing away as a *shadow*; an unsubstantial image, a nothing, that soon leaves its place, and leaves no proof behind it of its having been there. This is a strictly faithful, a literally honest, and unpoetical picture of the majority of mankind. While they are, their being is insignificant to society; and when they are no more, it is not remembered that they ever were. They leave no impression of their figure upon the station which they quit. There is no stamp of their ever having stood there. No mark, no monument, of their departed image remains. While they occupy their place, they are merely appearances. The sphere to which they belong is unfilled; the post where they stand is vacancy and emptiness. There is nothing there: there is the apparition of a member of society;

society ; but the substance is not there. It is only a shadow that stands before mankind ; a phantom that appears to the eye, without imparting any influence ; a ghost that glides unfelt through the earth, and then vanishes away. Of the majority of mankind such is the description. Their biographer has only to say of them, that on a day they were born, and on a day they died. All that remains to be recorded, in the interim, is, that they received, and returned the air of heaven ; they closed, and they opened their eyes, upon the light of day ; they felt, and they satisfied the wants of nature, or of art ; so many suns arose, and went down upon them ; so many summers bloomed, and faded before their eyes ; so many winters scattered the hoar frost upon their path ; and then their senses were sealed for ever. No wonder, when such men depart, that along with them their idea dies, and that their extinction is entire. From this total mortality, which the majority undergo, the instant their bodies are deposited out of the sight of survivors, those, who diligently discharge the duties of life, are favoured with a longer respite. Their generous activity, when their power of acting is over, whether
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the period of it be long, or short, gives a longevity to their image, in the mind of them, before whom, or towards whom, their virtue was displayed, proportioned to the degree of that virtue, and to the durability of the benefits it has communicated.

Such are not the shadows, that others are; there is substance and body in their being; they are felt, as well as seen, by their fellow-creatures; they make an impression upon the place in society which they occupy; they are not airy images, and unreal mockeries of the eye that looks for men; there is solidity, as well as outline, in them; they not only look like men, but are what they seem; they not only “go for men in the catalogue” of the naturalist, they are men upon the list of Reason, of Heaven. When such men quit the world, their memory makes a little longer stay in it; their names do not tread upon the heel of their breath; they are long before they follow it. When such men fall, contiguous society shakes around them; the hearts of others sink along with the final failure of theirs; and when the grave covers them from the gaze of gratitude, it cannot close over their loved idea. To this, long
life,

life, and length of days are added, in affectionate Memory's mental land of fair and cherished shades.

Thus, if there we would earn a place, we must exert the powers of our nature, while we occupy one in the world of reality. We must lead another life than that of a plant; than that which consists in mechanical animation; in the growth of a body; in a power of incorporating other dust into our own; in the current of a fluid through a complication of vessels; in the harmonious motions of a material system. Of this cold and vegetative, this still and contracted life, when it ceases to be, the remembrance will be no more retained by him, who beheld it in its bloom, than that of a tree, to the root of which the axe has been laid, by those who saw it flourish. The life, that is remembered by others, is that, by the generous glow of which others were warmed; that, of which the vigorous beats extend beyond the body where it dwells; that, which consists in the union of the soul, not with a single, but with the social frame, in the flow of the affections towards mankind, in the motion of the faculties in the courses of human-kindness: the life, of which the sublime
operation

operation lies in circulating happiness in society around us, as extensively as we can send it from us; in propelling it from our own hearts, with the powerful pulsation, the strong strokes of energetic generosity, to the extremities of the sphere, which we are thus enabled to animate. Of this noble animation, this divine, and enlarged vitality, which inhabits, as its complicated body, a circle of surrounding beings, the memory shall remain, when the principle is extinct: its memory shall remain, because the impression, which it makes upon the moral sensibility of all who behold it, is lively; and because the current of happiness, which it has caused, may continue to run on, long after the impulse that put it in motion is no more.

Those who have improved the opportunities, which Providence presented to them, of being substantially, and lastingly beneficial to any of their fellow-creatures, may be said to survive themselves in the benignant effects, which remain behind them, when they are removed from the world; while those consequences of their conduct, during their residence in it, are to be considered as so many memorials of them, that cannot fail, from
time

time to time, to revive the respectful and grateful-remembrance of them. Into the hand of a distinguished few, Almighty God has put the power of expressing their generous propensities, in such a manner, as to procure immortality for their names. Some have been possessed of learned, and eloquent pens; and in the volumes, in which they have transmitted important truth, they have handed themselves to posterity. Others have had it in their power, to render to their country such services of an active nature, as are never to be forgotten by the communities which receive them; the effects of which are felt through following ages; and in which they are, consequently, continually recognized and commemorated by their countrymen for ever. Others have been able, without injury to their relatives, to bequeath such magnificent legacies to useful institutions, as have held up their names to the respect and love of successive generations. Such men may be said to continue, in the consequences of their conduct, as long as those consequences last. These are so many monuments to their memory, monuments more durable than brass, more beautiful than sculpture can embellish; monuments that stand in

the public way, where mankind are continually passing, and reading their names. Such men, while such emanations of their minds remain, cannot be said to be departed; they are still in the world; their spirit walks among mankind; their statues stand in the earth, their noblest statues, the handsome images of their minds! the majestic effigies of their souls!

But posthumous existence is not confined entirely to such as these. Good men of humbler names, and obscurer merit, do not totally die, when their breath departs. Although their memory is not accompanied by the applause of the public, or graced by the gratitude of ages, of the private services they have rendered, in the narrower sphere in which Providence fixed them, the consequences may continue, and contain their names, long after they have left their place upon earth. The influence of their virtuous example, wherever it has taken effect, communicates from character to character, descends from father to son, and is to be considered as a perennial stream of benefits to society, stealing down, in various and silent courses, to the end of time. The source is soon concealed for ever from
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the sight of man ; but the river runs for ever on ; and though it may not be called after their name from whom it issued, or be connected with their idea in the mind of the spectator ; although no one may be able to trace it to its true spring ; yet it may afford some solace to the fleeting fountain, to reflect, that he has sent forth waters immortal, as they are sweet. If such persons as these have been blessed with children, who have taken the impression of a virtuous education, they may not only be said, with a peculiar propriety, to live in the virtue, to which they have thus particularly laboured to give birth, and of which they are the parents, as they are the authors of the being, in which they have travailed to form it ; but, as this is an effect, of which the eyes, of all that know them, readily assign them to be the cause, and upon which their names are left in sufficiently legible letters, they will frequently present themselves, in these surviving productions of their character, to the view of their surviving friends ; and often remind them of what were their minds, as they remind them of what their bodies were, by appearing before them in the moral, as well as in the animal, features of

their offspring. There is something soothing to a social nature, in the prospect even of this shadowy life, when the breath of real existence is resigned. Although “the dead know not any thing,” though “their sons come to honour and they perceive it not of them,” and though they may come to honour themselves, without any more sensibility to it, than their insensate stones experience; although, were popular acclamations to commemorate their names with a thunder of applause, they would prove insufficient to excite so much as the sense of a whisper in their ear; yet the living love to think, they shall be remembered when they are no more; and that the dart of Death shall not extend its stroke to the whole of them.

III. The diligent discharge of the duties of life, while it lasts, is the way to enjoy an animated, and an immortal existence, in another world, when this shall be no more. “I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.” These are the words that speak most loudly to the love of life, in behalf of virtuous practice; which

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propose

propose the most adequate remedy for that brevity of human existence, of which we complain; which most pleasingly salute our ears, and most effectually sooth our hearts, when we attend to commit our dead to the dust; which most completely deliver us from the dejection of spirit, with which we look round upon the assembled sepulchres of our species; and point out to us the way to emerge, in the most perfect manner, from those shadows of humiliation, which mortality throws around our nature.

Who, that has within him one spark of soul, can refuse to put on the beams of immortality? Who can endure to think of coming forth as a flower, and fading away, of fleeing as a shadow, and making no stay in the creation of God? Yet man, without virtue, is no more than this. All his other distinctions cannot rescue him from the humbling names, by which the Scriptures call him. Whatever golden, or crimson colours may array the vapour, it is a vapour still; “it appears but a little while, and then vanishes away.” “I have seen the wicked in great power,” and spreading out his honours to an ample extent; “but he passed away, and lo

he was not ; yea I fought him, but he could not be found.”—Is the luminous body that darts through the sky, that excites, for a moment, the vulgar amazement, that sheds, for a moment, a glaring light, to be compared with that glorious orb, which pours the golden day, which gladdens unnumbered nations, and shines with a serene and an unceasing splendour ?—No more is the flux and transitory glory, this world can give, to be compared with that, which “ the king eternal” confers upon them, whom he “ delighteth to honour.” “ The righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their father for ever.”

Take up the annals of nations ; in which, the great ones of their different ages, who put on the plumes of grandeur, and kept the world awake with the noise they made in it, whose excellency essayed to mount to heaven, and whose ambitious heads endeavoured to reach to the clouds, are marshalled by the pen of History, and made to pass in review before you. Behold the successive shades of the mighty ; see how swiftly they seem to shoot through the scene, as you pursue the story of the countries where they acted their part ;

their entrances and their exits have but a moment between them; the suns of glory, one after another, rise and set; the reigns of princes course one another with a rapid flight; the stirring spirits of different periods present themselves to the reader, and vanish; occupy a page, and disappear; the time in which each individual in the long procession is going by, is but as an instant; each fleeting passenger, in his turn, is departed, while the word of admiration is in your mouth:—Is this a glory to content a great mind? Shall we suffer our dignity, or our felicity, to be confined within such limits as these? Shall we permit so small a room as this to enclose our happiness? Shall we imprison our expectations in a point, when the door of immensity is thrown open to them? Let us be ambitious of abiding in honour, and in happiness. Let no believer in the Gospel content himself with meteor and mortal glories, the fires of which, however splendid, are speedily spent. Let no one satisfy himself with being a shooting, however shining, star, in the firmament of glory, who is invited to become an everlasting luminary there; to whom a splendour is offered that shall survive the sun; whose ambi-

tion is bidden to a glory, and an honour, with which immortality is joined. Let no one discover so little avarice of welfare, and engage in so abstemious a pursuit of happiness, as to restrain his desires to the few hasty joys, he is able to snatch in his passage through this world, when before his wishes christianity has spread “pleasures, that are for evermore.”

If, then, in the most perfect manner, we would redress the dissatisfaction of human nature with the short duration of human life, we must diligently cultivate those generous dispositions, which operate, at once, to multiply the days, and the pleasures of our present life; to make us memorable to our survivors; and to procure us the approbation of that Being, who gave us existence, and who can continue it as long as he pleases.

To what this subject has already suggested to us, I have only to add,

Thirdly, That the consideration of the brevity of human life calls upon them, who either have entered, or who are disposed to enter, upon the service of God and society, for all possible ardour in running, and expedition in starting, in the honourable race of virtue. The useless and the pernicious part of mankind compose a
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 numerous

numerous body. On the other hand, the friends of society, whose exertions are to supply the place of those faculties, which others suffer to slumber, and to counteract the malignant influences of opposite practices upon human happiness, are but a small party, and their stay in the earth is fleeting, like that of their opponents. Let them not then lose any part of that little life, which is allotted them. While yet they live, let them not live so much as a day in vain. They have not long to serve their fellow-creatures and their friends; while they have the opportunity, let them with virtuous avidity seize it. Whatsoever their hands find to do, let them do it with all their might. Whatever useful undertaking they may have meditated, let them make haste to execute: let their benevolence use all possible dispatch: for soon shall they sleep in the dust; and the eye of Necessity shall seek them in the morning, but they shall not be. Let the benefactor, who is so shortly to be no more, exercise the most diligent beneficence, while he is.

Let me address myself to the generous ardour of the young, and urge them to engage, without delay, in the service of society. So
short

short a term of devotion to it cannot afford any deduction. That offering, which nature and necessity have made so poor, let not indolence and procrastination impoverish. Give to your fellow-creatures the whole of that, which is so little. Insult not the claims of mankind upon you, by dedicating to them but a part of a moment.

And let it be remembered, that all the moral improvement we are able to make, within a space so narrow as human life allows us, will not be more than is wanted to support our nature, amidst the pains and terrors of its close. That is a moment of timidity, when fancy is sometimes too powerful for reason; and when fears are apt to mingle with the triumphs of faith. He will be able to pass that moment with the most perfect peace, whose memory has to place before him a life, as useful in all its parts, as it was in his power to make it; and whose sinking heart is supported in that hour of final depression, and sustained in its hopes of heaven, by the suffrages and testimonies of his grateful fellow-creatures. This was the retrospect that most effectually soothed unhappy Job, under all the agonies which wrung from him the words
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of the text : and it is upon this pillow, that our nature must ever enjoy the most profound repose, when “ heart and flesh for ever fail it.”

I conclude, my fellow-christians, with inviting your warmest gratitude for that Gospel, which teaches us to look forward to the last hour with sensations, at once serene and cheerful. To others Death has turned a pleasing face : but it is to us, my brethren, that he presents his most amiable aspect. The man of insupportable and irremediable misery has sometimes smiled upon him with a gloomy joy, and has called him a friend, when he has contemplated in him only “ the deliverer, who rescues man,” without being able to call him “ the rewarder, who the rescued crowns.” Considered merely as a sanctuary from incurable pain of body, or inconsolable sorrow of heart, he has “ rejoiced exceedingly and been glad to find a grave.” In the midst of “ wearisome nights, and days spent without hope,” he has soothed his plaintive fancy with the prospect of that peaceful and silent retreat from all the ills of life, “ where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest ;” where exhausted nature lies
down

down as upon a bed, sinks into a sweet oblivion of all her woes, and “remembers her misery no more.” There is comfort in the prospect of this negative ease to a creature in agonies, but it is mournful comfort.

The enslaved savage also, in looking to the close of life, has his consolation of a *positive*, but it is of an *humble* nature, in the prospect of that world, which his fancy has formed beyond the grave; where golden fruitage is to grow; where flowers unfading flourish; where healing breezes blow upon every wound; where nor hungry tigers roam, nor noxious reptiles lurk, nor Christian monsters lift their whips.

But it is to us, my brethren, that the sublimest comforts belong, when we look to the end of this little life. Amidst the troubles of it, we are composed to peace, by more than the dead and inanimate prospect of the tranquillity of the grave. Amidst the sighs that accompany our reflection upon its brevity, we are consoled by the exalted hope of more than a *sensual* heaven; by the hope of a region, where more than sunshine, and verdure, and fragrance, and ease, invite us; where the refined satisfactions of devotion, and
virtue,

virtue, and friendship, and knowledge, await us ; where more of the works of God shall engage our admiration ; more of his virtuous creatures fill our embrace ; more of his awful nature employ our contemplation ; and where Death, our dreaded enemy here, shall be swallowed up in everlasting victory. Upon that peaceful and blissful shore, I wish you all a safe arrival, and a happy re-union with every departed friend. Amen.

Poverty with Virtue more eligible
than Wealth without.

SERMON VIII.

*A little that a righteous man hath is better than
the riches of many wicked.*

PSALM xxxvii. 16.

THE Almighty has made us all to be happy, and to become so is the business of our lives. In endeavouring to attain this end, however, we discover more diligence than sagacity, and are less deficient in the exertion, than the direction, of our faculties.

We set out in this important pursuit with supposing, that happiness is the produce of situation solely; that it will only flourish in particular spots, and that there it will spring up spontaneously. We do not seem to know, or sufficiently to consider, that it must be planted and cultivated every where, and that, if
cultivated,

cultivated, it will flourish any where. We are not enough aware that what we call sources of enjoyment, are not so, in themselves, absolutely, and necessarily, but only relatively and conditionally; that they require certain corresponding qualifications in those who draw from them, to enable them to drink at them; that happiness is the result of an agreement and harmony between the person and the situation, between the inhabitant and the habitation, between the sensibility of the subject and the nature of the objects that act upon him. Light is sweet, but not to the blind; music is delightful, but not to the deaf; poetry is entertaining, but not to the tasteless in literature; polished society is pleasant, but not to the rustic; retirement is soothing, but only to the placid and untroubled breast; heaven is a place of felicity, but to the pious, and benevolent alone; and wealth is a blessing, but solely to the wise and good.

To bestow it upon the foolish, the sensual, the vain, the proud, and the selfish, is to put into the hand of a savage a gem, which he can apply to no valuable purpose, a book he cannot read, an instrument of which he knows not the use.

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We do not appear to consider, that there is such a thing as a capacity and an incapacity of enjoyment, a disposition to be happy, and a disposition to be miserable: that the former will find felicity in almost any situation, that the latter will find it in none. Where the soil is good, and where seed is sown, the clemency of the skies will call forth fertility; but no showers, however kindly, no suns, however generous, are able to fructify the rock.

For want of these reflections, of the adventurers for happiness that human life exhibits to our view, disappointment is the portion of those who “prosper in the world and increase in riches,” while the unsuccessful in the pursuit of them become the prey of envy.

The Scriptures abound in passages, that tend to set us right upon this subject. Of these, that, which I have this moment read to you, contains a very strong correction of the fatal mistake concerning happiness, into which mankind are so continually falling. “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked,” or than many riches, accompanied with wickedness.

This is a pleasing truth to them that have

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little,

little, and an important truth to them that have much. It shows us happiness in our own power ; instructs us in the secret of it ; guides us in the search after it ; and teaches us to make ourselves independent of situation and accident.

The superiority, asserted in the text, may be comprehensively illustrated by a successive reference to, and comparison of, the several component qualities, in the character of a righteous man, which are to be considered as contributing to the enjoyment of property, and the several follies and vices, which stand opposed to them in the various modifications of the opposite character, and which interfere with the felicity we inconsiderately regard as the inseparable companion of opulence.

First, The little that is accompanied with contentment, is better than the riches of those, who, whatever the sum of them they may possess, are dissatisfied with that sum. What is gain ? It is not gold ; it is not power : the Scriptures have answered the question, and they have answered it well. “ Contentment with godliness is great gain.”

“ But if I had more, I should be contented. It is the possession of much that produces content.”

content." Into an error more remote from truth than this, the human understanding never strayed. He that is not contented with competence, it is certain, would not be satisfied with superfluity. Contentment, with that which is enough for nature, is an inseparable attribute of a virtuous temper. It is a ray, in the luminous orb of the virtues, that streams from the same centre, which supplies the rest of the radiant circle. It is a natural and necessary emanation from Faith, Piety, and Charity. There is no truth, of which we require to be so frequently reminded, no truth is so necessary to our happiness, and none is so apt to escape our memory, as this, That contentment does not grow out of the condition, but out of the character.

So far is what is considered by the world as felicity of situation, from giving birth, of itself, to felicity of heart, that, where the parent principles of happiness are wanting, the tendency of great possessions is rather to diminish, than to increase, content. There is a closer connection, a more intimate affinity, in the nature of things, between satisfaction and little, than between satisfaction and much. Those that aspire to wealth, resemble, in this

respect, them that are ambitious of excellence in arts, or in science; the nearer they approach to that perfection, after which they pant, the greater is at once their perception, and their impatience, of imperfection.

In this respect, then, the little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of the wicked. He is contented with that little: and contentment is “wealth, and power, and every earthly thing.” He that is satisfied with what he eats, fares sumptuously; he that is satisfied with what he wears, is clothed in purple; he that is contented with his dwelling, is the tenant of a palace.

Secondly, The little, that is accompanied with economy and temperance, is better than the riches of those, who have a taste for profusion. In such hands, riches are not riches. Intemperance converts wealth into want. It does this, in three ways.

I. If wealth were inexhaustible, intemperance would impoverish the possessor of it, by sinking the sum of sensual pleasure, in its power to bestow, to a much smaller amount, than what even poverty, with sobriety, is able to command. In order to secure the largest sum of it, it is necessary that the habits

bits should be so arranged, as to admit of occasional risings above the tenour of our pleasures to more animated and extraordinary entertainment. Novelty and variety are the soul of enjoyment. But that system of life, which is marked by excess, utterly excludes this vital principle of pleasure. He that is already upon the summit, can rise no higher: and he that is always aloft, is no more alive to the sense of elevation, than those who are on the ground. It is the flight thither, and not residence there, which excites the pleasurable perception of height. If he, who is habitually as high as he can ascend, would experience that variation which enlivens life, he must come down. And, indeed, it has repeatedly happened, that when the gay, and the dissipated have, by any accidental and local necessity, been compelled to descend to the plainness and simplicity of humble accommodation, they have confessed that the change has exhilarated them more than the luxuries of life had for a long time done.

