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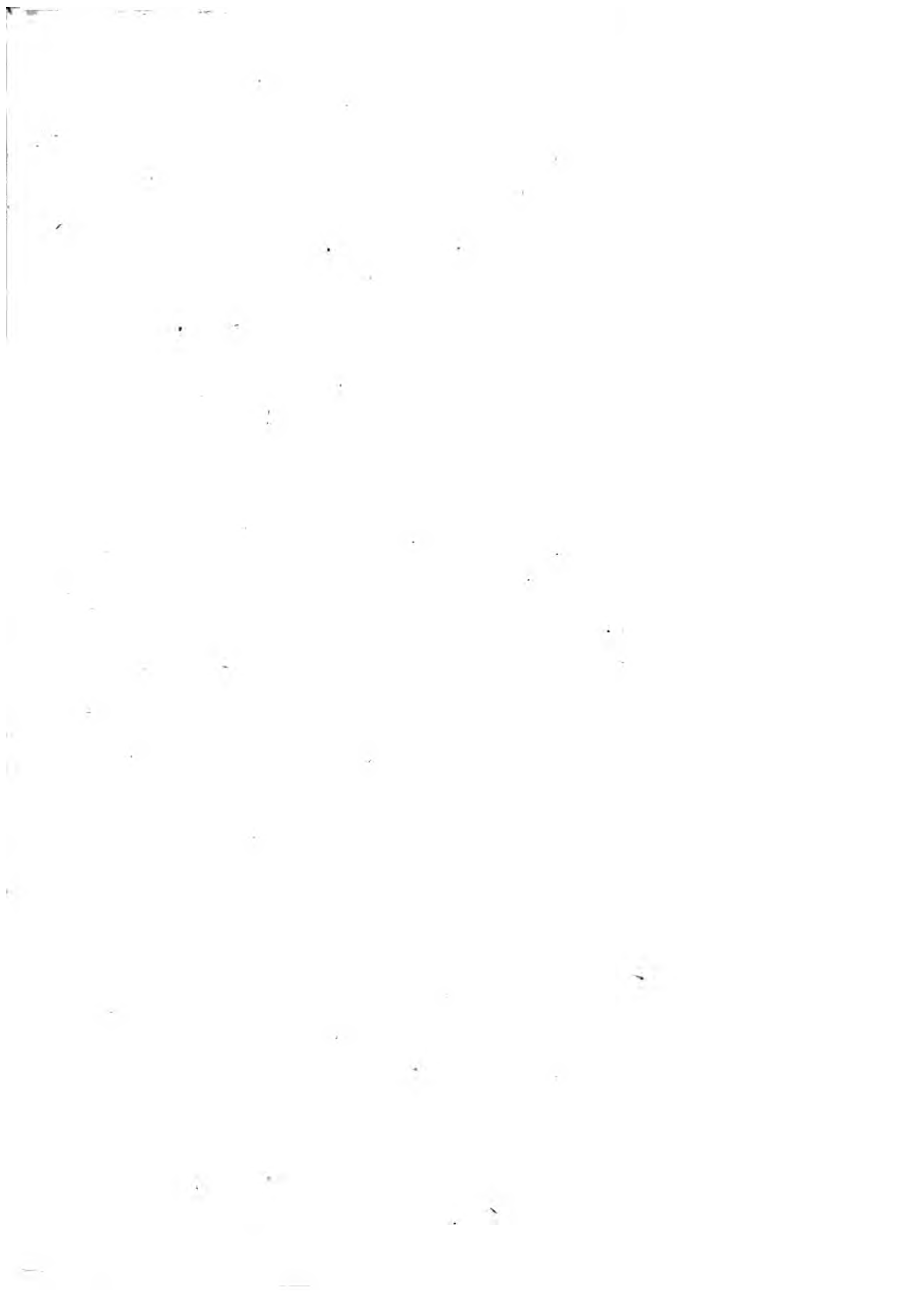
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