Opulence, then, were it unbounded, in the hand of Profusion, is the lowest poverty. I say the lowest; for common Poverty, poverty that is merely comparative, can communicate

to her sober and temperate sons and daughters, not only food and raiment, but occasional entertainment and delight. But eternal vacation can have no holidays; and perpetual festivity is a perpetual fast.

II. But, by reducing the superfluities to the necessities of life, and thus multiplying more and more the wants of nature, profusion renders wealth itself inadequate to the system of expence; and thus produces a feeling of poverty, in the midst of opulence. In consequence of the disproportion between his property and his factitious necessity, large as in reality his possessions may be, the prodigal feels himself straitened; he experiences a narrowness in his circumstances, a contraction in his property, ample as it is; and, in the midst of pecuniary enlargement, his appetites complain of imprisonment. What is this, however vast the sum of worldly substance with which it may be accompanied, what is this but beggary? Is it of any consequence, whether indigence be seated in the purse, or in the fancy? What difference there is, is in favour of the former situation of it.

I need not say, that this painful feeling of confinement is usually too impatient of it, to be

be kept within the bounds of prudence ; which leads me to add,

III. That profusion, in the end, is the cause, not only of imaginary, but real indigence. The very first step, in this downward path to ruin, is the beginning of shame and misery. To be obliged to defer the payment of debts ; to be under the necessity of dismissing the industry, that asks its due, with promises and excuses ; to have inferiors, in whose face we are ashamed to look ;—how much must every feeling of honest pride and decent spirit be subdued, before this can be borne. Is opulence, with these appendages, an object of envy ? How much happier, and more enviable is he, however inferior his station may be, who is able to hold up his head, whomsoever he may meet. But, if the passage to want be painful, the arrival at it is yet more so. When the scene shuts in ; when the respite from decided, exposed, and notorious poverty, expires ; when the feigned respect, that was forced by dependance, gives way to open contempt ; when the patience of long-suffering creditors, which hope had kept alive, is converted, by despair, into execration ; and the wretched “ lord of useless thou-

stands" stands deserted, dispirited, and ashamed; without one friend, or flatterer left; then he, who was envious of him, surveys him with a sigh, and understands how poor a thing is wealth, without wisdom!

In this respect, then, the little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of folly. It is more productive of pleasure; more adequate to his wants; and more durable. Riches, in the hands of prodigality, lose their nature; they are not themselves; they are a large sum only of cyphers. The little that a wise man has, however little, is really what it stands for. He extracts from it all the good it contains; he turns it to the best account.

Thirdly, The little that is liberally enjoyed, as far as prudence allows, under the influence of a cheerful trust in providence, is better than the abundance that is embittered by the anxieties of avarice, and the mortifications of a sordid parsimony. In the hands of those who thus use it, as in theirs we have just considered, opulence is penury. There is such a want, to employ the words of one who has wittily exposed the absurdity of it, as "the want of what we have." As far as enjoyment

joyment is concerned, it is equal, whether gold be in the bowels of the earth, or in the box of parsimony; whether you have it not in your hand, or whether you have not a heart to use it. In either case, and equally in either, you are a poor man.

Who would not rather be an honest labourer for hire, whose daily industry is sufficient to supply him with clothes, and food, and fuel, and who, supported by a pious confidence in heaven, can enjoy to-day, without anxiety for the morrow; who, when the shades of evening dismiss him from his task, is able to return to his family, with a cheerful face, and a thankful heart; than the owner of the largest possessions, from whose use they are all locked and guarded by a troop of fears and fancies, which he cannot overcome? Where is the difference, in point of real and actual destitution, between his being debarred from them by foreign force, and his own? between his being forbidden to enjoy them by another, and by himself?

I proceed, fourthly, to the most important point of the comparison we are pursuing, and that to which the text more particularly alludes, The little that is accompanied with the consciousness of its having been fairly acquired,

quired, is better than the riches that are attended with the remorse of having been ill gotten.

It is better than the unjust gains, of which the consequent loss to others is divided among many, and lies light upon individuals. Can he, who has furnished his house, however splendid its trappings, who has adorned his grounds, however delightful their shades, who has clothed his limbs, however superb their attire, with what he has embezzled of public money, or with what he has extorted in the administration of delegated government, or with the wages of political servitude, or with the winnings of dishonourable play, or with the spoils of variously adventurous fraud, or with the gains of an unlawful, or unlawfully conducted, traffic, or with the earnings of a liberal, but prostituted profession; can the reaper of such an harvest pass through his apartments with the proud step, entertain his friends with the unclouded gaiety, or sink into his couch with the undisturbed repose, of him, who, as he sits under a lowly roof, surveys a frugal board, looks round on a circle of plain-clad children, or welcomes to his hearth an humble neighbour, has it to say,
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and can say it with his hand laid upon his heart, “ Little as is my portion, I have honestly earned it; in the acquisition of this little lot, I have employed no deceitful weight; I have poised no unjust balance; I have practised no artifice; betrayed no trust; overreached no inexperience; injured no innocence; trampled upon no right: I have adhered, not only to the laws of my country, but to the nicer rules of honour and generosity; I have licked the dust of no foot; I have worshipped no pride; I have flattered no vanity; I have not bent my body to one unmanly stoop; I have not forced into my face one adulatory smile ?”—Is there not, I ask, a proud swell of soul in such reflections, which opulence, however ample, cannot communicate to the mean spirit, that has stooped to pick it out of the dirt, and soiled itself in the act of taking it up ?

How much more superior still is the little portion of industrious innocence and integrity, to the largest gains, that are the consequence of an injury, which either from being more concentrated, or accompanied with circumstances of peculiar cruelty, has been more severely felt ! With what pity, may the honest

next possessor of a little, look upon them, who, by mean and guilty artifices, have diverted from its proper course the domestic descent of propriety ! who, by sedulous endeavours to foment family dissensions, to nurse the resentment excited by juvenile and venial indiscretion, or rational refusal to comply with unreasonable requests, or manly opposition to tyrannical commands ; by taking care to keep alive, and blow into a lasting flame, that spark of animosity, which, if left to itself, would have soon gone out ; by malignantly magnifying the actual faults of those against whom they have thus plotted, or falsely accusing them of others ; and by the patient exercise of insinuating arts and flattering attentions to them whose hearts they have thus attempted to turn ; have succeeded in supplanting the natural claimant to the inheritance of wealth, in the breast of its proprietor : or who have secured succession to it, by the forgery of a will, to which such circumstances of domestic disagreement have lent a colour, and have promised success !—Has opulence any pleasures within its reach, that can prevent the reflection from frequently recurring to such possessors of it, that its rightful owner

is pining, perhaps, in poverty and obscurity ; and, still more than by the pressure of poverty, depressed by the mournful idea of a beloved relative's inexorable alienation, and implacable resentment ? Can the ravishers of his plenty enjoy the repast ? Can the usurpers of his pillow sleep ?

With what a yet deeper sigh of compassion, with what a groan of pity, may an honest man, however poor, think upon those, who, in haste to inherit the wealth that awaited them, have allowed themselves to indulge an impatience of the natural pace of that mortality, to which they must owe it ; who have been unable to attend the slow step of nature to the tomb ; who were prompted to expedite succession by secret violence ; and whose imagination, now that they have obtained their wish, is perpetually haunted by the thought of that grave, in which they have laid the relics, but not buried the remembrance, of those, who should now have been sitting at the table where they feast, and reclining in the bowers they occupy ! With what self-gratulation, and gratitude to heaven, may the innocent proprietor of the most scanty sufficiency think of them, who, at the board
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of festivity, often start at the sudden appearance of that form before imagination's eye, which the earth cannot hide from it: who frequently, in the midst of gay companions, make a fruitless attempt to be gay, and essay in vain to shake off, what, in vain they tell themselves, is no more than superstition: who, at the hour of general repose, are kept from their rest, by the remembrance of the past, and the prospect of the future: who experience depressions of spirit, no mirth, no music can raise; complain of head-aches, no medical aid can relieve; and often exclaim, in the agony of their soul, "Oh that I could recall what I have done, and restore what I have taken!" whose involuntary expressions of secret anguish have been sufficient to awaken powerful suspicions, though not to furnish legal proofs, of their guilt; whose frequent sighs, sudden startings, muttered soliloquies, absent reveries, restless nights, declining health, and fading faces, have excited the surmises of neighbours, the wonder of guests, the pity of domestics; have occasioned their servants to look at them with a speaking silence; caused "curses not loud, but deep, to murmur round the neighbourhood;" and converted

verted the respect of the poor and dependant into forced and empty breath!—Who that has led an harmless life, in however humble a walk, upon surveying such a situation as this, will not say, with a shudder of pity, with a glow of gratitude to God, and a smile of contentment with his lot, “Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right?”

Suffer me to add, who is there, as yet unstained by deeds like these, that, to gain all this world can give, would consent, whatever be the contraction of his property, to stand in their situation, who, in addition to the deep remorse of having thus injured others to obtain the riches they possess, are so circumstanced, as to be in continual dread, and in continual danger, of detection? Some depositary of the secret lives; some hired instrument, some mean utensil of villainy, whose lips must be kept sealed, from time to time, by oft-repeated bribes. Think what they must feel, in being thus in the power of an inferior! in being drained of their reward by a base fidelity insatiable of pay! whom they are afraid to offend, by an appearance of that contempt they feel! whom they must treat
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with respect, as well as reward with munificence ! who is thus the tyrant of his superiors, and the eternal scourge of them who thought only to have taken up and laid down a tool ! and who, in spite of all their preventive liberality, they perpetually fear, will one day betray them ! Trembling they reflect, that conscience, in some moment of compunction for having concealed what ought to be published, or having been accessory to an injury that ought to be redressed, may force open the mouth of mercenary concealment, and compel a discovery of the dark transaction : or, if the guilty secret should be kept locked in the breast where it is lodged, until the last hour of life, they know not how soon that hour may come ; and that they know is an honest hour, when the accomplice has nothing to fear from man, and when it is natural for Penitence to seek for the forgiveness of God, by the performance of an act of justice. Thus situated, they realize, with a fidelity dreadfully literal, the picture of agitated guilt, which is drawn with such strong strokes, and heightened with such striking colours, in the book of Job ! “ Terrors make them afraid on every side ; a dreadful sound is
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in their ears." If this be not, I know not what is, "treasure and trouble therewith."

How happy, in comparison of perturbation like this, surrounded by whatever splendour, is he, however low, in the scale of human life, he lies, who has none but honest secrets! who can say with truth, "No one is acquainted with any action of mine, of which the discovery to all mankind need call a blush into my face: I have done nothing of which I have reason to be ashamed: the bread which I eat, I have honourably earned: these hands have ministered to my necessities, without contracting any spots!" How much superior is the smallest portion, attended with the peace of this reflection, to the largest possessions, encumbered with such a conscience as we have just considered!

At the close of these considerations, I cannot call upon you, in vain, for contentment with an inferior condition, which yet contains a sufficient supply for the few and simple necessities of nature; or for reconciliation to the wisdom and justice of those ways of Providence, according to which, wealth is often the portion of the unworthy. Be it so: to such is it any blessing? In the hands of Folly,

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is it not more commonly a curse? Can it rescue the wicked from any part of their appointed punishment, either in this world, or in the next? Can it give happiness to the unreasonable? Can it satisfy the insatiable? Can it supply the wants of either the profuse, or the parsimonious? Can it make the former prudent, or the latter unanxious? Can it heal the distempers of Intemperance? Can it silence the reproaches of Conscience? procure the physician that can

“ minister to a mind diseas'd,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And, with some sweet oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff,
Which weighs upon the heart?

Can it enable a moral nature to forget, or not to feel, the deformity of the guilt it has contracted? Can it wipe from remembrance, or wash the darkness of vice into whiteness? Can it ward off the stroke of Mortality, or corrupt the justice of Heaven?—In the hands of the wicked, it is, then, a worthless thing. Let them take it: “ verily they have their reward.”

He that allows himself to be “ envious at the wicked, when he sees the prosperity of the
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the foolish," suffers himself to be dazzled by the surfaces of things. In contemplating their condition, who roll in ill-acquired riches, he does not properly estimate the bargain they have made. Their gains project to his view; their loss retires from his eye. He beholds their purchase; it is a sparkling purchase; but he sees not the price they have paid. He observes the house, the grounds, the equipage, the troops of friends;—but he cannot penetrate into the breast; he cannot perceive what passes on the pillow.

May we all have the wisdom to look upon a good conscience as "more precious than rubies," as a treasure "unto which all the things that can be desired are not to be compared," and for the loss of which there are no gains that can make us amends. May none of us be ever persuaded to give away innocence for gold: for however at first we may be pleased with the exchange, in a little while we shall feel ourselves to be losers, and admit the conviction, that all the wealth the world contains, when accompanied with the sting of remorse, is not to be put in competition with the smallest portion of it, when attended with the consciousness of integrity. Amen.

On Self-deception.

SERMON IX.

The heart is deceitful above all things.

JEREMIAH xvii. 9.

WHEN man came first from the hand of his Creator, his bosom was fair as the face of nature round him, and honest as the light that shone upon him. Upon his tongue there was no guile, for there was nothing in his heart that it wished to hide. To the colours of art his character had no recourse, for every feature within him was comely. But as soon as innocence was lost, the blushing heart, ashamed, and shrinking from the eye of inspection, sought out a place of concealment. When the first probationers had broken the command of God, unable to meet the eye of their Maker, they hid themselves, says the

historian of their fall, from the insupportable presence of infinite Purity, among the trees of the garden. And to some shade or other, have all the imitators of their moral declension flown, in order to conceal themselves from mankind: to cover their characters from contempt, or to screen their designs from detection.

So numerous, and so well conducted, are the endeavours of mankind to deceive one another; such is the sum of their vice, and such is the fertility of their invention; so much have they to conceal, and so skilful are they in the art of concealment; that no man was ever able to say, he had never been deceived by human professions or appearances. So great is the multitude of the masks that are worn, and with such nicety are the features frequently delineated, and the colours laid upon them, that many of them, even by the eye of Penetration and of Experience, have been mistaken for the lines and the complexion of nature. How often man employs the breath which is in him, the spirit of God which is in his nostrils, to deceive his brother, that brother into whose breast to make a wonderful conveyance of the ideas that exist
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in his own, that breath was breathed into him ; with what frequency that noble member of his frame, which was given him to be the sacred and glorious organ of Truth, is made the ignominious instrument of Falshood ; by what multitudes, that face divine, which Nature formed for the index of the soul, is instructed to express what is not there ; can remain unknown to none, but those that are buried in the shades of entire seclusion from society. Where are they to be found, sheltered in what deep and impenetrable solitude, to whom either their injured property, or their wounded fame, or their bleeding affections, or their lost innocence, and departed peace, have not, at one time or other, given cause to complain of human insincerity, and to repent of the trust they have reposed in man ? The delightful dream of unsuspecting innocence, which paints mankind after her own likeness, is not permitted to continue long. Romantic confidence in the honesty and honour of all it meets reigns but a short time in the bosom of generous youth. The glow of that sweet delusion is soon succeeded there, by the clay-cold conviction, that men should be tried before they are trusted, and by frigid

caution in the choice of social connections. The forwardness of the warm and generous affections of honest and inexperienced Nature, to fly forth towards all human kind, is soon repressed, and soon punished. Too soon, when, like the young and tender buds of the year, tempted by the sunshine of smiling looks, and the warm breath of friendly professions, they go out from the heart, all fearless and fondly trusting in the treacherous appearances, they receive a cruel check from a conduct, far other than was promised by the genial invitation, that drew them forth: a conduct that blows cold and bleak upon them, and compels them to shrink back again into the breast; there to shut themselves up from a world they have found so inclement; to venture out no more till warranted by maturer Wisdom to trust again; perhaps never again to quit the heart, to which they have been thus painfully forced to retire, but there to wither away, and, from excess of social ardour, to die into cold and comfortless misanthropy.

Where is that walk of human life, which Falsehood has not ever, and does not still infest?—Who shall number the negotiations, in
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which her breath has been employed? the boards, over which her hands have poised the balance, and spread the merchandize? or the social hearths, at which her polluted lips have profaned the name of friendship? Where is that place, however sacred, however consecrated to Truth, which she has not dared to enter? Is there a temple, in which she has not stood, and stretched forth her hands to the God of Truth? Is there a senate, in which she has not risen, and poured the words of patriotism in a copious and fluent stream? Is there a tribunal, she has not approached, and there, before the awful Justice of earth, and the volume that contains the veracity of Heaven, with lips that but just have left the venerable lids, while angels have shuddered at the daring sounds,—uttered deliberate and solemn deceit?

Such is the social deceitfulness of the human heart. Nor does it satisfy itself with deceiving the eyes that are without it, and that cannot read it: it practises deceit, and practises it with success, upon the eye, which, next to that of Heaven, possesses the most intimate access to it. Its powers of deception are able to impose upon that, immediately
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under which all its operations pass. Man is not only cheated by the hearts of others, he is also cheated by his own. This species of human insincerity is the most common of all. It is the most subtil serpent of the race, which has crept into every bosom ; to the insinuating entrance of which scarcely the sincerest minds are completely closed ; and by which every human being, in a greater, or smaller degree, has been sometimes beguiled. He, that would not suffer a lie to pass from his lip, is not entirely innocent of lying to his own understanding ; and he, whom others have seldomeft deceived, has, perhaps, been often duped by himself.

Among the enemies to human virtue, self-insincerity may be placed at the head, and is itself a host. When all the citizens are united in fraternal fidelity to it, the strong city may bid defiance to the besiegers. The open and outward enemy, however numerous, or however brave, it may overcome. But when its walls enclose the enemy, that acts in secret concert with the foe without, its bulwarks are useless. When intestine treachery opens the gates, it is to no purpose, that the bars of them are strong. However impregnable by
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military skill, or courage, the town that is betrayed is soon taken. No battlements can make any defence against deceit.

What I propose at present, is to point out the several sorts of self-beguilement, by which mankind deceive themselves to their destruction; the various ways by which they defraud themselves of virtue and happiness. When the artifices of a sharper have been detected and made public, society is in less danger of being deceived by him. A little insight into the arts, by which we cheat ourselves, may put us upon our guard against ourselves.

The FIRST instance of self-deceit I shall mention is the sophistry, which men make use of, to reason away that religious truth, which lays a restraint upon immoral practices. What the heart of man wishes to be true, it easily prevails upon the head to believe is so. Whatever reason may have to say in opposition to it, in vain she rises up within, while the judgment, bribed, and biassed by the passions, decides the cause in their favour. The mind merely grants to the arguments on the opposite side the form of a trial, and ceremony of an audience; it stumbles over them; pays
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them no attention; and consequently perceives in them no weight. In support, on the other hand, of the delightful error with which it is in love, it listens with eagerness to all that can be urged. In consequence of this partiality to its side, the pleasing falshood is soon pronounced to be right sentiment. The amiable appearance it presents to the heart, the understanding is so far deluded by the heart, as to mistake for the beauty of Truth, and the conformity of the notion to inclination, for conformity to the nature of things.

Religious truth, while it is believed, when it is unable to deter man from treading the path of vice, is sufficient to disturb the tranquillity of the traveller in it. It hangs at least a fetter upon the foot, that is loosened from the virtuous confinement in which it could not detain it, that impedes the freedom of its pace, and prevents that perfect licentious ease, that complete enlargement of lawless passion, and wildness of play upon forbidden ground, which the wanderer over it could wish. It occasions those checks upon the erring heart, which contain the chance of its return, but from the painful pull of which, the passions, that as
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yet refuse to obey it, are continually struggling to make their escape. The doctrine of an almighty and righteous Governour of the world, whose “eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good,” and whose justice has appointed a day, upon which he will bring both into judgment, cannot but often damp the pleasure of those whose works are evil, and interrupt the warm and sprightly triumph of licentious gaiety, with the cold and uncomfortable feelings of fear and terror. This awful tenet, while it is retained, must sometimes haunt and disquiet the guilty breast, whatever way it flies to avoid its intrusion. Into whatever flowery paths it may strike to escape from its pursuit, it must be, every now and then, overtaken, and tormented by the terrible truth. Under the umbrage of whatever bowers of pleasure it may seek to conceal and shelter itself, it must be often found and seized, by this penetrating enemy to its peace.

In order, therefore, that they might go astray with quietness of heart, without any rough molestations from reason and conscience, they, who have led irregular lives, have employed all the ingenuity they have
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possessed, to prove them to be mistaken, whose faith they could not admit, without allowing themselves to be mad. Terrified by the frowning face of truth, they have flown for refuge to that falsehood, which smiles upon their guilt: and it is wonderful, into how perfect a persuasion some of them have been able to work themselves of the rectitude of the wrong opinion, which their passions have espoused.

A young man of lively passions, and licentious propensities, is loosened from the bands of parental authority, and receives “the portion of goods that falleth to him.” He enters the world with a bounding heart, determined, whatever be the consequence, to take his fill of sensual pleasure, and “waste his substance in riotous living.” “Away with morality’s vulgar trammels, away with religion’s ignoble shackles, I will be a man of spirit.” ’Tis a bold resolution; and the sons of Licentiousness applaud him for his fire.—Accordingly he lies down among his roses, and the song begins. But, in a little while, in the midst of the sweet and soothing strain, he starts up from the Elysium in which he was lapped, and his thoughts trouble him—“If there be
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a judgment to come, I am undone;—but perdition is too dreadful to be true;—and, therefore, there is no judgment to come. Transporting conclusion! delightful inference! It makes the path of sin so smooth, it makes the sinner's sleep so sound, that it must be a just one."

Enamoured of his new opinion, the child of his wishes, he searches the world of sophistry for supports. With an inglorious perversion of the understanding, that was given him to guide him in the pursuit of wisdom, he seeks for error as for silver, and searches for arguments in favour of falsehood, as for hidden treasures. He flies to the circles of superficial reasoners, to the clubs of infidel declaimers, and empty disputers; the jugglers in reasoning, who think to charm the judgment; who possess that little knowledge, which, in literature, an eminent critic, and which, in philosophy, an eminent philosopher, have told us "is a dangerous thing;" who know so much, but no more, as enables them to err, to triumph, and to talk; who are just wise enough to be fools, and have light sufficient to wander by out of the way of truth. He listens with an eager ear to
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their “ gay rhetoric, that hath so well been taught its dazzling fence ;” he hangs upon the lip, that calls it credulity to believe, and cowardice to fear, and servility to obey, the God of heaven. He drinks the delicious doctrine, that distils as the dew on his thirst of evil ; he opens his ear to the honied speech, as sweetly it drops upon him, of those who declare, with a peremptoriness that passes with ignorance for the authority of infallibility ; with a fluency of words, which is mistaken by their admirers for unclouded clearness of conception, and unhesitating conviction of mind ; and with flashes, perhaps, of wit, which are regarded by their dazzled auditors as the light of truth ; That judgment to come is a nurse’s tale ; a politician’s lie ; a village ghost, for children to tremble at, and the vulgar to shake before, but for people of sense to despise.—Under the tuition of these masters, our young enquirer is soon finished in the school of infidelity ; and able to speak of righteous retribution, either to others, or to himself, with the smile of contempt.

Such is the influence of passion in perverting the judgment that looks beyond the grave. Infidelity is, in few minds, the effect of serious,

rious, and sober conviction. The majority, by whom religious truth is denied, disbelieve, not because they cannot, but because they will not, see. The mind knows that truth is before it, but wilfully shuts its eye. When the morals are loose, the heart denies, because it dares not assent.

Nor is the branch of self-deceit, which produces a persuasion of the final impunity of sin, peculiar to infidels. It is practised by many of those, who call themselves, and whom the world calls, believers in religion. Many of the professors of Christianity, unable to prevail upon themselves to practise its precepts, endeavour to persuade themselves, that it is a dispensation of loose lenity, which overlooks the want of virtue in those, who yield an unreserved assent to its celestial origin, and pay an uniform attention to its ritual duties. In thus ascribing to the Almighty an immoral mercy, an irregular and unrighteous goodness, a clemency inconsistent with the holiness of his character, and the harmony of his works, such persons deceive themselves. Having eyes, they see not the truth that is set before them.

ANOTHER branch of self-imposition, very
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common among mankind, is that which leads them to look upon their own manners, whatever they may be, as the standard of morality. No one, who suffers himself to reflect with impartiality upon the subject, can possibly remain ignorant of the extent of his duties. But he, who is inclined to pay but a partial obedience to that system of practice, which conscience points out to him, and which Christ has put into his hand, easily prevails upon his understanding to exclude from the code those branches of it, which it is not convenient to him to include in his conduct. Of these endeavours to accommodate the standard of duty to their private inclination, and actual character, it is impossible to look among mankind, without meeting with many instances. From that complete collection of duties, which reason and Scripture concur to place before us, large indeed is the number of them, who cull and select those which are most congenial with their particular constitution; while those, which run counter to their native temperature, they strike out of the list of the virtues. Instead of moulding the image of their minds to that form, which right understanding delineates,

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neates, and holds up to them as the picture of duty, they endeavour to shape the figure of duty, so as to fit the manner of man they find in the mirror in which they behold themselves. In all the madness of moral inversion, they make what they are, the model of what they ought to be.

He whose native complexion is cool, dispassionate, and phlegmatic; to whom it is easy to go to church, to perform the offices of industry, to live within the compass of his income, to pay what he owes, and to abstain from riotous excess; but to whom it is difficult, to exercise “brotherly kindness and charity,” “to do good and to communicate,” to “look,” with a generous interest, “upon the things of others,” and to derive his principal pleasures from the contemplation and pursuit of other’s welfare; finds little difficulty in deceiving himself into an opinion, that religious profession, sensual temperance, compliance with the demands of his creditors, and obedience to the laws of the land, comprise the whole duty of man.

He who is of an animated and impassioned temper, prone to sympathy, inclined to compassion, the man of feeling, but, at the same

time, the slave of sense, and the fool of fashion; who is occasionally capable even of brilliant munificence; whose cheek would redden with resentment should you charge him with a mean action, or tempt him to commit one; who is susceptible of enthusiastic friendship; who would share his last shilling with a friend in distress; whose purse is ever open, while he has one, to his necessities; whose courage is obedient to his calls; whose hand is at his service in any hazardous enterprize, in which he may want it; whose voice is the ready champion of his fame, whoever may assail it when he is by;—but who, while he pays these attentions to his friend, pays none to his reason and his conscience; who employs no pains whatever to restrain any of his appetites, or to govern any of his passions;—easily induces himself to consider wild profusion, intemperate pleasure, impious wit, the detention of debts, the seduction of the innocence that never offended him, and the indulgence of sanguinary revenge upon him that, however slightly, has; but as the rich luxuriates, and wilder shoots of spirit, and of parts; and to content himself with a claim to that giddy, irregular, and desultory goodness,

ness, which proceeds from animal ardour, and pecuniary carelessness, but which, neither regulated, nor enriched, by reason, is incompetent to produce a system of social service, and to fill up the circle of sacrifices which society demands.

In contemplating such a character as this, it is much to be lamented, that the generous spark, which nature has kindled in the breast of such an one, instead of being blown up into a steady flame of charity, should be buried amongst the rubbish of sensuality: and it is yet more to be lamented, that the appearance of that spark, through all that rubbish, which, while it oppresses the fire, and prevents it from burning as it ought, cannot completely put it out, serves but too well, as it shines amidst the shade of the character, to adorn the darkness of vice, and make immorality amiable in the eye of juvenile imagination.

That the restrictive virtues, though, in reality, branches of benevolence, and though virtues only as they shoot out of that trunk, are, if at all to be admitted into the number, tame and poor-spirited virtues; virtues of an inferior and baser rank, without any thing

that is liberal and beautiful in them ; and, that that easy and careless generosity which consists with sensuality, and with sloth, and which, as of consequence it is partial in its operation, is also compatible with injustice, and with cruelty, includes all that is amiable and ornamental in the character of man ; is a sentiment, which, I am sorry to say, has lately become very popular and fashionable. It has been honoured with the sanction of the politer circles ; it has received the repeated plaudit of the theatre ; dressed by the pen of dramatic genius, it has worn a charm in the public eye ; it has won its way into a thousand hearts : but, let me be allowed to say, it is a sentiment dishonourable to the understanding that adopts it ; ruinous to the interests of virtue in every bosom that entertains it ; and destructive of the happiness of every society in which it prevails.

The sensualist soothes his want of sobriety, by the boast of social virtue. Alas, his claim is of the most contracted nature to that virtue, to which he is contented to have it confined. The connexion between sensuality and selfishness, is of the closest kind. The intemperate pretender to generous virtue makes

makes but a poor pretence to it. That temperance, which he calls a low and bastard virtue, is, when practised from right views, and sprung from right principle, a virtue of high birth, high spirit, high title, and high office. She is the honourable child of Charity, and illustrious coadjutor of Generosity. That voluptuousness, to which he gives the fair name of innocence, or the brilliant one of sprightliness, and animation, is the vile and base-born enemy of Benevolence; at once the fordid offspring, and the fordid nurse, of Self-love. That dedication of his days to the pursuit of pleasure, which he maintains his right to make; in which, he asserts, he preserves his innocence, as, in it, he pretends, he contracts no social guilt; implies, on the contrary, a comprehensive and most criminal embezzlement of property, and time, and thought, and ardour, and vigour, all of which were put into his hand by the Proprietor of all, to be employed for the benefit of his creation.

The rioter is a robber. The immoderate lover of pleasure is the ungenerous enemy of mankind. The open-handed prodigal that scatters around him his worldly substance,

without caring where it falls ; and who boasts of the light and loose compression with which his property is held in his hand, is a niggard of the good he was made to communicate. Even to that partial goodness, within which his claim to charity is confined, his pretensions are imperfect. Of that pecuniary generosity upon which he plumes himself, his costly pleasures must be considered as contracting his capacity ; while they lead to a dishonourable inability, at length, of practising pecuniary justice. And while he boasts of the ardour and fidelity of his friendships, that intoxication, of the criminality of which he ridicules the idea, perpetually exposes him to the danger of offering, in the moment of madness, an affront to that friendship which he worships, not to be forgiven by that honour which he worships too, that may stain him with blood from the bosom of his friend, and banish peace for ever from his own.

This imperfection of his claim to the character of philanthropist, the sensualist is able to perceive, if he thought proper to open his eye upon the subject. He must know, if he chose to know, or rather he does know, but he pushes the truth away, as often as it presents

sents itself, and chooses to forget, that his goodness is not healthy and hearty goodness; that it is a maimed and sickly charity; an infirm philanthropy, that serves society, as an individual is served by a lame and decrepid domestic; a benevolence, whose crawl of obedience to the commands of society can only comply with a few of its calls; and is an object of pity, not of satisfaction, to every wise and virtuous member of it, and to the almighty Master of that world, unto which, we were all sent into it, to minister.

There is yet another character that claims a place in this class of self-deceivers. This is the man, to whose nature it is not repugnant, to pay a superficial attention to all the heads of rectitude, without entering into the spirit of any. He chooses, therefore, to consider all that the Lord his God requires of him, as consisting in the external office, whether of religion, or of morality, without regard to the motive. He beholds the works of nature, without thinking of their author; he meets the sunshine of heaven, without seeing in it the smile of celestial Benignity; he receives the blessings of life, without associating with them the idea of gifts from above; he
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suffers the loss of them, without deriving resignation from the reflection, that infinite Wisdom took away what infinite Goodness gave ; he regards mankind around him, without recognising in them the children of a Father in heaven ; he hears of what is transacting under the sun, or reads of what has been done under it, without an attempt to trace in the operations of human life the print of a Providence :—but, he says his prayers, and he calls himself devout. He enters with no sympathy into the situations of mankind ; he beholds their misery without pain, and their happiness without pleasure ; the idea of society presents itself to his mind, without producing in it any secret motions of love and complacency, any lively wishes for the progress of human welfare ; he has cultivated no vivid views of the rectitude of distributing to necessity, of the value of happiness, and the propriety of extending the reign of it as widely as possible :—but he gives to the poor, and he pronounces himself charitable. He feels not the moral beauty of temperance ; he thinks not of its necessity to fill up the measure of human utility ; he regards not health as a social talent ; looks not upon length of days

as upon the protraction of benevolent opportunity :—he abstains, however, from irregular gratification of the senses, and he takes to himself the virtue of sobriety. The whole of his character, all his religion, and all his morality, is form. He has a form of piety ; he has a form of charity ; he has a form of temperance. This man deceives himself. Such conduct, if it did not, as in the case I am supposing it does, include an attendance upon the proclamation of divine truth, might be ascribed to involuntary ignorance ; but those Scriptures which are read in the churches, to which the character, I am considering, is carried in the course of his circle of corporeal exercises, have told him, that piety is a sentiment, and that charity has a soul, with sufficient perspicuity, and with sufficient repetition, to put it out of our power to impute his self-satisfaction, in the absence of virtuous spirit, to any other cause than self-deception.

The dexterity with which it conceals from the eye of self-inspection, those secret motives, and inward motions, it is ashamed to shew it, is ANOTHER instance of the deceitfulness of the heart. Many of the fairest acts of man take their rise, either partly, or entirely,

tirely, from foul and polluted fountains, to which, as he cannot without a blush, he obstinately refuses to trace them. He keeps his eye upon the stream, and suffers it not to see the spring. As carefully, and nearly as successfully, as he conceals such sources of his seeming virtues from the sight of the world, he conceals them also from his own.

While men are applauding his pecuniary bounty, and while his own heart is applauding it too, of that beneficence, which looks so fair, the benefactor has often to boast no purer spring than pride. Perhaps the moral admiration of the objects, or of the spectators of his charity, was the reward to which he looked: or perhaps his bounty was an ostentatious display of wealth; he had a secret pleasure in conferring obligation, rather than in communicating bliss; in exciting gratitude, rather than joy; in calling up the admiring eye of the necessity he lifted out of the dust, to the eminence on which he stands, rather than in raising up the depressed spirit into the elevation of happiness.

When the world has been loud in praising his princely liberality, who has patronized arts, or letters; who has taken genius under
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his wing; relieved it from the oppression of want; raised it from the shade of obscurity; and seated it at his right hand; and while his own heart has concurred in the compliments, which mankind, and which, perhaps, the muses have paid him; how often has the penetrating eye, from which nothing can be hidden, perceived the apparently generous patron, to be principally, if not solely, actuated, by the ambition of having talents in his train, and of mixing his with an immortal name.

His superior in years dispenses advice to the adventurer in business, or to the candidate for eternity. He points out, with the finger of rectitude, the path of temporal, or of moral, prudence; directs him to guide his worldly affairs with discretion, or exhorts him to guard his innocence against the snares of the world. It is an act which wears a face of only kindness and benevolence. Of uncorrupted kindness he takes to himself the praise: nor avows to his conscience the pleasure he derived, in performing it, from looking down upon inferior experience; from sitting in the chair of instruction; from receiving the respect that was paid, by the object of his counsel, to the superiority of his understanding, or

to the dignity of his virtue, to his secular sagacity, or to his moral wisdom.

The rich man invites a concourse to his house; he loads his table with luxuries; he provides gratification for every sense; he crowds the day with delight. The country round admires his hospitality; and he owns not to himself that domestic ostentation is the source of it; that he sent for his guests, not with a view to their entertainment, but for the entertainment of his own pride; that, in spreading his table, he spread a feast for his own vanity; nor, in calling his neighbours to see “all the things that are in his house,” and leaving “none among all his treasures that he shews them not,” does he put himself at all in mind of the antient and royal host, whose similarly contaminated courtesy to his visitants, the Scriptures have recorded.

A member of a republic is in power. His countrymen think he has too much. The conspirators assemble. Yes, they will rid their country of a tyrant. Yes, they will send their daggers to his heart. It is gallant, and splendid language. Each that utters it, conceives himself a patriot. Every one in
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the council imputes to the purity of public spirit the part he is going to act. Yet not to every one does the praise of uncorrupted patriotism belong. While this member of the assembly, who, "in a general honest thought, and common good to all, makes one of them," though he compliments himself upon the high heroic act he is going to perform, is assisted, in his undertaking, if not singly swayed, by private resentment against the victim of the conspiracy; perhaps another is principally prompted by envy of the height of him he is going to tread down; and a third, it may be, by a selfish impatience of his own personal, more than a generous intolerance of public, subjection to the will of a tyrant.

Thousands, in private life, have interposed in the protection of injured individuals, from the impulse of personal enmity to their oppressor, who have not disturbed the soliloquy of self-applause, by too deeply considering the cause of their conduct; who have regarded themselves as the enemies of injustice, the generous friends of innocence, and the honorable redressors of wrongs.

As the heart of man thus conceals from
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him the sinister motives of his social conduct, by the interposition of those fair and generous ones which constitute social virtue; with equal art, and with equal success, it deceives him, respecting the sincerity of his personal virtue. He has often hidden from his own eyes his dissatisfaction with his situation, under those declarations of contentment, with which he has attempted to cover it from mankind. From the shades of his retreat the recluse has sent forth the most alluring descriptions of the sweets of solitude. He has told his friends in epistles, he has told the world in poems, of his contentment with a calm obscurity; of his discovery of that happiness, which the world is in search of, in retirement from it; of his compassion for the inquietude of public life; of his contempt for the emptiness of honours, and for the favour of courts. These declarations, though their author was far from suspecting their sincerity, those who were acquainted with his anxious but unsuccessful application for preferment, have ascribed, not to philosophical elevation above the world, but to sullen disappointment in the pursuit of its smiles. The correspondent has seen in his letters, and the

public has read in his rhimes, but the eloquent evaporation of spleen, and the tuneful solace of discontent.

And as men thus conceal from themselves the sinister motive from which they perform good actions, or make fair professions, under the mask of these good ones which give them their merit; they hide from themselves the evil inducements, from which their ill actions derive their ill desert, and the unworthy feelings, that may upon any occasion pass through their breast, under the disguise, sometimes of innocent, and sometimes of commendable, principles, and amiable sensations.

He that exercises a parsimony injurious to his health, and inconsistent with charity, who refuses to his own wants, and to the wants of others, the supply which it is in his power to communicate to both, believes himself, when he tells himself, that it is rational and virtuous prudence which he practises.

More than one, perhaps, in political life, conscious to himself of sufficient generosity of nature to give the deceit some colour, has hidden from himself the ambition that has led him to the council of rebellion, under the cloak of a generous and honourable thirst of

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power. He has reconciled and soothed the conscience, that recoiled and started at the idea of kindling the flame of civil commotion, by the consideration, that his pant for promotion, was the aspiration of benevolence ; that his desire of higher station was but a liberal wish for a larger sphere of utility.

A neighbour has acted indiscreetly. The story is conveyed from ear to ear. It is carried from house to house. It is the topic of every circle. The evil-speaker hears the tale with rapture, and with rapture relates it. He enlarges upon the enormity of the crime ; he lashes it with severity ; he loads the actor of it with the harshest epithets, with which language is able to supply him.—Is he not ashamed of his want of lenity and mercy ? Does he not blush before his conscience, when he retires into himself, and looks to the heap of stones, and hard ones too, which he has thrown ? When he sinks upon his pillow, will the recollection of the words, that have gone from him, allow him to sleep ?—His sleep is as sound as yours. He was actuated, he tells himself, by a virtuous abhorrence of vice.

When fairly defeated by the arguments of
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his opponent, a disputant shall prolong the war of words, with an unyielding obstinacy. He shall continue to fight against irresistible and victorious Truth, with a warmth that refuses to confess her conqueror, without accusing himself of any wilful exclusion of conviction from his mind; or making confession to his conscience, of the secret opposition, which was made by his pride, to the surrender of a point he had undertaken to defend.

The mercantile fall of one, eminent in his walk, has been frequently seen with a secret exultation, arising either from resentment, or from envy, of which his conscience has taken no account, who, from the impulse of either of these passions, has thus “rejoiced when his enemy has stumbled,” or been glad when his rival has fallen. On the contrary, he has, perhaps, given credit, whatever suspicions others may have entertained of his sincerity, to the declarations of sorrow and compassion, which accompanied his reception, and his report of the tidings.

ANOTHER instance, in which the heart of man discovers its deceitful character towards himself, is seen in the friendly veil, with which it covers from his eye the vice of those

actions, when committed by himself, of which, when exhibited to his view in the conduct of others, the vice is sufficiently obvious to him, and which, as he then examines without fear, he censures without mercy. The very same sort of criminal actions, differing in circumstance, but perfectly agreeing in spirit, wear very different colours, when presented to us in the practice of others, and in our own.