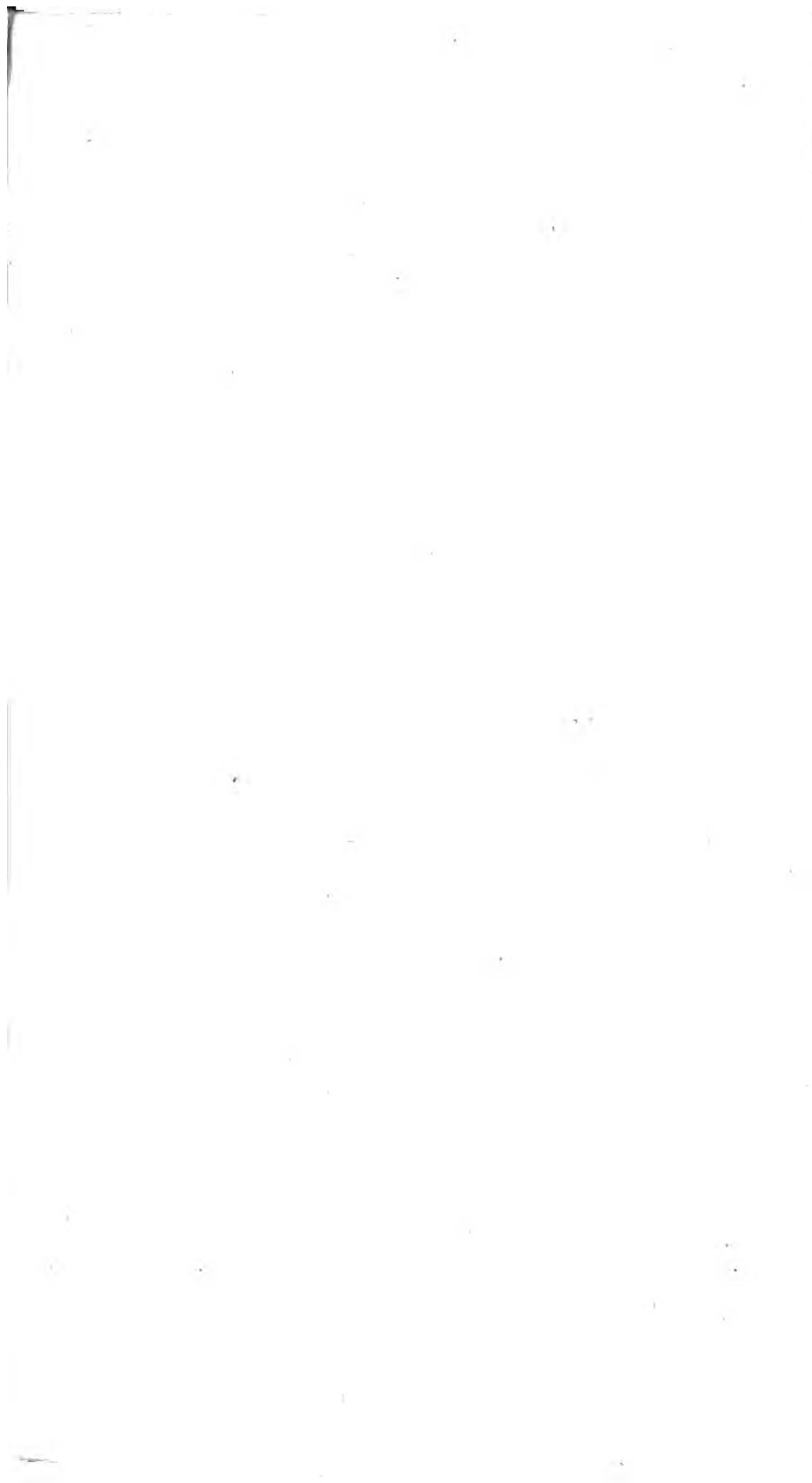
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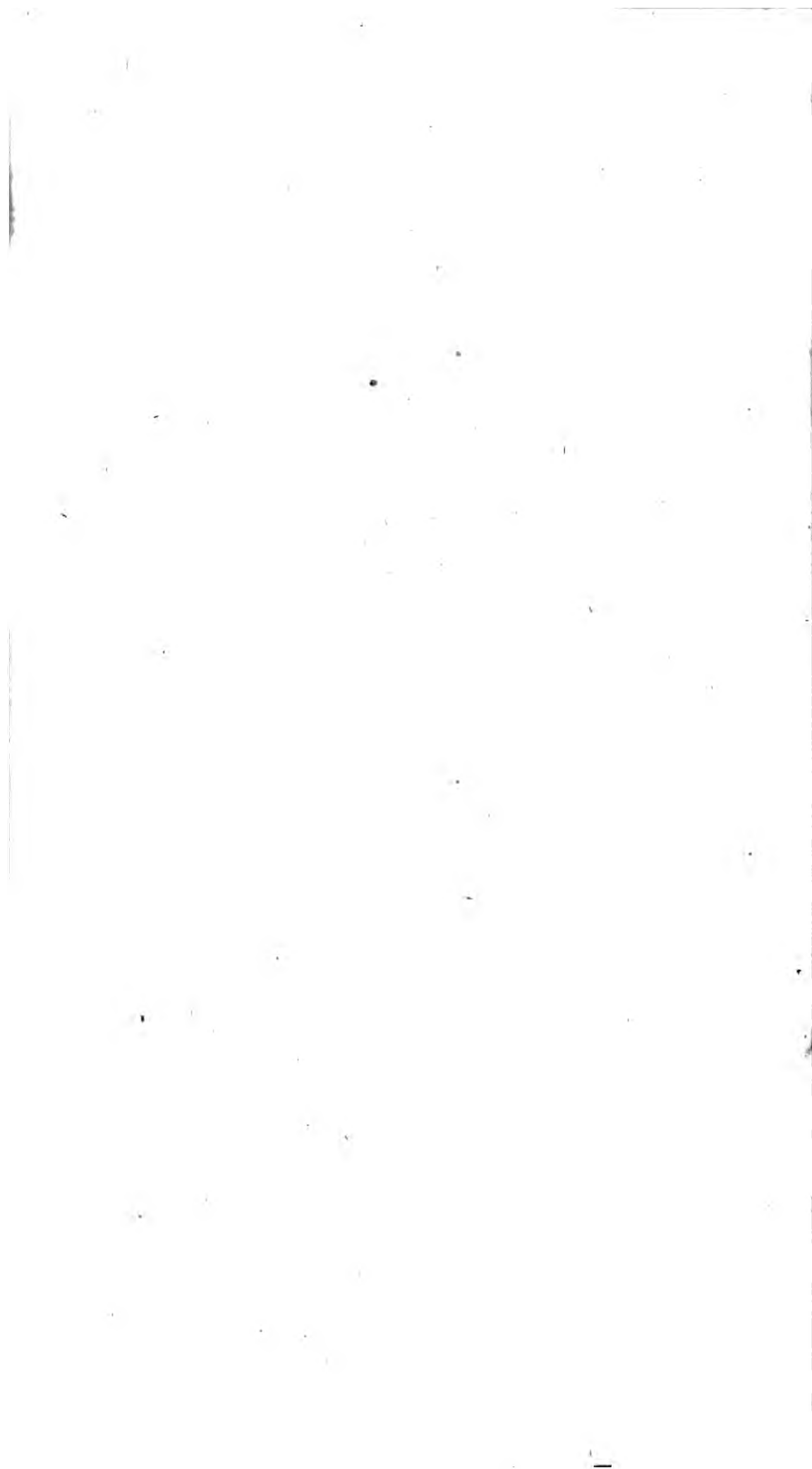