Hark, how loudly, and how eloquently, that man complains of oppression in the rulers of his country! With all the vehemence of political enthusiasm, he harangues upon the holiness of liberty, and the sacrilege of them that dare to invade it. Follow him to his own house. Behold him acting the tyrant there; setting his foot upon the neck of his family; causing the domestic circle to “fear and tremble before him;” pushing paternal authority into oppression; invading the filial rights; exacting a slavish submission to his will, from minds mature in reason, upon points, on which to that reason alone their obedience belongs; and sacrificing the happiness of his sons and his daughters to his arbitrary pleasure, in the formation of those most intimate connexions in human society, in the contraction

contraction of which, as their happiness is the only question, their heart is the only rightful judge, and advice the only interposition the parent has any right to make. Of them that tread down a people, he can clearly discern, and heartily execrate, the turpitude; but in this conduct of his own, the domestic despot sees nothing to censure.—Another is vehement in his imputation of guilt to them, that break into his house, or infest his roads, who is guilty himself of the equally glaring, though the more elegant injustice, the more modish dishonesty, and politer robbery, of exposing at the table of chance, or squandering in the house of feasting, the provision of an impoverished family, and the property of defrauded industry.—Many who omit innumerable opportunities of doing good, which, though they are poor, are presented to them, (for silver and gold are far from comprising all the good which is to be given and received by human creatures,) are yet eager to upbraid, and bitter in their accusation of the opulent and the powerful, for omissions of munificence and protection; for feeding so few of the hungry; for clothing so small a number

of the naked ; for defending no more that are oppressed.—The poor man that steals his purse, is pronounced a villain by him, who, in the circles of the rich, delights to defame, and who, without calling himself by any such name, or viewing himself in any such light, allows himself to commit robbery after robbery upon that reputation, which “ not enriches him,” and leaves “ the object of this moral rapacity “ poor indeed.”—Thousands declaim upon the impiety of the self-destroyer, and call the ground accursed where he lies, who are themselves chargeable with the slower, but sufficiently speedy, suicide of intemperance. A violent and tragical termination to their days, they are not tempted to make. They have no inducement to so dreadful a deed. They labour under no depression of spirit ; their situations are pleasant and gay ; their history glides along in a smooth stream, and all things smile upon them. But that kind of untimely termination to life, which they *are* tempted, they consent, to put to it. In lifting to their lips the cup of daily excess, they drink down poison, as fatally efficacious, in the end, as that which works in the veins
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with more expedition. The nocturnal riot, and irregular rest, are as deadly, though not so striking, and so instantaneous, in their operations, as the point of that steel, as the explosion of that tube, which brought his wretched existence to a close, whose gored bosom, or whose shattered brow, excites the shudder of horror in every spectator of his remains, and calls the blush of shame into the face of his family. They that shatter their constitution, and shorten their life, by sensual excess, are distinguished from them, to whose self-dismission from the world the laws have refused the rites of Christian interment, and of whose act the tender interpretation of mercy is loss of reason, only by doing the same thing, from a gayer motive, and by being a little longer in doing it.—Allow me to add, by how many, is the murderer of another regarded as a monster, by how many, would every exertion in their power be made to deliver him into the hands of justice, who have themselves the heart, to seduce youth from that innocence and virtue, without which life is of no value; to put that soul to death, in which resides, to which is confined, that likeness of God, from the consideration of

which the Jewish lawgiver deduces the peculiar enormity of shedding the blood of man; to murder peace of mind; to occasion the death of honour; and by means of that cruel stab, by the same barbarous stroke, to plunge a dagger into parental tenderness, and bring the grey hair with sorrow to the grave. Strange force of self-deception! that he who stains himself with this slaughter of happiness and of honour, this havoc of all that is dear to human nature, should be able to conceive, that the man who spills the current that flows through the veins of the human body, has fouler spots upon his hand than he!

But so it is, and so it ever was. The very same thing in ourselves, which we condemn in another, we look upon with an indulgent eye. The smallest difference in the situation, in the application of precisely the same practice, is sufficient to enable self-love to see in it a totally different thing. David's anger was greatly kindled against his own cruelty, when presented to him as the action of another, and in another situation. He did not perceive that the fable required only a change of circumstance, to be a literal narrative of what he had acted himself. He did
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not know himself, when he met himself, upon allegorical ground; though it was his exact image that met him there. He did not see his own shape in the shadow, that with the most perfect fidelity defined it. There has ever been need of an expositor, to tell the spectator of himself in the criminal conduct of another, that it is himself he is looking at. The monitor that would shew, upon moral canvasses, to him whose character is misshapen and unseemly, what manner of man he is, will find his lines, however true, his colours, however faithful, to the figure and complexion he copies, insufficient to explain to him the person that is meant. However striking the likeness may be, the painter must put the name at the bottom of the portrait, or the original will not know it. The rebuke of Nathan's pencil was unfelt, until underneath the picture, strong as it was, he had written David.

The secret promises we make ourselves, only to be broken, of future reformation, in order to pacify the reproaches of conscience, and procure the consent of our understanding to forsake the path of duty, is a FARTHER illustration

illustration of the deceit which we practise upon ourselves. This conduct of the human heart is, perhaps, to be called deceitful, chiefly, in a metaphorical sense, as these promises, at the moment that it makes them, it intends to keep. This branch of self-deception is, therefore, to be considered as proceeding from self-ignorance rather than self-insincerity. Self-delusion, however, it is. Whatever be the cause, the effect falls under the subject before us, and, practically considered, is perhaps the most important head of it; as pointing to the earliest moment of moral action, and directing its check to the first movement of moral error. Nor indeed, if we reflect, how obvious to the most negligent view of human life, is the infrequency with which the self-promises of man to return to that path of rectitude which he prevails upon himself to leave, are performed by him, and with what repetition this truth is told by every teacher of morality to inexperienced youth, will it be possible for us to say, in what a degree, in many cases, the ignorance to which the self-credulity, we are considering, is to be ascribed, may be voluntary;

tary ; and the self-delusion assisted by self-deceit.

This self-deception is necessary to account completely for that copious current of rational creatures, which has passed through the gate of destruction. If in the proposal of those passions which tempt him to his ruin, hell were to lie naked, and destruction without a covering before the eye of man, it would be difficult to conceive of his compliance with it, in the first instance, and before the infatuation produced by evil habit had taken place. But in their deceptive proposition, a veil is spread over perseverance in vice. They talk only of taking two or three steps in the pleasing paths of error. Then, those steps, they promise him, they will permit him to tread back. By this promise, a promise scarcely ever kept, the credulous mind is induced to take them. It enters that path, in which the eye of sage Observation, that attentively and soberly watches the walks of men, has seldom seen a returning traveller. When it has gone a little way, the same promise of a return, which prevailed upon it to proceed so far, with equal facility, persuades it to proceed a little

little farther. And thus, from one tempting point to another, in that enchanting path, it is gradually drawn along, until, at length, the sun has sunk in the west ; the night shuts in ; and all recovery of the path of rectitude is become impossible.

In this way every human being that has ever perished in vice has been deceived to his destruction. His heart gave him its word, before he yielded his assent to its going out of the way of duty, that it would not always err ; that it would one day refrain its foot from evil. Alas ! he little thought that a lying spirit was in its mouth ; he listened, and believed. In this sense, the human heart may be said to have been eminently deceitful. Of all unperforming promisers it is, in this respect, the most faithless. Man is deceived by the promises of all surrounding things, but by none so much as those of his own heart. Deceitful is the serenity of the sky ; deceitful is the smile of fortune ; deceitful is the beam of favour ; but “ deceitful above all things ” is the heart that tells its owner, to obtain his consent to criminal courses, that it shall ultimately be well with him. The promises of good, that are made him by other things, are sometimes

sometimes kept ; but the promises of timely return to the forsaken path of virtue, which he makes himself, are scarcely ever fulfilled. He who believes with confidence that the day, which the morning promises shall be fair, no showers shall deform ; he who is certain that the sea, which tempts his boat from the shore, intends no adversity to his vessel ; he that places the most perfect trust in the mercantile appearances that tell him, his projects in traffic have no failure to fear ; he that, upon a short experience of it, discards every doubt of the faithfulness of that patronage, of the fidelity of that friendship, which promises that its ray shall rest for ever upon his head ; discovers far less credulity than the man, whose easiness of faith suffers him to believe that heart, which saith unto every one that walketh after the imagination of it, No evil shall come upon thee ; awhile thou shalt taste the pleasures of sin ; then, thou shalt pursue the path of virtue, and at last possess the happiness of heaven : thou shalt thus experience all the variety of bliss ; rove over the sweets at once of forbidden, and of lawful ground, and exhaust the world of enjoyment. Little does he think, who lends an ear to this
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smooth prediction, who is allured by it into the path of folly, that every word it contains is false : that instead of the fair and shining history it leads him to look forward to, dark and stormy is the day, that is to follow these rosy promises of orient folly : that, while it is certain, he will find the ways of sin to be far other than the ways of pleasantness his heart has painted them, it is yet probable, he will never forsake them, if once he suffer his foot to go into them.

ANOTHER way, which is the last instance of self-deception I shall mention, in which, as in that I have just considered, the heart of man deceives him to his ruin, though without exercising deceit in the strict sense of the word, is by its insensible progress from one degree of moral turpitude to another ; in consequence of which, he is carried along, without any moral alarm, to that extremity of vice, at the idea of which, when he set out in ill, he would have felt every hair alive upon his head. As man deceives himself in the duration of that deviation from duty to which he consents, he deceives himself also with respect to its distance. Did he foresee the elongation from the path of rectitude, in
which

which his steps aside from it are to take him in the end, as he would despair of the possibility of a return to it, he would resolutely resist the inclination to leave it. He means only to play awhile in the vicinity of innocence; he will go but a little way from virtue; he will keep within the call of conscience to come back: he will not roam to that iron region of insensibility to truth, and remoteness from rectitude, where the voice of remonstrance is unheard, and whence return is hopeless: he will pluck his flowers within an easy reach, and a practicable recovery, of the path from which he has turned aside. And as he foresees not the latitude in error which awaits his steps astray, his pace towards it is such, as to render his approach imperceptible. The beguiling motion of his wandering heart leads him along a path of such gradual obliquity, as appears to him to be parallel with that he has left. It draws him to a greater and yet a greater distance from it, by such a series of small, and insensible removes, as to prevent him from perceiving the degrees of his deviation.

The deluded follower of so gentle a leader in the line of error, proposes to himself, at his

outset in it, to pursue the pleasures, the riches, or the honours, of the world, with an avidity, inconsistent indeed with a virtuous attention to the ends for which he was created, but intending to contract no more than the negative guilt of delaying his duties for a time, or the venial folly of loving little things too well, and prolonging for a short season the period of childhood. But, into whichever of these paths of intemperance he permits himself to enter, he at length arrives at a point, where the attainment of what he is in pursuit of requires the aid of that injustice, or perhaps that inhumanity, the prospect of practising which in the prosecution of his pursuit, had it presented itself to his mind, when that pursuit presented itself to his choice, would probably have repelled him from it. To this ultimate necessity of excessive self-indulgence, in whatever way, for the assistance of social crime, as he gradually approaches, he is insensibly reconciled. Attentive only to the uniformity of his end, he observes not the alteration in his character, that is produced by a change of the means. His eye fixed upon the point, attends not to the path. Down the stream of one passion he
glides

glides along, nor perceives by what polluted currents it is joined in its course, and swelled in its tide.

If pleasure be the object of his pursuit, it is not long before a temptation occurs, in order to procure himself a companion in pleasure, to corrupt another's innocence; or before, with a view to support his extravagant propensities to it, he finds it necessary, whenever he can find an infamous purchaser, to give his integrity in exchange for gold; or to break in upon the property, which though in his hand, is not his own. Thus, before he is aware, he, who intended only to be a cypher in society, is become a curse to it: by insensible degrees, the sensualist is darkened into a seducer; the man of pleasure, into the destroyer of peace; the prodigal, and the idler, into the knave, and the villain.

In the same insensible manner avarice leads along, from wishes that were formed when wisdom was away, to practices from which virtue is banished; from the desire of more than enough for self, to the denial of what is needful to another; from insensibility to other's wants, to invasion of other's rights; from the neglect of mercy, to the violation of justice.

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With an equally imperceptible motion, the moral eclipse steals over the mind, when Ambition is the enemy to its glory. Slowly, and insensibly, the crescent shadow encroaches upon the character, until it has completely covered it, and the dark orb of evil is come to its full. Before the slave of this passion is aware, the desire of power is become hypocrisy, political intrigue, treachery to country, and falsehood to friendship.

So quiet and unalarming is the progress of the heart in evil, and so much does it resemble rest, that not only those who have consented to do wrong, and have consequently excluded moral vigilance from their minds, but those also who possess the virtuous caution of well educated, and as yet uncorrupted youth, are beguiled by that pace, with which the human mind creeps into, as well as over, the course of its degeneracy. As vice insensibly becomes more vicious, innocence is insensibly seduced into vice. As it is by the most slow, and unnoticed steps, that intemperance, to whatever terrestrial object directed, leads to injustice; in the same manner, sobriety is enticed into intemperance. With the same imperceptible progress as we pass

from one stage of depravity to another, we proceed from the contemplation, to the practice, of evil ; from the desire, to the pursuit, of interdicted objects ; and from evil company, to evil conduct.

The amiable youth, upon whose heart the lessons of virtuous tuition have left an impression, is led into error without being sensible of the mental process, of the several steps of thought and sensation, by which he is brought to the brink of the precipice from which he falls. At first he *looks* only upon the objects, which he cannot obtain without parting with innocence. There can be no harm in beholding them, in perceiving how fair and desirable the possessions are, which yet, at such a price, it is far from his intention to purchase. He *imagines*, there can be no evil in imagining, the pleasure of holding them. He *wishes*, where is the criminality of a wish, that the fruit, which wears so blooming an appearance, it were *not* forbidden him to pluck. He dares not put forth his hand ; but he dares, nor dreams of danger in daring, to walk round, and round the tree. From the repetition of this mental indulgence of desire, it gradually

and insensibly grows to a vigour, that makes it more than a match for reason:

When first the seductive circle of the licentious furrounds the pupil of Wisdom, to whom it has been said, by lips revered, "My son, when sinners entice thee, consent thou not," he refuses to consent: he remembers the good counsel, and obeys it. He starts at the proposals of them who tempt him to forsake the law he has been taught to love. But, while he detests their morals, he admires their manners. He at last allows himself to be allured into their company, merely to amuse himself with their conversation, without the most distant idea of imitating their example. By degrees their maxims became familiar to him. By the frequency with which religion and virtue are insulted in his presence, his honest resentments are gradually worn away. Before the multitude of immodest words that are poured into his ear, the blush of decency grows fainter and fainter upon his face, and at last forsakes his cheek for ever. Thus, before he is aware, the at first recoiling auditor of their discourse becomes a convert to their principles, and a companion of their pleasures.

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In this beguiling manner the heart of man leads him on from innocence to guilt, and then from guilt to guilt. He becomes bad, before he is aware, and “waxes worse and worse,” without perceiving that he does. The sun of falling innocence slowly descends; without being seen to sink; and as soon as it is set, the night of vice advances on the heart, without its notice. One shadow steals in silence after another, and the reign of darkness is completed, while the eye pays no attention to the lessening light. Our whole progress in ill, from the first stir of evil thought, to the last extremity of evil conduct, is such as to baffle all observation of it. We proceed from evil to evil, without appearing to ourselves to move. We wander wider and wider from virtue, and think we are standing still. The journey of our degeneracy is performed with the most perfect privacy; every step of it is stolen. The heart passes along with the most profound secrecy and silence. It makes no noise, as it goes, that might disturb the conscience. It takes no sounding steps, no thundering strides. With a “stealthy pace,” like midnight Murder to its dark design, it “moves like a ghost”

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ghost" towards the last stage of depravity ; with a soft tread that seems to say to the slumbering centinel of the breast, " hear not my steps, which way they move." The sleeping conscience hears them not, and the subtle passenger reaches the extremity of moral turpitude, without being heard or seen to go. Its progress is the thief of space.

Such are the several sorts of self-deception, to which the human mind is liable. I conclude with calling upon you all to be upon your guard against them. When you incline to the opinion, if at the same time you incline to criminal practice, that God hath not appointed a day in which he will judge the world, or in which he will judge it with righteousness,—suspect your self-sincerity.—When you would tell yourselves, that either temperance, or piety, or justice, or mercy, is not among the number of your duties, or that, while your conduct is decent, it will not be inquired by the Judge of all men, " what spirit ye are of"—be assured you deceive yourselves.—When you find yourselves disposed to praise your own conduct, upon any occasion, beware that you do not compliment and flatter it : examine, with severity,

severity, into its motive, in order that, with exactness, you may ascertain its merit.

You that would know what manner of men ye are, look not only to the part your hand is acting on the stage of the world, look to the little theatre within you; where the passions are playing a secret part, over the silent scene of which the attention of man is apt to sleep. Indulge not that depth of moral slumber, which is to be roused only by the more boisterous irregularities that break out from the breast, that assume a body, and that bustle in the world. Attend to the action of the mind: mark the business of the bosom: and ask yourselves, if the history of your hearts will bear to be heard, when it comes to be read from the record of heaven, on that day, when the keen scrutiny of infinite penetration shall “bring every secret thing into judgment.” Into judgment have now the resolution to bring your secret faults. Instantly drag your heart out of the darkness that covers it, however reluctant and backward to be brought out of it; whatever its struggles to continue in the shade, drag it out into the day, and lay your bosom bare to the light. Determine to see, dare to know,

what you are ; and if you do not find yourselves, have the resolution to make yourselves, what you ought to be. Be not afraid to look truth in the face, whether within you, or without you ; that truth which must be met to-morrow, if you refuse to see her to-day. Have the boldness to face your defects, ye strangers to yourselves, that tremble at the thought of an introduction to your own soul. Remember that, in searching for your secret faults, you do not search for indelible stains, that bid defiance to ablution, that refuse to disappear. You discover but to rectify : you blame, but to approve yourselves : you blush but to glory.

You that are so self-deluded, if to any such I address myself, as not to see the same deformity, in the same overt and *visible* vice, when practised by yourselves, which you see in it, when practised by others, I have not to call upon you, in order to convict you of self-deception, to hold up a lamp, (hard to be held with an unshaking hand, but which yet may be held, and must be held, by every one that would mend it,) to a disfigured heart that lies in the dark ; I have not to call upon you, in order to discover your error to you,

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to throw light upon the obscure chambers of the bosom ; but merely to look with more attention upon that which is already in the light ; not to suffer the situation of an action to alter its appearance in your eye ; to push off to a proper distance from your sight those practices, which, in your own conduct, are too close to be examined by it ; to set them by the side of the actions you censure, and see if they are not the same ; to perceive the same act, in the same act, whether dressed in the circumstances, under which you, or in those under which another has done it ; in short, to recognize your own conduct, when it occurs to your eye, in that of another, without permitting the difference of its place to disguise it from you.

You that are young, and that are saying to yourselves, we will walk awhile in the flowery paths of pleasure, and then we will return, and travel to heaven—I beseech ye, do not believe yourselves. “ To-day, while it is called to-day,” I exhort you to hear the voice of God within you. As you value your eternal welfare, in your conferences with your conscience, respecting the preparation for death which it prompts you immediately

diately to make, suffer not the word to-morrow to be once employed. It is the syren word, that has sung so many thousands to the shores of destruction. It is the ill omened word, that bodes the ruin of all, who thus begin their moral transactions with themselves. There are no promises that pass from man to man, so brittle as this which man makes to himself.

You that are proceeding from evil to evil, if any so unhappy are in this house to-night, and do not perceive the progress you are making, be persuaded to turn round and look upon the point, that fair point of innocence, from which you set out; take notice of the length of the way you have trodden, and turn back, while yet you are not too remote from virtue, to render your return impracticable. And you, my young friends, to whom good doctrine has been given, by them that gave you being; who have heard "the instruction of a father," and who as yet have not forsaken his law; if, on entering the world, you feel yourselves strongly attracted towards that ground where you are forbidden to walk, however pure from intention to traverse it you may at present be, incline your ear to the
warning

warning voice, that bids you beware of insensible approaches to it. Open your eyes and look, with all the vigilance in your power, upon them, and see if, along with your affections, your feet are not even now moving towards it. Mistake not stepping slow, for standing still. If you would not be gradually drawn into that path of the wicked, into which you do not now wish to enter, take the advice of the wise man, he has not left a wiser word behind him, "Pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." He that would not walk in it, must not go near it, must not look at it. He that would not set his foot, must not fix his eye, upon it. Not only keep thine *hand*, "Keep thine *heart*," is the lesson of Scripture; and it is the lesson of reason. Restrain the wandering wish, if you would prevent the erring step. Observe the first stirrings of sin within you, while yet it but barely, and faintly moves; ere yet it have acquired the strength, or assumed the form, of sin. Stay not to crush the "grown serpent; that, it may not be in your power to crush; extinguish the worm of evil, in its infancy, that "hath nature in it which in
time

time will venom breed, though no teeth for the present."