8° B.S.W. 22.









**BISHOP HALL'S**  
**SACRED APHORISMS,**

**SELECTED,**

**AND**

**Arranged with the Texts of Scripture**

**TO WHICH THEY REFER.**

.....

**BY RICHARD BRUDENELL EXTON,**  
**RECTOR OF ATHELINGTON, SUFFOLK.**

—◆—

**The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed.**  
**JESUS CHRIST.**

—◆—

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE Editor of the following pages claims but little merit in the design or execution of the task he has undertaken. If it may boast of any, it belongs entirely to the venerable Prelate from whose works he has made the selection. Productions of the greatest labour are not always those of the first utility: this reflection, if admitted, will deprecate the surprize of such readers as may stumble upon the simplicity of the arrangement, and the want of an originality which the work does not profess to display. Of its usefulness the Editor has conceived a notion sufficiently strong to urge him to the publication of this little volume; but this usefulness must depend upon its proper application. If it be merely *perused*, much obscurity will hang upon numerous passages; many doubts may arise in the mind of the reader, upon their correctness, even, perhaps, upon their truth: but, once brought into that light which the narrative of Holy Writ (as carefully referred to) will throw upon them, these APHORISMS will be seen to derive a sacred splendour from the beams of Divine Truth, displaying not only their intrinsic soundness, beauty, and piety; but their value also as a

luminous commentary on the lively Oracles of God, to unlearned members of the Christian Church. Few, indeed, of those who read the Bible with a sincere desire after "instruction in righteousness," will hesitate to acknowledge, that these truly evangelical reflections of the great and good BISHOP HALL penetrate deeper into their subject, and place it in a clearer point of the mental view, than their own most attentive consideration would have effected. To such readers this humble work cannot fail to prove an acceptable offering. To others it may, under the Divine Blessing, become "the savour of life unto life," by conducing to a more frequent, or a more attentive study of the Sacred Volume; and by furnishing an help to that understanding of it, which is so necessary to its cordial reception, and to a disposal of the human heart willingly to "justify the ways of God to man."

To have selected all the beauties of the eminent Divine from whose works this Compilation is formed, would have been to transcribe nearly the whole of his published writings; for so pure is his style, so copious and varied are his thoughts, so free and flowing his language, and withal so elevated by the glow of a fervid piety,—as well to have entitled him to the distinguishing appellation of the CHRISTIAN SENECA: but as the Editor's design is to present only such portions of the

Bishop's reflections as are substantive, and at the same time illustrative of the historical passages of the Old and New Testaments, those who are acquainted with his writings will acknowledge how large a portion is inapplicable to this particular purpose; while they will not consider the Selection as useless: and they who have not enjoyed the gratification of perusing the works of that highly-gifted writer, may, perhaps, be induced, by an acquaintance with this little Abstract, to apply at the fountain-head for more copious draughts of the sacred pleasure to be derived therefrom, if they imbibe a relish for the sample here presented to them.

The Editor is anxious not to over-rate the worth of his undertaking; but is impelled to it rather by a sense of his duty, to use "all means" in his power "to save some;" than by a presumptuous confidence in the success of *these* means to so desirable an end. It suffices him, that the humble talent herein employed shall not hereafter be called for to his confusion.

The adoption of the title to this book may require an explanatory notice. Many of the passages it contains do not strictly bear the character of Aphorisms: the word is used in a special sense, as appropriate only to the relation which the maxims bear to those dispensations of God's

Providence that are recorded in Holy Writ, and to which they particularly refer.

The reader will find many of the sentences without a reference to any text of Scripture : each of these will prove a corollary to the leading reflection upon the passage referred to ; except a few with which the volume opens, and which may be considered as merely introductory.

*May, 1823.*

**SACRED APHORISMS.**



**PART I.**



# SACRED APHORISMS.

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## CHAPTER I.

**I**T is the manifestation of the glorious presence of the Almighty that makes heaven to be itself.

There is no variety in that which is perfect, because there is but one perfection; and so much shall we grow nearer to perfectness, by how much we draw nearer to unity and uniformity.

O Lord, why do I not yield to the word of thy counsel; since I must yield, as all thy creatures, to the word of thy command?

After the Almighty had drawn that large and real map of the world, He did thus abridge it into this little table of man: He alone consists of heaven and earth, of soul and body.

This my soul teaches me of itself, that itself cannot conceive how capable, how active it is. It can be all things, can comprehend all things; know that which is, and conceive that which never was, never shall be. Nothing can



fill it, but Thou which art infinite ; nothing can limit it, but Thou which art every where.

The better we were at our creation, the worse we are by our fall : as the sons of some prodigal or tainted ancestors tell of the lands and lordships which were once theirs. Only do they whet our desires, answerably to the readiness of God's mercies, that we may redeem what we have lost ; that we may recover in Him what we have lost in ourselves. The fault shall be ours, if our damage prove not beneficial. *Gen. i. 26.*

If man had been made only for contemplation, it would serve as well to have been placed in some vast desert, on the top of some barren mountain : but the same Power which gave him a heart to meditate, gave him hands to work, and work fit for his hands. *Ibid.*

God loves to see his creatures happy ; our lawful delight is his : they know not God, that think to please Him, by making themselves miserable. *v. 28.*

Man is no sooner made than he is set to work : (*Ib.*) neither greatness nor perfection can privilege a folded hand. How much more cheerfully we go about our business, so much nearer we come to our paradise.

How dear hath this lesson cost us—that in some cases it is better to be ignorant ! (*Gen.*

ii. iii. &c. *passim.*) And yet do the sons of Eve inherit this saucy appetite of their grandmother! How many thousand souls miscarry with the presumptuous affectation of forbidden knowledge!