That what has been said may be successful in exciting, in every one of us, in our respective situations, the vigilance that is necessary to save us from whichever of these several kinds of self-deception those situations may more particularly expose us to, may the God of truth, and guardian of virtue, in his infinite mercy grant ! Amen.

On pure and spiritual Worship:

An introductory Discourse delivered on a
first Night of the Season.

SERMON X.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

JOHN iv. 23.

ALTHOUGH man's capacity of religion is to be considered as the crown of his nature, and as what constitutes his chief pre-eminence over the brute creation, yet in no character has he appeared so much an object of compassion and of contempt, as in his religious character. As nothing raises him so high in the scale of the creation as rational religion, so nothing sinks him so low as gross superstition. If it be asked,—what is that subject,

subject, the power of contemplating which is the proudest distinction of the human understanding?—I answer God.—If it be asked,—what is that subject, upon which the mistakes of man have been most disgraceful to his understanding, have thrown the darkest blot upon his intellectual honour?—I answer God.—If it be inquired, what is that principle, which is most eminently calculated to animate the social virtue of man; to produce in him the faithful friend, the kind relative, the good neighbour, the patriot citizen, the useful member of that society with which he is connected, and the fervent lover of all mankind? what is it that is most excellently adapted to make him all that men admire, and all that society wants?—I reply, with readiness, and with pleasure, Religion.—If it be inquired, what is it, that has most powerfully operated to rob society of his services; that has frozen his social affections to the most torpid insensibility; that has buried his talents in the profoundest inactivity; that has turned his humanity to the hardest stone; that has sullied his sword with its foulest stains?—I reply, with sorrow, and with shame,—Religion.—If it be said, as
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with truth it may be said, that there is no joy so sublime, no superiority to anxiety so serene, no sense of security so tranquil, as that which religion inspires;—With equal truth it may be said, that of all the melancholy, in which man has been ever plunged, the deepest has been religious melancholy: of all the excessive solicitude, by which he has been harassed, that which has respected the divine acceptance of his services has disquieted his bosom the most: and of all the fears, that have chilled his heart, the most icy he has felt have been his fears of God.

In reviewing the annals of human religion a man of sense is little disposed to triumph over those inferior tribes of creatures, whose highest order are able to raise their eyes to no higher a master than man. He is much more inclined to hang his head and blush. In the history of our nature, it is the most unseemly page. It is one long record of ignorance, and continued chronicle of error: in which the only variety to be traced is in the shade of the ignorance, and in the shape of the error.

The pagan world presents to our eye superstition in her wildest sport; trampling upon reason with all the wantonness of triumph,

triumph, and exercising all the licentious fancifulness, and maddest freaks of religious folly. There we have to contemplate divinity divided among a multitude; disfigured by malevolence; stained with impurity; contracted in goodness; confined to place; the prisoner of a province, and the tenant of a statue.

Our attention is next called to a particular nation, educated in the knowledge and worship of one God. Shall we not here behold religion making a more rational and respectable appearance? Alas! the reader of the history of religion, who wishes to relieve his offended eye from the absurdities of pagan piety, will be able to procure it little refreshment, by fixing it upon the scholars of Moses. In the history of hebrew devotion, we contemplate incorrigible superstition, either relapsing into the idolatry from which it had been recovered, or, when compelled to renounce that error, obstinately tenacious of other error, altogether as wide from truth, and as hurtful to virtue. When no longer capable of mistaking the *object*, the jew, as if sworn to reject rectitude of sentiment upon this subject, refuses to be set right with
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respect to the *nature* of religious worship ; and persists, in the midst of all the moral instruction of successive preceptors in duty, to worship the true God, in a false way ; stemming the stream of virtuous eloquence from hallowed lips, with a sturdy, and stubborn opposition, that refused to be carried along with it.

In the fulness of time, another dispensation of religion takes its turn to rectify the religious errors of man : directing his attention, with a clearness which must carry truth to every mind that is open to receive it, from the shadow to the substance, from the form to the spirit, of religion : and to remove all foundation for a vain confidence in the competence of corporeal and local piety to procure the favour of God, cutting away from his worship all that extensive ramification of religious rites, which, by furnishing such occupation to the attention, tended to divert it from mental piety ; and which, by making so large a figure to the eye, encouraged in the breast of him, who saw them all assembled in his practice, a claim to divine approbation, in the absence of all spiritual religion. Yet, alas ! even this last, and most

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luminous religion, which God has given to man, has but lessened the excuse, without having expelled the shade, of superstition, in the lands that have received its light. . It is not more melancholy, than amazing, to think, how large a multitude, who ignorantly worship the God of heaven, even at this day, Christendom contains !

Upon resuming the religious exercises, and moral reflections, in which I am happy again to accompany you in this place, I do not know in what manner we can better improve this first hour, than by directing our attention to the nature of that pure and spiritual worship, which christianity calls for from us. Permit me, therefore, to employ the few moments, that are this evening entrusted to me, for the purpose of conducting your meditations, in recommending it to you, to purify your religion from every particle of superstition ; to refine it from the minutest remnant of it, by which it may be, possibly, corrupted ; and to render it perfectly clear and undefiled by it. —The grosser degrees of superstition, perhaps, you all perceive ; and, perhaps, you all despise : but, in a more refined form, it is apt to gain admission into the minds of many,
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who want neither good sense, nor good dispositions. All they want is a little attention to the subject. Let them be persuaded to give that attention to it ; and let them be persuaded to give it now. It is an advanced period of the human history : it is an advanced period of the christian history : it is high time to put away every relic of puerility, and to be men in religion.

In distinguishing true religion from superstition, I shall not tire your attention by branching the subject out into a variety of parts. It is not necessary. The truth lies in a narrow compass. It calls but for one steady look, in order to comprehend it completely. I shall confine myself to one single mark, by which all superstition may be known, which characterises all the kinds of it, which constitutes its essence, and in which its noxious quality consists.

If we compare the pagan, the jewish, and the several sorts of christian superstition, we shall find, that, whatever variety of form they may wear, they have all one common feature. They all agree in ascribing to the object of worship an *arbitrary* character ; a disposition to derive pleasure from some-

what separate from the happiness and welfare of the worshipper. All superstition, through all its diversified modes, proceeds upon ignorance of, or inattention to, the GENEROSITY of the divine character. The heathen believed in many gods; the hebrew and the christian have been directed to believe but in one; but the superstitious professors of all these religions have agreed together, in entertaining the notion of a supreme Power, who is pleased with services that do not terminate in the excellence and happiness of the servant. It signifies little, what these services are, so far as respects the principle of superstition: whether they consist in placing upon an altar the fruits of the earth, or the beasts of the field; or whether in resorting to a temple, or a closet, and presenting to heaven corporeal postures, or oral praises: nor is it of any consequence, whether these services be rendered to a multitude of deities, or only to one. If with these services, in themselves considered, for their *own sake*, and looking to no *useful end*, the performer of them supposes the object of his adoration to be pleased, the great characteristic mark of superstition remains the same. The superstition of the gentile consisted, not in his

his offering sacrifices, but in his supposing the sacrifice he brought to the altar to be in itself an acceptable *present*, a grateful *compliment* to the Powers he worshipped: and the worship of christians, if they consider it in this light, as many of them are apt to do, is equally false. The christian, who carries his more simple and portable tribute to the courts of devotion, with the same idea of its power, in itself considered, to gratify the supreme Being, with which the more cumbersome offerings of the ancients were brought into their temples; who regards the praise he presents as a kind of gift to Almighty God; is guilty of as gross superstition, as that which prompted the presentation of sheep and oxen at the shrine of religion. The professor of christianity, who thus worships God, has but relinquished an incommodious, for a more convenient mode of immolation. Words and sentiments are more easily taken to the altar of religion, than the bulky oblations of bulls and goats. In this respect, the superstition of the christian has a semblance of purity, and spirituality, when compared with the glaring visibility, and showy equipage of pagan superstition, which imposes upon an eye that superficially examines it; and which assists the

self-deception of those who practise it, to consider it as uncorrupted worship : but whoever compares these two kinds of sacrifice to God, with the attention of a moment, will see in them precisely the same thing.

Nor is the pupil of Christ, who thus considers the worship he pays to God, more pure from superstition than the heathen, with respect to the *object*, any more than to the *nature* of his worship. Christian superstition is but another form of idolatry ; a more refined mode ; a less gross, and visible idolatry ; it merely escapes the letter, while it retains all the spirit, and all the poison, of idolatry. The superstitious Christian does not fall down before a material object : but he adores, nevertheless, a God of his own making ; the formation of his mind, if not of his hands ; the creature of his fancy ; the manufacture of his imagination ; a chimerical deity ; a spiritual idol.

In introducing a religion peculiarly calculated to correct the religious mistakes of mankind ; in announcing it to the Samaritan woman, in the words of the text ; and in all his accounts of the supreme Being ; the author of our religion employs one word, one all-
powerful

powerful word, which tends to remove, in the most radical manner, this fundamental error, which is the common basis of all wrong religion, and to make a complete rasure of it from the mind of man; a word, which strikes directly at the root of all superstition, and brings the whole tree, with all its innumerable branches, in which so many various nations have had their habitation, at one stroke, to the ground;—and that is the name by which he describes the object of worship: not the king,—the governor,—the master,—but—the FATHER. “The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” Before that all potent word, that all amiable name, all false worship falls to the ground at once. The retention and impresson of this single idea, that almighty God is the father of all mankind, will not suffer so much as the smallest shade, the faintest tinge of superstition, to remain one moment in the mind. What does the title of father contain? what does the appellation of parent express? what but benevolence streaming in beautiful and generous beams to every part of the circle which the relation embraces? Every good father is his family’s

warmest friend ; desirous of nothing, with respect to them, but their welfare ; and aiming only at their happiness in all his commands, and in all his prohibitions.

To this test, then, if we would distinguish between false and true worship, let us bring the service we render to the Almighty ; and we shall be in no danger of a mistake. Does it, either immediately, or ultimately, produce human happiness and good ? If it do, the worship is true : if it do not, it is false.

The question that remains then is only this. How is that human happiness, which is the object of the divine will, to be promoted ? The answer is obvious ; by the practice of virtue. Virtue is the source of happiness to the individual, and to society.

The most *perfectly* pure and spiritual worship of God is, then, the practice of virtue : and no other sort of worship whatever is of any worth whatever, but as it promotes this. Mankind, in all nations, and in all ages, have practised ritual devotion, in some way or other. When this worship, whatever it be, is productive of true virtue, it is well : when it fails to produce this, whatever it be, it is worthless.

In order, therefore, perfectly to purify ceremonious worship from superstition, we must perform it with a *single eye* to its efficacy upon the *moral* character; without *mixing* with our look to that end the smallest notion of its possessing any *intrinsic* and independent value.

The production of virtue in the human breast is a process. Ritual worship is one instrument of promoting it; of putting the mind into the motion, that carries it, in the end, to virtuous character. If, in any part of this progress it stop, without reaching this goal, the utility of external devotion is totally destroyed, and of consequence all its acceptableness in the sight of God.

Outward worship may be considered as possessing an *immediate*, and an *ultimate* utility.

Its immediate utility consists in its excitement of the sentiments of religion. The formal adoration of divine benevolence and rectitude, is an instrument of renewing our recollection, and enlivening our admiration, of that divine character, which is our great example in goodness, and the contemplation of which is peculiarly adapted to spur us to the practice of generous virtue. The breath of praise
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has a tendency to fan the flame of gratitude to that Being, who requires no other return for his goodness than obedience to the dictates of reason. Confession of sin, and supplication for forgiveness, is calculated to create, and increase our conviction, of the need we have of moral amendment, and of the obligation we are under to forgive those that offend us.

The ultimate utility of external worship consists, in the tendency of the sentiments, which are thus periodically brought back to the breast, at last to settle in it; to take up their habitation in the heart; so as to be ever present to the mind, and uniformly operative upon the conduct.

Such, in a few words, is the moral process, which outward worship is an instrument of promoting. The use of the offices of devotion is, to excite the feelings of devotion: the use of the feelings of devotion is, to produce the duties of life. If the rites of religion fail to carry the mind through the *whole* of this course, they lose all their value.

There are those who will readily acknowledge, that if they fail to produce the *former* of these effects, they are of no estimation in the

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the sight of heaven. They willingly confess, that the mere exercise of the lips, the hands, or the eyes, cannot possibly possess any kind of claim to the approbation of a spiritual object of worship: but they are seduced into an idea that religious exercises, accompanied with devotional sentiments and affections, possess an intrinsic worth, and recommendation to the Almighty. They do not allow themselves to suppose, that they are of themselves *sufficient* to procure the divine satisfaction, without the addition of a virtuous life: but they suffer themselves to think that they are *something*, in themselves, and detached from moral duties: and that it is better to perform the duties of religion, thus separately considered, than no duties at all.

This is a very common, and a very pernicious, error, which cannot be too strenuously combated. It peculiarly requires to be opposed, upon account of its peculiar plausibility. An attention to the simple rule I have laid down, for judging of the acceptableness, in his sight, of any services which we render to the Almighty, will lead us to see, in the most satisfactory manner, that religious exercises, with whatever momentary emotion
they

they may be accompanied, must be regarded with indifference by a benevolent Deity, if they fail to produce virtuous temper and practice. This, then, is the question;—by which is happiness produced? by which is the individual rendered truly happy? by which is society served?—by a periodical sensation of gratitude to God, or by an habitual obedience to his commands? by a speculative admiration of infinite goodness, or by a practical imitation of it, and perpetual co-operation with it? by a conviction of moral imperfection, or the pursuit of moral improvement?

The correspondent sentiments which accompany the periodical offices of devotion, but which are not themselves accompanied by a correspondent conduct, cannot be considered as acceptable to the object of devotion, because they cannot be considered as sincere. That sorrow for sin, which does not prompt the relinquishment of what it professes to lament, can have no other seat than the lip. That love of God, which does not inspire the practice of virtue, must be either a *selfish* feeling, inseparable from all sensitive beings when contemplating an object from which they have derived personal benefit; or an *obscure* enthusiasm,

enthusiasm, a mysterious, monastic emotion, that sees its object by a dim religious light, and bows and burns before it knows not what ; or, if a clear, a rational, and a moral, it must be a *faint* and *imperfect* affection, common, in this degree of it, to all intellectual natures. That love of God, which alone deserves the name of piety, is a *generous* principle. It implies more than merely the pleasure that is felt, in looking to a Being from whom we have received individual good. It is not merely the love of a Being who is faithful, who is just, who is merciful, to *one* ; but who is faithful, who is just, who is merciful, to *all*. It is the love of Veracity ; the love of Justice ; the love of Mercy : for God is abstract perfection personified. The selfish man loves the benefactor to him, though an oppressor to others : you may call this sensation by what name you please : you may give it the name of gratitude : but it certainly is not *virtue*. No more is that affection to be called *piety*, which springs solely from the sense of that happiness which Omnipotence has excited in our single breast. The love of God, that love of him which constitutes the pure principle, and genuine spirit, of religion,

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is not the mechanical love of an *instinct* towards the *instrument* that has gratified it ; of a *sense* to the object that has produced an agreeable impression upon it : it is not like the love of the eye to light ; like the love of the ear to music : it is not the love of animated *body* to pleasingly operating *power* ; but of MIND, to infinitely amiable, and beautiful MIND. It is not the love of happiness to the *hand*, but the love of reason to the *rectitude*, that dispensed it : it is the affection of the understanding for infinite benevolence, employed in producing the greatest possible sum of welfare in the universe at large.

The love of God is, then, the love of virtue. But the love of any thing, if it be sincere, implies the *pursuit* of it, if the object be attainable. By a lover of pleasure we mean, not a hermit who says he loves it, as he sits in his cell, in total retirement from it ; whose lips are eloquent on the charms of gay society, but whose life is spent in perpetual solitude ; whose mouth is full of the praises of luxury, but whose board is never covered but with roots, and whose thirst is only supplied from the rill : but by a lover of pleasure we mean, a voluptuary. By a lover of
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money we do not intend, either a prodigal of it, who declaims on the advantages of wealth, while he is throwing it away; or an indolent trafficker who neglects the opportunities of obtaining it: but by a lover of gold we intend a hoarder of what he has, or a drudge to accumulate more. By a lover of power we do not design to express a recluse, who refuses to put forth his hand to take hold of the advancement that is within his reach; and who amidst the shades of voluntary retirement, talks of the pleasures of promotion: but by a lover of power we design to express an industrious candidate for power; one whose faculties are occupied in climbing to it. By a lover of knowledge we do not understand a man who professes a taste for science, who paints in conversation the charms of philosophy, but who improves not the opportunities for cultivating it which present themselves to him; who, while his shelves have volumes upon them, and while his life has leisure in it, employs little or none of his time, either in reading, or reflecting: but by a lover of knowledge we understand a diligent student. For the same reason, by a lover of God is to be understood, and so every rational worshipper

per of him understands the phrase, not a man who, upon a particular day, in a particular place, with a particular ceremony, and with particular words, professes to love him; whatever of warmth there may be in his words, or whatever of fanciful affection there may be in his breast, while he neglects to copy the imitable attributes that make him amiable, that constitute him an object of love: but by a lover of God is to be understood a just man;—a merciful man;—a generous man:—for what is God,—but Justice;—but Mercy;—but Generosity? The truly religious man is he, and only he, who endeavours to *acquire* the moral attributes which he ascribes to the object of his devotion; who *imitates* the character he loves; who *exercises* the equity he worships; who *speaks* the truth he adores; who *practises* the benevolence he praises.

The great sentiment, then, which, upon this subject, I wish to impress upon your mind, and which I seize every opportunity to inculcate, is this,—that, in whatever point of light you place religion, whether you consider it as an act, or an essence; whether as an office, or an affection; morality, from a pure and proper principle, comprises the whole.

whole of it. The *spirit* of religion is the *love* of rectitude, rectitude living and realized in the divine nature: the *exercise* of religion is the *practice* of that rectitude. Justice and mercy are not the adjuncts of religion, but religion itself. In giving this account of it, I repeat the definition of it, which one of the apostles has left us. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father”—(the Father—beloved appellation! blessed clue! to lead bewildered man out of that deep maze of superstition, to the centre of which false guides have brought him; which conducts him not only to its outermost round, but accomplishes his complete extrication from it,) —“pure religion”—not only calls for, as its appendage, but “*is this*,” this is its constituent substance, “to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” This,—the exercise of humanity to the whole circle of its objects, from among whom the particular situations of distress, which are set before us in this passage, are selected by the Scriptures, as being prominent figures in the group of human miseries, to express, in one word, the various objects of mercy, and to

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represent the sons and daughters of affliction ; —this discharge of the duties of humanity, to the complete fulfilment of which the preservation of sensual purity is necessary, in a variety of views ;—this active service of God, this worship of the life, is *all* that, *in itself* considered, communicates any pleasure to the Almighty. In no other light than that of being instrumental to the production of this, could the offerings of the jewish religion, or can our mode of worship, procure any acceptance in his sight. Neither were their sacrifices, nor is our verbal tribute, of any worth whatever, in his eye, considered in any other light. As he wanted not the fruits of their fields, or the blood of their animals ; neither has he any need of the posture of our bodies, or the breath of our mouths, or the sedentary devotion, and inactive admiration of our minds. He wants not to be told by us, that he is either infinitely great, or infinitely good. He wants no compliment from our tongues, though accompanied by the consent of our hearts, any more than a bullock from our house, or a he-goat from our folds. But the promotion of happiness among his works communicates

real fatisfaction to the Father and Friend of all. He that eateth not “ the flesh of bulls ” feasts on the felicity of his creatures ; he that drinks not the blood of goats is gratified by the effects of goodness. The heathens thought their gods were susceptible of pleasure from the steam of their sacrifices : Heaven *does* inhale the happiness of earth ! Sweet to the source of good is the odour of this incense !