What marvel is it, if my corruption find the serpent in my closet, in my table, in my bed, when our holy parents found him in the midst of paradise? *Gen. iii. 1.*

Who can wonder at dissensions among thousands of brethren, when he sees so deadly opposition betwixt two, the first roots of brotherhood? *Gen. iv. 8.*

It hath been an old and happy danger to be holy: indifferent actions must be careful to avoid offence: but I care not what devil or what Cain be angry that I do good or receive good.

There was never envy that was not bloody: (*v. 4.*) for if it eat not another's heart, it will eat our own. *See Esther, v. 13.*

How early did martyrdom come into the world! The first man that died, died for religion. *Gen. iv. 4.*

We should never sin, if our foresight were as good as our sense.

The most sins begin at the eyes: by them commonly Satan creeps into the heart: that

soul can never be in safety that hath not covenanted with his eyes. *Gen. vi. 2.*

He that delights in revenge surprises his adversary: whereas he that gives long warnings desires to be prevented. *v. 3.*

If we did not stay some while under God's hand, we should not know how sweet his mercy is, and how great our thankfulness should be. *Gen. viii. 6—14.*

How worthy are those messengers to be welcome, who with innocence in their lives bring glad tidings of peace and salvation in their mouths! *v. 11.*

There is no action without faith, no faith, without a word. Happy is the man which in all things (neglecting the counsels of flesh and blood) depends upon the commission of his Maker. *v. 15, 16.*

Our faith will ever teach us to prefer God to ourselves: delayed thankfulness is not worthy of acceptance. (*v. 20, 21.*) No perfume can be so sweet as the holy obedience of the faithful.

While God upholds us, no temptation can move us: when He leaves us, no temptation is too weak to overthrow us. *Gen. ix. 21.*

One act can no more make a good heart unrighteous, than a trade of sin can stand with regeneration. *v. 24, 25.*

He that gives himself to wine is not his own: what shall we think of this vice, which robs a man of himself, and lays a beast in his room?

The sins of those we love and honour, we must hear of with indignation, fearfully and unwillingly believe, acknowledge with grief and shame, hide with honest excuses, and bury in silence. *v. 23.*

It is just with God, that peremptory determinations seldom prosper; whereas those things which are fearfully and modestly undertaken, commonly succeed. *Gen. xi. 4.*

He is a rare man that hath not some Babel of his own, whereon he bestows pains and cost, only to be talked of.

At the first, when there was but one language, men did spend their time in arts; but now we stay so long, of necessity, upon the shell of tongues, that we can hardly have time to chew the sweet kernel of knowledge.

The calling of God never leaves men where it finds them. *Gen. xii. 1.*

The power of faith can prevent time, and make future things present. *v. 4.*

Sometimes the believer sticks at easy trials, (*v. 11—13.*) yet breaks through the greatest temptations without fear. *Gen. xii. 4. and xvii. xviii. pass.*

It is too much tenderness to respect the censures and constructions of others, when we have a direct word from God. *Gen. xxii. 1. —3.*

God's charges are oftentimes harsh in the beginnings and proceedings, but in the conclusion always comfortable.

True spiritual comforts are commonly late and sudden. God defers, on purpose that our trials may be perfect, our deliverance welcome, our recompense glorious. *v. 11—14.*

Whatever is dearest to us upon earth is our Isaac: happy are we if we can sacrifice it to God.

It is no disparagement for the greater persons to begin treaties of peace. God never suffers any man to lose by an humble remission of his right, in a desire for peace. *Gen. xiii. 8, 9.*

Outward appearances are deceitful guides to our judgment or affections. (*Compare Gen. xiii. 10. with xviii. 20. to xix. 28.*) They are worthy to be deceived that value things as they seem.

Wicked men grow worse with afflictions, as water grows more cold after an heat. *Compare Gen. xiv. with xix.*

Continuance and society in evil makes

wicked men outrageous and impudent. *Gen.* xix. 4, 5.

There can be no warrant for us to sin lest others should sin. It is for God to prevent sins with judgments: it is not for men to prevent greater sins with a less. *v.* 6, 7, 8.

The best minds, when they are troubled, yield inconsiderate motions; as clear water, that is violently stirred, sendeth up bubbles.

They who are bent upon villainy are more exasperated by dissuasion; as some streams, when they are resisted by flood-gates, swell over the banks. *v.* 9.