The great sacrifice, which is alone immediately, and directly, acceptable to the Almighty, is neither any thing that cometh out of the ground, or that goeth forth from the mouth of man ; it is the sacrifice of our faculties upon the broad, immortal altar of society. The substance of divine service is social service. Benevolence to man is the “ beauty of holiness.” The ground, wherever it be, upon which honest goodness relieves the indigent ; consoles the dejected ; protects the oppressed ; defends the defamed ; communicates truth ; or inculcates virtue ; the ground, wherever it be, upon which good is done, from a good principle ; or upon which impotent Pity drops an honest tear, and but wishes to do it ; is better consecrated, in the eye of heaven, by such transactions, or by such

tears, than by all the religious ceremonies, that could have been performed upon it. The house of mourning, the hovel of poverty, the prison of despair, when they receive the visit of charity, are temples, upon which the object of worship looks down with more complacency, than upon any other temples. The sphere of usefulness is the chief church of man : this is the most “ holy place :” the “ holy of holies :” the most sacred court in the temple of God : those that minister here are the highest priests, whose office has most sanctity in his sight. Devotedness to society is the truest dedication to God. Generous offices are the noblest sort of religious exercises. He that teaches the sighing “ heart to sing for joy,” awakes the harp which best befits the fingers of devotion. He that tunes this animated instrument, he that raises this holy hymn, he that sends up this sacred music, he is the psalmist that, in the ear of heaven, excels all others in sweetness. Whoever wipes another’s tear, lifts another’s head, binds another’s heart ; performs religion’s most beautiful rite, most decent and most handsome ceremony. To go on an
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errand of mercy, is to set out on the only holy pilgrimage.

All other worship, with whatever height of solemnity, with whatever sublimity of circumstance, with whatever comeliness of form, it be accompanied, considered independently of this, and as terminating in itself, contains no degree of recommendation to the divine Being. All the voices of assembled mankind, joining together in a chorus of praise to God; all the musical instruments in the world, united in a sacred concert; all the knees of all the nations, bent together before the throne of high heaven; this sort of praise, ascending from all the earth at once, in itself considered, would yield no satisfaction to the object of worship; any more than all the frankincense of the earth, ascending in one cloud to heaven, or all the fruits of the earth, presented upon one spacious altar:—but peace prevailing among all the nations; equity reigning all round the globe; all mankind concurring to promote the general good, and dwelling in fraternal amity together; this social order, this moral harmony, this concord of faculties, this music of minds, were an anthem that would

enter the ear of him who “ is a Spirit :” of him who hearkens to the silver chime of the spheres, and who set the silent harmonies of nature.

Supposing the supreme Being to be susceptible of pleasure from the praise of his creatures, even separately considered from the profit ultimately resulting to them from the commemoration and contemplation of his character ; that man must be considered as proclaiming his perfections in the loudest voice, as praising his name in the most eloquent language, who acts in such a manner as to answer the ends of his creation. How is it that the “ sun and moon praise him, and all the stars of light ?” How is it that “ fire, and hail, and snow, and vapour, praise him ?” How is it that “ mountains and all hills, fruitful trees, and all cedars praise him ?” How is it that “ beasts and all cattle, creeping thing, and flying fowl,” set forth his praise ? What is the way in which these irrational, and these inanimate, works of God, which, in the ardour of oriental fancy, and devotional enthusiasm, the psalmist invokes to praise him, actually obey the poet’s animated call ?—It is by the voice that cannot

not be heard by any but by reason's ear : it is by silent obedience to the laws of nature : by observing the order they were made to observe : by performing the offices they were created to perform : by producing the benignant effects they were formed to produce : and thus displaying in their silent song, audible only to the understanding, but to that sufficiently striking, the wisdom and goodness of the hand that made them. And in the same manner are mankind, the flower and the pride of the terrestrial creation, in the same way are " kings of the earth, and all people, princes, and all judges of the earth," to praise the name of God, not by postures of body, or compositions of words, or periodical recollections of divine excellence, but by fulfilling his moral word ; by falling into the regular courses of righteousness ; by uniformly pursuing that path of benevolence, which is the orbit of all intellectual beings, and in which if all mankind were to move, human life would " declare the glory of God," and " shew forth his handy work," with the same voice as that, with which the heavens declare it, and the firmament sheweth it forth.

Virtuous conduct, then, is, in every view we can possibly take of devotion, the only *perfectly* spiritual worship of God : and in order completely to purify ritual worship from ritual corruption, we must completely purge from our performance of it the idea, that it contains *any*, even the *smallest* value, in *itself*, and separate from its moral efficacy upon the character of the worshipper ; that it divides, even in the least degree, the divine favour with virtue. For, although we may assign to it the smallest share in the division, and although we may resolve not to satisfy ourselves with that share, whatever it may be, which we attribute to it, but may determine to add to the ceremonies of religion, the offices of morality ; yet if we allow ourselves to believe that the former possesses *any* portion, separately considered, of the divine approbation, we contract superstition ; and expose ourselves, in a greater or a smaller degree, to its pernicious operations upon the human character.

This notion, in however moderate a degree it be admitted into the mind, is sufficient of itself to lead the understanding along, by a gentle gradation, to all those excesses of superstition,

stitution, which have stained the annals of religion. Corruption in religion is an encroaching thing. It is the tendency of superstition, if the smallest part of it be received into the breast, to wreath and insinuate itself, till the whole length of the long enormous serpent be taken in. If I once admit, that there is any, the smallest recommendation to the Deity, in any kind of worship whatever, detached from moral duty, I open my mind to the idea of an arbitrary object of worship; who is pleased with something, it does not signify what, distinct from utility; with something besides the happiness and welfare of his works. This sentiment may be stopped by circumstances in the road of absurdity; but of itself it knows not where to stand. Its own impulse carries it on, if not arrested by some foreign force, to religious cruelty; to religious melancholy; to profligate immorality.

If I suppose, that there is any thing in religious exercises, in themselves considered, that renders them acceptable to the Almighty, I naturally pass on to the supposition, that some one particular mode of religious exercise, considered separately from its moral tendency, will

will recommend the worshipper to him more than any other. Thence I proceed to imagine, that this particular kind of worship is the only one that he will accept. From that imagination I go to the idea, that it is justifiable to force others into the use of it, with whatever rod I find it in my power to drive them to the adoption of it; and to compel them, if to such lengths my power extend, even with tragical violence. This is the path of the principle we are considering. If it stop short of this latitude, it is owing to the accidental limit of encouragement, not to the intrinsic confinement of the principle.

Again—if I allow myself to imagine that the Almighty is pleased with one useless thing, why may I not as well suppose him to be pleased with another? I have taken into my mind the notion of an arbitrary judge of men, who approves without reason. If he be pleased with the attitude of my body, or the words of my mouth, or the meditations of my heart upon the excellence of his character, which, however just, are fugitive as the office of outward worship, and ineffectual to bring forth that moral fruit, which is necessary

cessary to render my being a blessing to society, and, in the highest degree, to myself; if he accept as service this sort of insignificance, why may he not be pleased with my abstinence from innocent pleasure? with my total seclusion from society? with the sadness of my countenance? and the heaviness of my heart?

Again—if I allow, that there is any worth whatever, in any worship whatever, without good works, whatever my present resolution may be to add to that worship those good works, which, at my outset in this error, I may deem necessary to the completion of my acceptance in the sight of heaven, I am in danger of insensibly sliding into an idea, that, if I be very *punctual* and *strict*, in my performance of RELIGIOUS, I may *relax a little* in my attention to MORAL offices. Thence I steal on to the idea, that by *adding* to my religious assiduity, I may relax a little *more* in my moral attentions. And thus, step by step, I may reach at last that extremity of religious madness, which has led so many to imagine, that a multiplicity of devotional exercises is sufficient ground of itself for confidence towards God to stand upon, without any virtuous practice at all.

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I say then of superstition, what I say of vice, if you would avoid its more licentious lengths, beware of its first beginnings. Let us not admit into our religion the smallest mixture of that leaven of corruption, which possesses the power of making a complete change in the whole mass of it.

Let us keep close to this sentiment, from which if we stir one step, we know not whither we may wander, that the divine Being approves of nothing, for its own sake, in itself alone considered, but that virtue which produces the happiness of the possessor, and of society.

Let this idea dwell in our minds, that our duties to God, and our duties to man, are not distinct, and independent duties, but involved in each other: that devotion and virtue are not *different* things, but the *same* thing, either in different stages, or in different stations; in different points of progress, or circumstances of situation. What we call devotion, for the sake of distinction, during its initiatory and instrumental exercises, is devotion in its infancy: the virtue, which after a time it produces, is devotion in its maturity. The contemplation of Deity is devotion at rest:

rest: the execution of his commands is devotion in action. Praise is religion in the temple, or in the closet; industry from a sense of duty is religion in the shop, or in the field; commercial integrity is religion in the mart; the communication of consolation is religion in the house of mourning; tender attention is religion in the chamber of sickness; paternal instruction is religion at the hearth; judicial justice is religion on the bench; senatorial patriotism is religion in the public council.

While, then, we perform the rites of religion, if we would perfectly refine our performance of them from superstition, we must retain the idea in our remembrance, so as never to lose sight of it, that their *sole merit* consists in their *instrumentality* in the production of pure and generous morality. This is the end; they are the means. This is the plant; they are the water. If this do not thrive, they are spilt upon the ground. Suffer me then to repeat, let me beseech you to remember, carry the idea along with you, as often as you repair to the courts of religion, if you would carry along with you a devotion

devotion perfectly clear from corruption, that man, then only, in the most perfect sense, “ worships the Father in spirit and in truth,” while he is meditating, or doing, good to his works; or while he is contemplating with a sincerely generous pleasure the benevolent operations of almighty Goodness, and ardently wishing for opportunities of co-operation with it:—that the province of justice and mercy is the most holy ground on which he can stand:—that the post of his duty is his divinest place of worship; the eminently sacred situation, of which it may be said, in the most sublime sense of the words, “ This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!”—that this, wherever it be, in whatever walk of society, in whatever part of the globe, or in whatever pale of religion, is the “ high and holy hill” of every human being; the everlasting Sion of every moral agent, through every world, where God for ever dwells with him, nor ever removes his approbation from this its eternal rest.

I entreat you to keep continually in your eye this infinitely important truth: it is the pole star, that alone will guide you through
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the rites of religion, and prevent you from losing your way, and wandering, no one knows whither, in the wide sea of superstition, where so many worshippers of the Father have been lost.—I call upon you all, under whatever roofs, with whatever rites, in whatever words, in the preceding part of this day, you are accustomed to adore the omnipresent, and, to honest devotion, the universally propitious Deity, as you value the purity of your religion, and wish to be preserved from sliding into ultimately fatal errors, whenever you direct your steps to your respective churches or chapels, by whatever name the buildings go, I beseech you to take along with you the conviction I have laboured this evening to excite, that the wide theatre of virtuous activity, the ample field of generous labour, which Providence has opened to man, is the grand CATHEDRAL of piety: that the place, whatever it be, in which prayers are said, in which praises are sung, in which any sort of religious ceremony is performed, is but the *porch* to this: that he, who, at whichever of its numerous doors, enters into this temple, is a true worshipper of the Father: that he, who stops in the porch,

porch, whichever of them it be, is no servant of God's, with whatever solemnity he may sit there.

Them, who, after the manner I have recommended, resolve to worship the God of their fathers, I shall be happy to join, in this place, in the social offices of devotion. Welcome to the courts of religion, all honest worshippers of the Father! Far from our thoughts be all confidence in the form of religion; in the shadow of a piety, that possesses no substance, that renders no service to society. Let us engage in the offices of devotion, not as performances that are to supply the place, but to secure the discharge, of moral duties; not as exercises that are to consecrate, but to eradicate, vice. The ancients, we are told, had temples, in which the malefactor, that fled to them for protection, was safe from the pursuit of punishment: violence was not allowed to profane the place: the pursuer stopped short at the threshold; and the object of his pursuit panted in security from him. The superstition of christian countries has sought in the temple of the living and true God an asylum from the obligations of morality; and a sanctuary
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from the pursuit of celestial justice. I invite no attendance here that proceeds from such a principle. I have no comfort to offer, no shelter to hold out, to the fugitive from offended conscience. The altars of God are not the guardians of guilt. No: hither let us come, as to a sanctuary, not from the remorse attendant on immorality, but from immorality itself: as to the fortrefs of our virtue amidst the temptations of life: as to a tower of moral security in this state of moral danger: and in this house, as often as we enter it, and in every other to which we may repair for the same purpose, may our virtue find the protection which it seeks, and may we learn to worship God by promoting the harmony and happiness of his works. Amen.

On the Propriety of the Term, usually
employed in Scripture, to express
the virtuous Character.

SERMON XI.

——*The spirits of JUST men made perfect.*

HEBREWS xii. 23.

TO express the whole by some one prominent part, is a mode of speech, very frequent in the best writers. It is impossible for any one to have perused the sacred Scriptures with any attention, without having remarked, that they commonly describe the whole of the virtuous character by some epithet, which, in its strict and limited sense, expresses only some one single part of it. Nor is it less obvious to a reader of those writings, that justice, or righteousness, which signifies the same thing, is the virtue, which

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they

they more frequently select than any other, to stand as the representative and definition of virtue in general. Good, is a term of which they sometimes make use, but not so frequently as that in the text. They forbid us however to infer from their frequent use of this expression, that the whole duty of man is confined to justice, in the limited sense of that word, by the distinct enumerations, which they often place before us, of the several component parts of the virtuous character. But whenever that character is described in one word, just, or righteous, is the expression which recurs with the greatest frequency in the sacred pages, and is most familiar to the eye that is conversant with them.

What then, you will say, is justice the virtue, which, upon a first survey of the bright constellation of all the virtues, first catches the eye with its splendour? Would not some one of the more liberal and generous branches of rectitude be a more amiable and beautiful title for the whole? Would it not be more agreeable to moral taste and sensibility, when describing a virtuous man, to call him a kind man, a generous man, a merciful

ciful man, than a just man? Is not FRIEND, PATRIOT, PHILANTHROPIST, a more brilliant name than just person? one who renders to all what is their due? that to which they have a perfect right, and which to withhold from any one, would argue a shameful depravity and baseness of spirit?

The only use I propose at this time to make of the portion of Scripture, I have chosen for our present meditation, is to submit a few considerations to your attention, to illustrate the propriety of the preference, which the sacred writings have given to the expression employed in this passage, to represent the virtuous character.

First, There is no one virtue of so absolute importance and essential necessity to the welfare of society as justice.

Let all the debts of justice be by all men discharged; let every man be just to himself, and to all others; endeavour, by the exercise of industry and œconomy, to provide for his own wants, and prevent himself from becoming a burthen upon society, and abstain, in the pursuit of his own subsistence, from every thing injurious to the interests of others; let every one. “ render unto all their

due ;” that property, which he is obliged by the laws of the land, or by those of honourable equity, to pay them ; that candour and open dealing, to which they have a right, in all his commercial intercourse with them ; that portion of good report, to which their merit entitles them ; that decent respect and quiet submission, which their rightful civil authority demands ; that intellectual and moral cultivation, which he owes to them whom nature has particularly entrusted to his tuition, or whom he has professionally undertaken to educate ; or that just advice, which it is his occupation to dispense, a capacity of which it is his duty to seek in a suitable education, and to the free and unreserved communication of which, unwithheld by sinister considerations, all that apply to him for it, have an undoubted claim : let every thing insidious and insincere be thus banished from the transactions of traffic ; every thing injurious to reputation, from the circles of conversation ; every thing base and dishonourable, from the professions that watch over the health, the property, the morals, or the learning and knowledge, of mankind : let no part of human dexterity, invention, and wit,
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be wasted in a subtle war with the laws of the land; let no violence invade the property, or the liberty, or the life, of man: let civil communities conduct themselves towards each other, by the rules of equity and justice; put away from them all intemperate desire of dominion, all unjust claims, and pursue pacific councils; let none be allured from the arms of their families, to fight the battles, and to fall in the fields, of unrighteous and unhallowed war; let arms be no longer the description of a profession, or destruction the subject of councils, or offence the office of steel; let the mortality of mankind be no longer expedited, and widows and orphans multiplied, and hospitals peopled, by the mighty men of mischief that divide the spoil of the earth: let every man thus hold the scales of Justice in his hand, and stand in no need of her sword; let innocence and peace thus reign in every part of private and of public life; and mankind will present a picture of felicity, that will leave little scope for the exercise of Compassion and Charity. Let justice be thus universally done, and the spirit of Mercy will have little to do, but to

look upon mankind with the smile of congratulation !

Few are the miseries of man that proceed from the hand of Nature. All the acts of relief and succour, which she has made it necessary for Humanity to perform, are, now and then, to console the lamentation that weeps over the mortality of Friendship ; to support the head of occasional Sickness ; to watch over the weakness of helpless Infancy ; to rock the cradle of declining Age ; and sometimes, but not often, with tender and patient arts, to solicit home again the Reason that has strayed from her seat.

The great mass of misery, that presses upon mankind, is imposed by human hands : and much reason did he discover, in his election of an enemy, who exclaimed, “ let me fall into the hands of God, for very great are his mercies, but let me not fall into the hands of man ! ” It is not Pestilence, it is not Famine, it is not Earthquake, it is man, that is the most terrible scourge of man !

The great demand for mercy, which there is in the world, is occasioned by the scarcity of justice. The labours of Love would be little wanted, if the debts of Justice were
every

every where paid. It is the dishonesty of the many, that creates the great importance of the kindness, that is exhibited by the few. During the darkness of the night, we are glad of that silver sister to the day, whose light, when the sun is in the heavens, we do not want.

Of what do the acts of charity, for the most part, consist, but counterworks to the operations of Injustice? but attempts to repair those breaches in human happiness, which that enemy to it has made? to expel the poison that scorpion has infused? The offices of brotherly kindness include little more, than interpositions to shield mankind from the blows of man; to protect oppressed Innocence; to defend injured Fame; to wipe the tears which Cruelty has caused to flow; to redress the various wrongs, which the unrighteous have heaped upon the heads of mankind. Whence is the renown of patriots derived, but from the attempts of Faction and Tyranny to trample upon the liberty of those countries, in the annals of which their names are interspersed, as the stars and beauties of history? To what does the celebrated visitant of prisons owe the fame of his humanity, but to the injuries of the prisoner?

And

And to what are the opportunities of munificence, so perpetually presented to the opulent, to be traced, but to injury, existing somewhere or other in society, either more closely connected with, or more remote from the sufferer; with the exception only of those cases, in which indolence is the cause of the indigence that asks their relief? As God has “given the earth to the children of men,” and caused it to bring forth enough to satisfy the natural and necessary wants of them all, to a competent portion of its provision, every inhabitant, who contributes the portion of labour which he owes to society, must be considered as having an indisputable right. Every industrious man demands this, not from Charity, but from Justice. When Decrepitude pleads incapacity of labour, how frequently does the history of it carry back the imagination of the inquirer to one of those fields of blood, in which no limb had ever been lost, had there been no such things as unjust ambition and sanguinary revenge among mankind! How many of the necessitous families, for whose relief benevolent subscriptions are taken in, would never have been reduced to the necessity of application to

public humanity, had their departed heads exercised that providence and œconomy, which they owed, in strictest justice, to them, whom they were bringing up in habits of elegance, and to prospects of plenty ! How often is the pecuniary embarrassment, or total ruin of the trafficker, to be charged either upon that profusion, or neglect of business, or rash experiment and speculation, which imply not only personal imprudence, but social injustice, in one, who has domestic, or commercial connections, that must be involved in his fall ! Or when his distress is to be traced to no injustice of his own, how often is it to be ascribed to that of others ! How frequently has the fallen trader, whose shipwrecked fortunes seek for the assistance of the prosperous, to complain of dishonourable debtors, of the snares of fraud, or, if in humble life, of the pillage that has taken from him his little all ! How often has he a story to tell, of the whispers of calumny, that robbed him of the good name upon which he depended for his bread ! of the arts of envy and dishonourable rivalry, before which no man is able to stand ! When misfortunes of this nature are not produced by any immediate and obvious

injustice,

injustice, they are, perhaps, to be imputed to some more remote obstruction, in the circulation of human equity, that impeaches either the integrity of individuals, or the vigilant justice of the state.

There is scarcely a single one, of all the various evils in human life which ask the redress of the benevolent, but what is inflicted, not by nature, not by God, but by man, upon man. Even health, that department of human happiness, which appears to be, in a manner, the sole province of nature, where every vicissitude seems as it were reserved for the immediate, sole, and unmixed administration of Providence, even this sphere is invaded by the bold step of human Injustice! Much of the sickness that calls for the attendance of Friendship, or the balm of Charity, has been occasioned by the sale of medicines, which Avarice has adulterated; by the food it has partially poisoned; or the improper medical treatment of uneducated pretenders to an art, which, in him who knows that he does not understand it as he ought, it is murder to practise.

And as injustice is the cause of most of that evil in the outward conditions, and in the
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bodies of men, which calls for the assistance of goodness, to the same source is to be traced much of that disorder in their understandings, and in their hearts, which so often requires the compassion and correction of Friendship and Benevolence. The errors and prejudices which are treated with tenderness, and eradicated with calm and patient pity, by the wise and good, may be traced to the neglect of those, to whom the care of education was committed: and many of the follies and vices, to which moral benevolence administers admonition, would never have called for admonition, if parents and preceptors had not been guilty of infidelity to the trust reposed in them; or if evil companions had not taken pains to corrupt the morals of innocence and youth; and thus committed the greatest injury that one human creature can possibly render to another, an injury, which, of all others, puts in the strongest claim to a release from the obligation of forgiveness.

This view of the compass and extent of human injustice is, I hope, sufficient to convince us, that if justice were universally done, there would be little left for Mercy to do. The universal discharge of this one duty
would

would produce, in human life, a picture of happiness, that would content the eye of Charity. Generosity would have only to spread a heightening colour over, and breathe a richer spirit into the piece. The acts of justice are the pillars of society; if they stand firm, undefaced, and fair, Charity will have only to beautify the capitals of the eternal columns, and lend a little ornament to the well-supported fabric. Let mankind be left to themselves, without molestation; to the unimpeded operations of their own powers; to the goodness of Nature and of God; and Pity will have few tears to shed; Friendship few words of comfort to utter; and Beneficence but few offices of relief to perform:

Secondly, As that branch of morality, which the Scriptures have selected to express the whole, is that which is of most importance and necessity to society; so it is the only one, of which the expressions are, with certainty, to be ascribed to a principle of rectitude. The appearances of all the other virtues may possibly proceed from the temperance of the body. Temperance in the pleasures and pursuits of human life is often to be traced to no higher origin, than to appetites

petites that are averſe to ſenſual exceſs; to paſſions the quietude of which requires no rein; and to a peculiar degree of phlegm and coolneſs in the conſtitution, which is not eaſily exaſperated into irregular reſentment, or into wild ambition. The patience, that produces diligence in buſineſs, that is neceſſary to perſeverance in the offices of induſtry, may be derived, not from the exertions of reaſon, but from the inactivity of the ſpirits. The expreſſions of humility ſometimes ſolely proceed from timorousneſs of natural temper, that ſhrinks from the frown of reſentment, or from the ſmile of contempt, and that, in ſhutting itſelf up from what it fears, aſſumes the appearance of modeſt retirement from notice. The courage, of which we admire the exploit, may poſſibly ſpring from corporeal animation, and mechanical inſenſibility to danger. The fortitude, which ſuſtains the ſhock of adverſity, without ſhaking, is frequently to be imputed ſolely to firmneſs of nerves; and acts of pecuniary generoſity, which call forth all the enthuſiaſm of gratitude, and all the glow of panegyric, are often the effects of a flow of warm ſpirits, and an ardour of conſtitution, incompatible with
avarice,

avarice, and invariably accompanied with pecuniary carelessness and indifference. But he who uniformly does justice, not merely that which the laws of the land prescribe, but all that conscience and reason teach him is just and honest ; he whose justice is not the prisoner of a letter, but goes the whole round of broad, immortal equity ; must act, can act, from nothing short of pure and virtuous principle. The acts of justice have no connection, can have none, with the texture of the nerves, the pace of the blood, or the motion of the spirits. In taking Justice for the title of virtue, we take a clear, un sullied name ; the purity of which bids defiance to slander, and to suspicion ; upon the polish of which no dimness will rest, and of which the whiteness will not take a taint.

Thirdly, Another foundation for the preference, which the sacred writers have given to this virtue, in making it the name of all, is what may be inferred from the foregoing consideration, that the uniform practice of true justice, if not merely legal honesty, but liberal equity, implies the possession of every virtue. All the several parts of virtue constitute one simple whole ; all proceeding from
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One principle, all partaking of one spirit. This principle as naturally and necessarily produces all the branches of known and acknowledged virtue, as the same root, that supplies one branch of a tree, is the source of all the rest. This principle is the supreme love of God, and of society. All the various heads of virtue are equally commanded by the first, and equally conducive to the happiness of the last. The love of mercy is the law of the same Being, who directs us to do justice; and both are equally the ministers of public good. He who practises one, from a proper principle, must possess the spirit of both. If he, who uniformly practises the whole of justice, must act from such a principle, the love of God and man must dwell within him. To call any one a just person, therefore, is to style him a servant of God; a friend to mankind; a good man.

Fourthly, Another ground of the superiority of the term we are considering, to express the virtuous character by, is, that true justice not only implies goodness, but is necessary to give to goodness its value to society. If Justice be not the guide of Goodness, Goodness will wander from the line of utility.

That Mercy, along with which Justice does not go, changes its nature, and becomes Cruelty. In endeavouring to communicate happiness, he who observes not the rules of justice, will often, while he acts from good nature, produce evil effects. There is Benevolence that acts the malefactor's part ; there is Friendship that performs the office of Enmity ; there is Love that accomplishes the ends of Hatred. That lenity in the magistrate, which should prevent him from being a " terror to evil doers," would also prevent him from being " a protection to such as do well." That heat of social attachment, which hurries along in the pursuit of their particular welfare, by whom it is kindled, without heeding, upon what interests of others, upon what welfare of society, it tramples in its way, converts the friend of an individual into the enemy of mankind. That tenderness of friendship, which spares the errors of its object the temporary pain of the faithful reproof it owes them, deserves the name of malignity. That kindness in the parent, or in the preceptor, which prompts him to gratify by indulgence, instead of checking by opposition, those evil passions in

his children, or his pupils, which must prove the disturbers of their future repose; which, in imparting pleasure to childhood and youth, but throws food to the vultures of the breast; such a kindness as this, disunites what should eternally go together, what, it is, of all violence to nature, the most impious and profane to dis sever, the FATHER and the FRIEND!

Justice, then, in these instances, is only Goodness, in a more awful form. It is Kindness, rendered venerable by Wisdom; it is the gravity of Benevolence; it is Philanthropy, losing the sweetness of her smile in the seriousness of forethought and reflection. It is this association, which renders the charity of man imitative of the providence of God, who ever acts from the most enlarged views, and the most lengthened insight into futurity.

Upon all these accounts, we shall all, I trust, without hesitation, agree with Cicero's character of justice, who calls it the queen and mistress of all the virtues; and shall not wonder that the Scriptures have so far honoured it, as to call them all by its name.

Fifthly, One thing more may be said, to complete the vindication of the choice, which the sacred writings have made of this epithet, to express the whole of the virtuous character; which is, that the word was frequently used, in this enlarged sense, by many ancient writers of the best authority. Sometimes they considered justice as expressing the whole of human duty, including all that we owe to God, and all that we owe to man: and sometimes, as signifying social duty only, but social duty in its utmost extent; comprising, along with those of justice, the offices of humanity and mercy. In this use of the word, in these extensive senses, they proceeded upon this generous sentiment, that God has a right to all the homage we are able to pay him, and that mankind have a right to all the services we are capable of rendering them; that piety is but justice to God, and that mercy is no more than justice to man. It has been common, as many of you know, for writers upon equity to speak of the debts of charity, as well as of the debts of justice; and to consider the demand of that which legally belongs to a man, and the petition of that distress which deserves to be
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be succoured by him who has it in his power to impart assistance, as being both entitled to the appellation of claims and rights; which they have no farther distinguished from each other, than by calling the former perfect, and the latter imperfect, rights.

In the eye of philosophical, and of the sacred writers, in the sight of reason, and of God, not only he that lends has a right to what he has lent; not only he that labours for another has a right to his wages; and he that sells, to the price of the goods that are bought of him: but he that has need, which he has not by indolence deserved, has a right to what he really wants, from him that hath this world's goods; he that is bewildered in the walks of business, from his ignorance of the world, or in his way to heaven, from his ignorance of duty, has a right to the directing hand, which it is in the power of any one who perceives his secular perplexity, or his moral error, to hold out to him; he that is sick, has a right to all the attention and support which his situation requires, from the health and strength that surround him; he that is dejected and unhappy, has a right to all the consolation, which

those about him are able to afford him; he that wants any thing, whatever it be, whether intellectual, or moral, or animal, which he cannot procure for himself, has a right to expect it from them that can. According to this honourable and generous view of things, it is not only unjust to oppress another, but to withhold the protection we are able to lend him, when we see him oppressed: it is not only unjust to steal the bread, or the raiment of a brother, but not to give bread to them that are an hungered, not to bestow raiment upon them that are naked, when they are incapable of feeding and clothing themselves, and when we are able to do it for them.

The want of definition of the duties of charity, in the system of practice which christianity has put into the hand of man, together with their total absence from the prescriptions of political society, have been the causes of their having been regarded by the multitude, as less strictly obligatory than those of justice. The indefinite and general inculcation of the generous duties, in the christian, as in all other moral directories that have been communicated to mankind, is to
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be considered as owing to the utter impossibility of their specification. Return that, which you received on the express condition of its being repaid; give that, which you engaged to give in exchange for what has been given you; employ the property, that was entrusted to your hand, to the purposes for which it was put into it: to define these debts of justice, is easy; a few words are sufficient to point them out; but the debts of charity are innumerable as the necessities of surrounding society, which I possess a power to supply. But, though the distinct specification of the former, in the laws of God, and of the land, may give them a peculiar appearance of sacredness to our eye; although, embodied in solemn forms of words, they may seem to our apprehension to be of a bulkier, and more palpable nature, than those which make no verbal figure before us; yet the debts of charity are altogether of as solid substance, and as binding a nature, in the sight of reason, as those of justice; and are all of them easily discernible, and distinctly visible, to an impartial understanding, as they rise in detail, in the course of life,

That addition, whatever it be, which I find myself able to make to the sum of general happiness, is a debt which I strictly owe it; the payment of which I have no right to refuse. That, whatever it be, by the communication of which I am capable of making that addition, is no more my own, in the eye of that everlasting law which shall out-live the everlasting hills, than the money committed to my hand, by one man, to be by me administered to another. That reason, which points out to me the possibility of making this addition, is the law of God within me, commanding me to make it. That vacuity, in the scene of happiness and welfare around me, which I perceive, and the filling up of which I perceive, at the same time, to be in my power, possesses a claim to such a supply from me, which, the moment I reflect, I cannot avoid recognising. That vacuity is a voice, commanding me to fill it, authoritative and audible as the thunder of Sinai. The simple appearance, to the mind of a rational creature, of the possibility of his adding, in any case, to the quantity of happiness, upon the whole, in the creation of God, by parting with any possession, or employing

mend him to the divine acceptance. The letter of legal justice is so far from including the whole duty of man, as not to comprise the whole even of justice, considered in the confined sense of the word. A pure and clear principle of honesty obliges a man to do much more than the letter of the law ; and the obedience, that is limited to that letter, cannot possess any of the spirit of equity. He who does what is just, only from a fear of the laws, is not an honest man. We are told by Solomon, and we are truly told, that the just are actuated by other motives. “ It is joy to the just to do judgment ;” and judgment they would do, and take a pleasure in doing, if there were not such an officer as a magistrate in the world. Justice, if what I have said in this discourse be true, is a generous principle. True justice is charity ; it is public spirit ; it is sense of rectitude ; it is a principle of piety ; it is the love of order and harmony in the creation of God.

Of the other class of self-deceivers, whose eyes this discussion is adapted to open, is he, who infers his claim to divine commendation, from the experience of occasional feelings of compassion and good-nature, and the practice
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of a desultory and unregulated charity, in the absence of temperance, œconomy, religion, and justice. Be just before you are generous, is a piece of popular and proverbial advice; it is daily in the vulgar mouth; but from the lips of the moral philosopher there never dropped a lesson of conduct, more deeply founded in moral wisdom. It is common for them who set the fashion in the manners, as in the ornaments of human life, to consider, what they call, generosity, as the virtue of gentlemen; and justice, as the virtue of mechanics. They pronounce an act of showy munificence to be noble and princely; an office of friendship to be heroic and glorious: but the payment of a debt to honest industry, or the exercise of that frugality, which is necessary to the future comfort and subsistence of a family, as well as to the enlargement of the capacity to bestow relief upon poverty, they regard as beneath the dignity of polite and liberal attention.

Such persons might not only be told, what it would give them no pain to be told, that they are not just; they might also be told, what might excite within them some surprise, and some resentment, that they are
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not generous. It might not only be said to them, what they would hear with a smile, “You possess no piety;” it might also be said to them, “You possess no public spirit: you may boast of the ardour of your private friendships, of the nicety of your artificial, your fanciful, and partial honour;—but you are not the friends of society; there is no honour in your conduct to mankind at large; your sensual excesses impoverish both your personal, and your pecuniary powers of social service; your insolvent profusion discourages that hand of the diligent, to which accommodated life is indebted for its conveniences; and your inglorious and guilty indolence, your base and ungenerous inactivity, entombs the talents, that were entrusted to you, to be rendered by you as productive of utility to all around you as possible.”

Charity is a complete and consistent thing. It is not a flash, but a flame; it is not a fragment, but a whole; it is not a segment, but a circle: Its affections stream from God as their centre; all mankind compose their circumference; they go forth, not only in one, but in all directions, towards the production of others’ good,

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That benevolence, which solely consists in the uncultivated feelings of nature, which is not rooted and grounded in the eternal principles of religion and rectitude, is not only, while it lasts, a thing of fits and starts, but likewise short-lived. It is a thing as perishing, as it is imperfect; it declines with declining, it departs with departing, nature. It is fugitive as youth; it is fleeting as health; it is brief and mortal as human life. This broken goodness, which has no root in vital religion and love of rectitude, like the branch of a tree cut off from its parent stem, that yet looks green for a day, that serves to decorate the bower of festivity and holiday, and that, in situations in which the fracture appears not to the sight, may seem, for a short season, to be growing still; this broken goodness, like such a broken bough, may look fair and fresh, for a while, to the eye of man; and flourish in reputation, during the little day of human life: but as the evening of life draws on, it begins to fade; it withers and droops, when the shadows of old age are lengthened; at night, it is totally dead; and sees corruption in the grave.

God

God grant, that we may grow to that eternal vine, which supplies the character with immortal nurture! Then shall we “flourish in the courts of our God,” and “our leaf shall not wither for ever.” Amen.

On Spiritual Pride.

SERMON XII.

Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.

ISAIAH lxxv. 5.

OF all the vices to which we are liable, that which is at once the most repugnant to reason, the most injurious to happiness, and the most common to man, is pride. He, from whom the hand of Heaven appears to have taken the most especial care to hide it, by surrounding him on every side with circumstances of humiliation, the most completely calculated to shut it out, discovers some opening or other, in some part of the circumscription, through which he finds a way to it. There is somewhere, either in what he is, or in what he has, some humble eminence, some little hillock of rising ground,
upon

upon which he contrives to lift up his heart, and to taste the delight of looking down upon some, however few, of his fellow creatures.

All the several branches of pride, irrational and vicious as they all indisputably are, in the eye of every just understanding, are so far from being regarded in this light, as to be vindicated, and considered as becoming, by their respective possessors.

He who regards his inferiors in station with a disdainful eye, who preserves, with an inflexible and unrelenting pomp, the solemnities of rank, without ever stooping, in the slightest degree, from the stately stiffness of haughty reserve, calls this contemptible spirit by the name of decent pride; and considers it as an important office of parental tuition, to rebuke an opposite spirit in his young, and as yet inartificial descendants, when, solely swayed by the dictates of nature, and careless, because unconscious, of domestic dignity, they discover in their intercourse, with those who are beneath them in condition, an ignorance of the distance which society has thrown between them.

Upon persons who have a proper contempt for pecuniary, and for family-pride, there

there are yet some sorts of this weakness the appearance of which imposes. They speak of an honest pride; of a noble pride; of a generous pride: the words are splendid and sonorous; but I know of nothing in nature which answers to the description. Of this kind, in their estimation, is that impatience of obligations, in consequence of having been accustomed to confer them, which discovers itself in them, who are ashamed to receive what they are reduced to want; and whose fore sensibility must be touched with a gentleness, possible only to the hand of nice and delicate humanity, in order that they may not be hurt and wounded, when they are taken hold of to be lifted out of the dust. The blush, with which those who are of this spirit, when sunk into this situation, receive the succour they have often communicated, but never needed till now, communicates (as these moral critics conceive) a grace to their reception of it, and is an ornament to their countenance. Their struggle between gratitude and even anger, when he whom once they relieved from poverty, but who now is richer than they, tenders them the return he owes them; their fullen ac-

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knowledgment of the kindness they cannot accept; has in it (they think) somewhat of noble and of generous, by which their fall is adorned, and which lends a glory to the shades of their adversity.

This pride is, however, unquestionably weakness. As there is certainly nothing to be ashamed of, in the eye of reason, in present reduction to the necessity of receiving assistance, when the fall from affluence is the consequence neither of guilt nor of folly; so was there nothing to nourish that spirit of pride, of which the present shame is an indisputable proof, either in the capacity to communicate relief which is now past, or in the inclination to lend it which went along with the power.

The pride of piety and of virtue approves itself to the understanding of many persons, who see nothing but what is despicable in the pride of riches or of rank. “For are not these (they ask) the true glory of man? Wealth is dirt: title is air: but virtue is solid greatness. What is without me, is not myself: that which adds neither a cubit to my stature, nor a hair to my head, can give me no claim to respect: but rectitude is intrinsic

trinsic excellence; rectitude is the dignity of angelic, rectitude is the dignity of the Divine, Nature."

It is so: but of that dignity, pride constitutes no part: in the breast of perfect excellence pride has no place. What is called the pride of virtue, if it be any thing more, and more it must be in order to deserve that name, and more it is in the mind of many, than that sober and moderate self-approbation to which every honest man has a right, and which is no other than the voice of God within him; that self-approbation which is but the approbation of what is right in itself, and which is inseparable from a rational nature when contemplating that rectitude within itself, the excellence of which it cannot help perceiving in whatever place it finds it; that self-approbation which is accompanied with a perfectly equal approbation of the equal excellence which is exhibited by any other character, and an equal pleasure in perceiving another's virtue to that with which we are conscious to our own: if it over-step this modesty, or stray from this generosity; if it rise into an excessive elation of mind, into self-applause and panegyric,

upon the discharge of any of the duties of man ; if it inspire an intemperate thirst of the respect and admiration of mankind ; if it lead to look down upon them who seem to be less deserving than we, with an exulting sense of superiority and insolent triumph over them, and to compliment ourselves, on the comparison, upon the extraordinary splendour and distinguished dignity of the figure we exhibit among the works of God ; if it go to this extreme, our self-complacency becomes vice of the most contemptible kind.

Of moral or spiritual pride, as there are several causes, there are several kinds ; accompanied with different degrees of virtue ; some of them, in consequence of their cause, founded in an empty pretence to it ; but all of them inconsistent with the perfect purity of it, and all originating in weakness and ignorance.

Ignorance is the mother of *all* pride. As the pride of station proceeds from ignorance, or which is the same thing forgetfulness, of its foreignness to ourselves ; and the pride of talents from ignorance of their derivation ; so the pride which says, “ Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou,” arises from igno-

rance of one or other of the following things : ignorance of the nature of virtue ; of the degree in which we are virtuous ; of the strictness of the obligation by which we are bound to be as perfectly so as possible ; or of the way in which, if we are, we became so.

First, Spiritual pride frequently exists in the total absence of all virtue, in consequence of an utter ignorance (which must have for its cause more or less of wilful inattention) of what it is. When the whole of obedience is made to consist in what is to be done with perfect ease, and when every thing arduous and difficult is excluded from the part to be acted by man, the performance may arrive at absolute perfection : and a notion of faultless excellence naturally gives birth to pride.

This is the case, when the whole duty of man is reduced to the entertainment of particular religious tenets ; to a scrupulous regularity, or superfluous repetitions, of ritual attentions ; the preservation of a formal gravity of deportment ; and a minute observance of the miniature proprieties, the little decencies, and petty decorums of life : and

when moral excellence and radical worth, with all the inward struggles that are necessary to the production, and maintenance, of it in the mind, are entirely lost sight of.

It is obvious, that for him, whose notions of duty are of this narrow nature, it is easy, in his own esteem, to become a perfect man. If he regularly attend to all the punctilios which, he imagines, comprise the circle of his duties, he will have nothing with which to reproach himself; he will have no imperfections over which to blush; he will have no confessions to make “before the face of Almighty God:” the consequence of this will naturally be, a high opinion of himself, and a haughty contempt of others, who are not, in these respects, so observant as himself.

The pride of the Pharisees was notoriously owing to their mistaking the shadow, for the substance, of piety. They were proverbial for confining their attention to rites and ceremonies, and neglecting justice, mercy, and truth. This was the ground of that arrogant gratitude to God for a supposed superiority to a far superior character, and that impudence of private praise, which the well-known
parable

parable of Christ, upon this subject, has, in so beautiful and pointed a manner, reproved.

But when duty is placed in its true light; when it is considered as consisting in a right government of all our thoughts, and words, and actions; in the exercise of sincere and cheerful submission to the supreme will, in every situation of life; in the practice of strict justice in every social transaction; in a temperate gratification of every sensual appetite; and in a warm benevolence towards all the world, which is ready to part with whatever the real necessities of nature can spare to any that want it: when we chalk out for ourselves these ample lines of duty, we shall find it no easy thing to fill them up. This is setting ourselves a task, which will make it necessary for us to wrestle with powerful opposition, from a variety of little passions, that are at war with large and liberal views. To do this, with such a nature as ours, in such a world as this, will require unremitting resolution and vigilance. He, who enters upon such a course of well-doing, will be frequently forced to confess himself a frail and imperfect creature: he will have often to enter into himself with shame, and to review

his conduct with self-reproach and dissatisfaction. He will frequently feel himself to fall so far short of what, he knows, he ought, and of what he aims, to be, as to "smite upon his breast," and acknowledge himself a sinner.

Secondly, Another cause of moral pride is ignorance of ourselves, or of the degree in which we are virtuous. When we know what we ought to be, it is not so easy to ascertain exactly what we actually are. Character is best expressed by action: but occasions are necessary to call the character into action; and occasions, adapted to draw it out into those strong and decisive actions, which make it impossible either for the spectator, or the possessor, of it, to entertain a doubt of what it is, do not always occur. There are some who stand in such circumstances, during the whole course of their lives, as secure them from all temptation to actions flagrantly criminal. In such a situation as this, a strict self-examination is necessary to arrive at self-knowledge. A decidedly good man, who is thus circumstanced, may know, and indeed must know, that he is, upon the whole, a good man; though he cannot so accurately ascertain

ascertain the extent and degree of his goodness. But, on the other hand, a bad man, whose actions are thus circumscribed, though equally able, by looking into his secret thoughts and feelings, to determine what he is, is generally led to presume, that as no deep stains appear upon the surface, all is pure and white within.

The characters of many of them who are strangers to piety and virtue, are manifested to themselves, and to the world. Opportunities present themselves, to exhibit what is within them. They are tempted to do wrong, and they do it. They are condemned by the world, and they condemn themselves. They know themselves to be virtuous, and make no pretensions to the praise of virtue.

But there are others who, though in reality little better, if at all, than these, neither appear so to others, nor to themselves. Their situations are such as shut up their true character in total shade, and prevent it from coming into the light. Though destitute, therefore, of the spirit which animates the friends of Virtue, they consider themselves as standing in that class. Their manners are decent; their reputation is fair; their

their neighbours respect them; and they can find no fault in themselves.

It is among persons of this description, that moral pride abounds. Free from all outward immorality, and never looking within them to attend to what passes there, they conceive themselves to be faultless. It is from such as these, that the notoriously wicked receive the loftiest looks, and the loudest reproaches. Attend to the censures, which every day so freely circulate through every part of society: Observe if the majority, and if the severest, of them do not fall from their lips, whose situations secure them from the faults they condemn. Who are they, that with most asperity censure the fraudulent and dishonest?—the rich and independent. Who are the persons, that are the most severe upon avarice, and the omissions of munificence?—the poor and destitute. By whom is the vanity and the pride of the great the most freely censured?—by those whom obscurity preserves from the infection of flattery. Take notice who are among the first to lift up their hands and their eyes to heaven, and to wonder that the pecuniary profusion of the age is not punished with pestilence,

pestilence, or famine, or earthquake:—Observe if they be not the fordidly parsimonious, and the naturally dispassionate; who, in consequence of this complexion, are under no temptation to luxury and prodigality. We all of us think of the self-destroyer with horror! He has done a deed which shocks all the feelings of nature! which shakes us all to the very centre of our soul! It is foul! it is impious!—But who are they that fling at his memory the heaviest curse? that regard his grave with the most angry eye? with a detestation that would prevent, if it were possible, a flower from flourishing near it, or a sun from shining upon it? with an abhorrence which says, “Let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon it?”—Mark if they be not the gay, the prosperous, and the happy: whose imagination no animal melancholy has ever oppressed; whose hearts no agonies have ever wrung; whose reason no disappointments have shaken. How eloquently they talk of the impiety and cowardice of deserting the post in which Providence places us! All that they say, is true: they cannot paint the crime they condemn, in darker colours than
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than it deserves: but he whom they thus upbraid, he also could have talked as they do: and once perhaps he did. To declaim, is an easy thing; to declaim eloquently, is an easy thing; but to act well, is quite another. And many an one, I doubt not, has censured another's fatal despair; has approached the unconsecrated ground, where flaked through he lay, with horror, and called the place accursed, as he passed it, who was not himself possessed of a single particle more of piety to God, or regard to society, to arrest the hand of self-destruction, had similar distresses tempted him to lift it up. Many have harangued upon the pusillanimity of sinking under distress, without possessing any more fortitude than those that have fainted in the day of adversity. Any man may stand upon the shore, and deride the shrieks of the terrified wretches whom the tempest is tossing.

It is one thing to condemn what is ill done, and another thing to do better. We can all of us be very virtuous in our closets; we can all of us be very heroic, in the safe and easy field of speculation; and rise into the heights of moral sublimity, as we recline
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in the chair of moral criticism. We can all explain with the nicest propriety, how the situations, we do not fill, ought to be filled; how the burdens, we do not bear, ought to be borne. We can be very patient under the pressure of another's sorrows: we can be very brave in the face of another's dangers; we can be very generous in the disposal of another's property. We can sit by the side of a broken hearted sufferer, and tell him, that it is unbecoming a christian to "sorrow as others that are without hope," with a firm and intrepid tone: we can go to the opulent, and point out to them, very clearly, the many benevolent plans which it is in their power, and which it is therefore their duty, to prosecute: but actually to perform, what we can thus accurately explain, and sagely advise, requires more exertion than that of the breath.

I would not be understood to insinuate, that all of those, who are not tempted to do wrong, would do it if they were. I am the last to say so. No doubt there are many who, though their virtue has been but little tried, and though trials strengthen virtue more than any thing else, have yet vigour of
mind

mind enough to acquit themselves honourably, in the day of temptation. Neither would I wish any truly honest and good man to mistrust his character, because Providence puts his virtue to no outward proof. He has a sufficient evidence of it within him, to preserve him from all painful diffidence, and religious melancholy. He who is conscious to himself of an inward ardor in the cause of truth and virtue ; who has taken pains in the cultivation of his character ; who has to look back upon a course of serious and close meditation upon religious and moral subjects ; and who, in consequence of this cultivation, feels within him a lively love to God and man ; who does all the good he can, and is desirous of doing more ; such a man may certainly look up with confidence towards God : such a man has a right to say, “ I am incapable, in any situation, of a deliberately base and dishonourable action.” The amount of what I have said, under this head, is merely this : that there are many persons of very decent manners, and of unspotted reputation, in the world, who are less chargeable with the crimes which others have committed, only because they have not had equal temptation

temptation to the commission of them: and that the self-ignorance, arising out of this situation, is a frequent and a fruitful source of moral pride.

A Third cause of moral pride is, a loose and careless attention to, and a, therefore, obscure and contracted perception of, the strictness of the obligation, by which we are bound to do all that conscience dictates to be done. In conceiving of moral obligation, many persons are apt to draw, in their own mind, a line, at which, they imagine, strict and bounden duty stops; beyond which all is discretionary ground; a field of honour, where glory is to be acquired, where laurels may be won, but to which man is not called by Heaven, with a commanding voice. Justice, they consider, as a strict duty; the discharge of which is pointedly prescribed, and indispensably required: but the path of charity, they consider, as a freer walk; where man is left at large to his own direction. This they regard as a virtue, of which, as the acts are less defined in the written law of God, the obligations are less binding; of which the offices, those more especially of an eminent, and signal nature, are

are to be considered as beautiful redundances, and generous exuberances of goodness; honourable, ornamental, and noble, but not strictly obligatory; as a pitch of supererogatory excellence, to which man may aspire, or not, as he pleases; to which they who attain are entitled to high admiration, but to which none are absolutely commanded to climb. As an artist may content himself with that particular degree of skilfulness in his art, or a scholar with that particular degree of proficiency in literature, which is sufficient to satisfy his particular thirst of fame; so, such persons conceive, that in morals, what is more than justice, or than common humanity, is mere matter of moral ambition. It is glorious, they say, to lay down life at the call of public necessity: it is heroic to leave the lap of ease and of pleasure, to engage in the toils and hardships by which society may be served: these are splendid acts; but men are not absolutely bound in duty to go these lengths in goodness.

This conception of morality is not derived either from Scripture, or from Reason. They concur to teach us, that all which man is able to do, in the service of his fellow

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low-creatures, he is bound to do: that all we are, and all we have, without any reserve, is the property of God; of which man is merely the trustee, and not the owner: that all our possessions, both intrinsic, and extrinsic, are to be considered as put into our hand, to be rendered as productive as possible of good to the creation of which we are a part. Hence it follows, that he, who keeps back any part of the benefit, whatever it may be, which it is in his power to communicate, who disposes of any part of that, which is not his own, contrary to the will of Him who committed it to him, is to be called not merely unmerciful, and unfeeling; but unfaithful, and unjust: that, in refusing to exercise any part of that charity which it is in our power to practise, we are to be considered not merely as declining an honor, but as contracting delinquency; not merely as exhibiting imperfect munificence, but as being guilty of detention, and dishonesty; of unfaithfulness to God, and unrighteousness to man.

This is the language of Reason, and of Scripture. All things belong to God, and to society. Man, the individual, has a property

in nothing, the communication of which is necessary to increase the sum of general happiness. When the necessity of society requires it, his time is not his own ; his wealth is not his own ; his liberty is not his own ; his life is not his own. The good of the whole demands, with an imperious voice, from every component part of it, every sacrifice of which it has need.

What we call generosity, we are apt to consider as a quality, in morals, similar to what we mean by grace, in language, or in arts ; an excellence beyond the strict requisition of rules ; a striking, but an unnecessary ornament ; by which the piece is improved, but without which it would have had no fault. This is not the view of virtue to which reflection leads. Properly speaking, the absence of any of those beneficences, which we are capable of performing, is not merely the absence of so many beauties and graces in the character, but is to be considered as so much breach of duty ; so much fracture in the frame of the character ; so much deformity in the figure of the mind ; so much blot and stain upon the purity of honor. The want of such acts as these, in the life of man, is not
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to be compared to the want of that exquisite finishing, which a piece of art receives from the last touches of the master's hand, by which it is made more perfect, but without which it would discover no defect; but is to be considered as positive, and pointed blemish. In the eye of strict and sober Reason, what we call exalted goodness, eminent generosity, is but the perfection of decency, and the summit of decorum.

We have made a distinction between crimes of omission and crimes of commission. In the eye of imagination, the former appear to be of a more airy, and less real nature, than the latter. Crimes of omission, however, are as substantially crimes in the sight of Reason and of God, as those of commission. In the eye of Reason and of God, he that refuses to a fellow-creature what he wants, and what he has to communicate, is a robber. In those eyes, the misery which a man might remove, and neglects to remove, he inflicts: in the oppression which he could redress, and refuses to redress, he is an accomplice.

This consideration of the strictly obligatory nature of virtue, in its utmost practicable extent, is a necessary, and it is an effectual

preservative of our moral humility; and will, if perpetually present to our minds, prevent whatever virtuous actions we perform from raising in us the faintest emotion of pride. When we have done all we can to increase the sum of happiness in the creation of God, “we have done no more than it was our duty to do:” we are only not dishonest. Conceiving of beneficence, as being the communication of what we might have held back, without incurring criminality; of that which we had a right to dispose of according to our caprice; forgetting that whatever we give to the creatures of God, “it is of his own that we give him;” imposed upon by the sound of property and possession, words which civil society has coined, in order to prevent violence, and preserve good order, in the walks of industry and traffic; imagining, that that worldly substance, and that personal talent, which are mine, in the eye of Law, and mine, in the language of man, are mine, in the most strict and comprehensive sense of the word; that we are the proprietors of the produce of our industry, or of the powers of our nature, in that sense, in which alone Almighty God is the owner of all things; we

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are.

are naturally led to applaud the disposal of what we possess, according to the will of Him to whom alone it belongs, as an act of splendid virtue, and a wonderful exploit of goodness !

Surrounded, at the same time, by so many who neglect the trust in which they are placed by the providence of God ; who embezzle the bounty of Heaven ; who stop, and keep in their hand, what was committed to it, not to rest in it, but to pass through it ; we call the just steward a prodigy of goodness ! and look upon the honest man, who refuses to rob his fellow-creatures, by retaining that, to which their wants contain their title, with amazement and admiration, as a miracle of generosity ! Accustomed to contemplate such multitudes, in all ages of the world, disobeying the law of God ; introducing disorder, and spreading mischief among his works ; we regard the few we see, that decently discharge their duties ; that do, what the sun and the moon, and every thing in nature does, but man ; that move in the orbit marked out by the finger of Rectitude for them ; that merely avoid the mad eccentricity and lawless motions of vice ; as something unspeakably il-

lustrious, and celestially sublime! In the midst of so many who act so very far beneath their obligations, who fall so very short of their duties, to those who rise above beings who are sunk so low, we lift up our eyes as to lofty spirits, as to soaring minds: we call them exalted characters, and lavish eulogiums upon the elevation, that is but escape from the dust!

If we wish to preserve ourselves pure from the infection of pride, let us continually keep it in mind, that all we have done, or ever can do, to serve our fellow-creatures, is no more than what we ought to do: and that the most eminent beneficence of man is entirely indebted for its dazzling appearance in the eye of the spectator, or of the performer, not to its really overwhelming splendour, but to its extreme scarcity, and the contrast of surrounding shade.

Fourthly, Spiritual Pride is owing to ignorance of that divine assistance and influence, to which the virtuous are indebted for their virtue. Without, at this time, endeavouring to vindicate the divine government, in those inequalities in the moral situations of mankind, which Providence dispenses to them,

them, it is sufficient to my present purpose, to state, what no one can deny, that these inequalities do actually exist: and without entering into any subtle disquisitions concerning the freedom of the human will, and the nature of human subjection to the influence of circumstances, unfavourable to human virtue, which have actually occasioned its decay, I content myself with pointing to the fact which appears upon the face of human life: that the same general circumstances do commonly give birth to the same general characters; so as certainly to furnish some foundation, whether sufficient to afford it a perfect support or not, for the inference which many have drawn from this appearance, that both the smaller shades of difference, in individual characters of the same general colour, and the exceptions to this general resemblance of characters that appear to have passed under similar impressions, are owing to unseen varieties in situations that, to a superficial eye, seem to be the same; some of which may have a less, and some a larger share in moulding the mind: and so as to make it decent and becoming in the man, who, amidst the moral shipwrecks by which

he is surrounded, finds himself in possession of innocence and virtue, rather to look up with humble gratitude to God, for his preservation from vice, and to look round with compassion upon them, from whom he is thus distinguished, than to regard this most pitiable class of his inferiors, with the pride of conscious superiority.

Whatever speculative opinions you may have adopted, concerning the nature of divine influences upon the human character, you cannot but agree with me, upon the smallest reflection, that this is a feeling which best becomes such a creature as man; conscious of much imperfection; ignorant, how, in other situations, he might have acted; possessed but of little virtue; and (at least, in a great degree, as all must admit, who pay the most careless attention to the connection there is between the characters, and the education and histories of men) indebted to Heaven for the little that he has. I am confident, that this is a feeling most congenial with every generous mind; that the more virtuous any one becomes, the more he will be disposed to cherish it; the more he reflects upon the influence of circumstance and situation upon the
human

human mind, the more clearly he will perceive the propriety and justice of it; and the more he reads the Christian Scriptures, the firmer will be his conviction, that this is the spirit of Christianity. “By the grace of God I am what I am,” was the language of a primitive and eminent preacher of it. “By the Grace of God I am what I am,” let the best of us unite in acknowledging.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

1821 17

ERRATA.

Page 2, line 1, for *were*, read *was*.

27, - 10, for *off*, read *of*.

67, - 1 and 2, for *the most mighty, and the most merciful,*
submit, read *the most Mighty and most Merciful*
submits.

72, - 2, for *distressed*, read *distress*.

165, - 18, for *train*, read *strain*.

167, - 17, for *there*, read *these*.

— - 23, for *characters*, read *character*.

201, - 1, for *willingly*, read *only*.

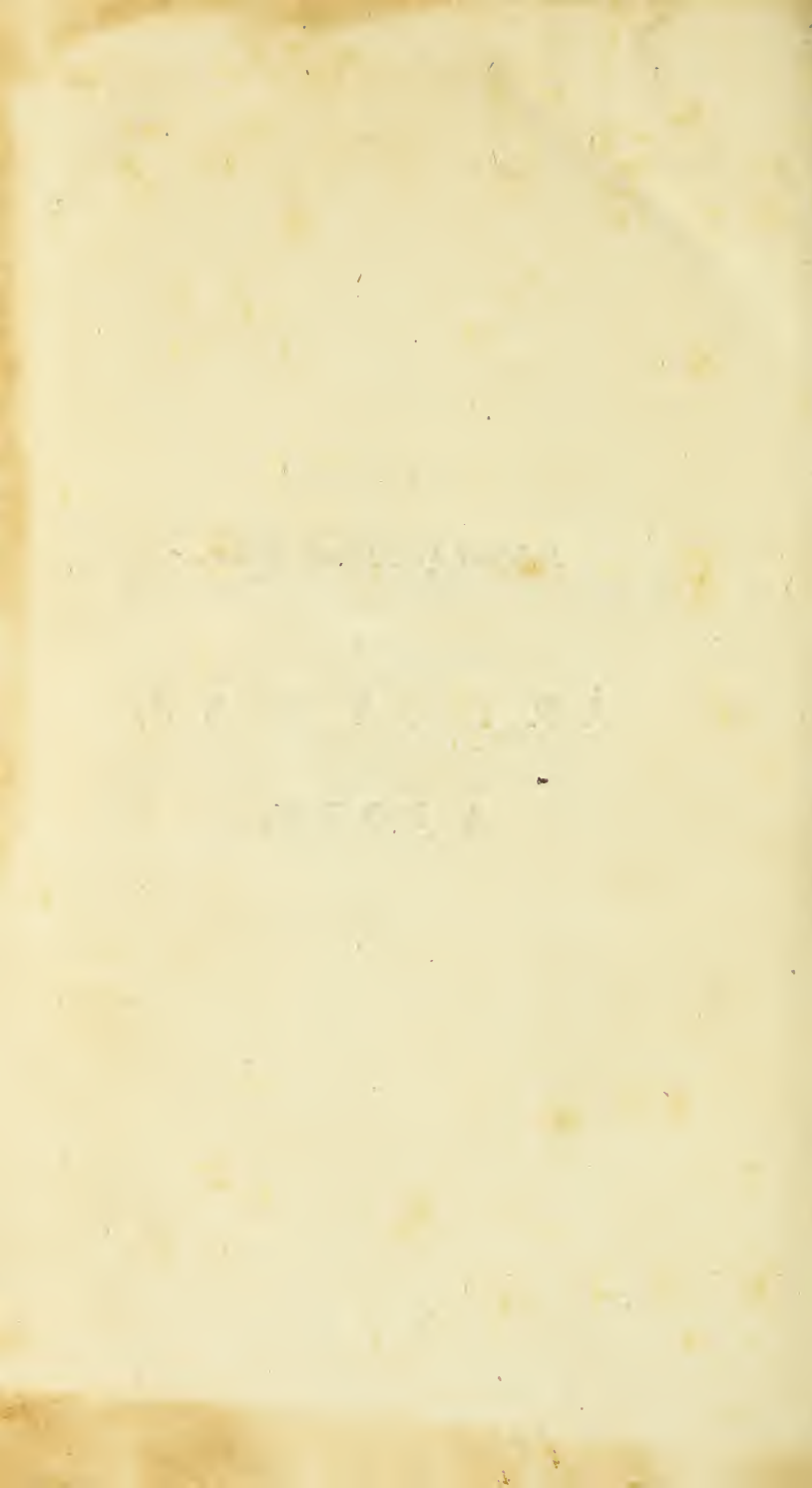
228, - 24, for *lengthen*, read *extend*.

303, - 5, after *who*, add *not*.

409, - 16, for *virtuous*, read *vitious*.

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