It is the way of God to blind and besot those whom He means to destroy.

When men are grown to that pass that they are no whit better by afflictions, and worse with admonitions, God finds it time to strike. *v.* 13.

No good man would be saved alone. Faith makes us charitable, with neglect of all peril. *v.* 14.

To carnal men preaching is foolishness, devotion idleness, the prophets madmen, Paul a babbler. *Ib.* See also *1 Cor.* i. 18; *John* x. 20; *Acts* xvii. 18.

If God meets with a very good field, He pulls up the weeds, and lets the corn grow; (*Acts* v. 1—10.) if indifferent, He lets the

corn and weeds grow together; (*Matt. xiii. 30.*) if very ill, He gathers the few ears of corn, and burns the weeds. (*Gen. xix. 16.*) Were it not for God's dear children that are intermixed with the world, it could not stand: the wicked owe their lives unto those few good whom they hate and persecute.

Small precepts from God are important: obedience is as well tried, and disobedience as well punished, in little as in much. *v. 26.*

Drunkenness is the way to all bestial affections and acts: wine knows no difference either of persons or things. *v. 33—36.*

There is no grace where there is no unquietness. (*Gen. xxv. 22.*) Every true Israelite brings his war with his being.

If either by strife, or purchase, or suit, we can attain spiritual blessings, we are happy. *v. 33.*

The dearest of God's saints have been sometimes transported with natural affections. *Compare Gen. xxv. 33. with xxvii. 4. 27. 33.*

The hopes of the wicked fail them when they are at the highest; (*Gen. xxvii. 31.*) whereas God's children find those comforts in extremity which they durst not expect.

The miscreant can wish himself well. (*v. 38.*) No man would be miserable, if it were enough

to desire happiness. No motive can cause a good heart to repent that he hath done well. *Gen. xxviii. 1.*

The blessings of special love are for none but Israel; but those of common kindness are for them that can sell their birthright. *Gen. xxvii. 39.*

Wicked men cannot be so ill as they would. *v. 41—45.*

He that can wrestle earnestly with God is secure from the harms of men. (*See Gen. xxxii. 24. and xxxiii. 1—16.*) Those minds which are exasperated with violence, and cannot be broken with fear, yet are bowed with love: when the ways of a man please God, He will make his enemies at peace with him.

God is most present with us in our greatest dejection, and loves to give comfort to those that are forsaken of their hopes. *Gen. xxviii. 11—16.*

God comes often home to us in our own kind; and even by the sin of others pays us our own when we look not for it. *Compare Gen. xxvii. 18—29, with xxix. 21—25.*

What miseries will not love digest and overcome! *Gen. xxix. 27—29.*

How wisely God weighs out to us our favors and crosses in an equal balance; so tempering



our sorrows that they may not oppress, and our joys that they may not transport us! Each one hath some matter of envy to others, and of grief to himself. *Gen. xxix. 30, 31. and xxx. 1.*

It is a weak greediness in us to affect God's blessings by unlawful means. (*Gen. xvi. 2. and xxx. 3. 9.*) In those sins which Satan draws us into, the blame is ours; in those which we move each other into, the most fault and punishment lie upon the tempter.

Small and unlikely means shall prevail, where God intends an effect. *Gen. xxx. 31—43.*

As the wicked have no peace with God, so the godly have no peace with men: for if they prosper not, they are despised; if they prosper, they are envied. *Gen. xxxi. 2.*

It is not good to regard too much the unjust discontentment of unworthy men: and to purchase unprofitable favour with too great loss. *v. 4—16.*

God makes fools of the enemies of His Church: He lets them proceed that they may be frustrate; and when they are gone to the utmost reach of their tether, He pulls them back to their task with shame. *Gen. xxxi. 22—55. and xxxii. xxxiii.*

He that knows our strength will yet wrestle with us for our exercise, and loves our violence and importunity. *Gen. xxxii. 24—28.*

It is not enough for us to look to our own thoughts, except we beware of the provocations of others. (*Gen. xxxiv. 1, 2.*) If we once wander out of the lists that God hath set us in our callings, there is nothing but danger.

Those actions which are ill begun can hardly be salved up with safe satisfaction: (*v. 6—31.*) whereas good entrances give strength unto the proceedings, and success to the end.

A smiling malice is most deadly; and hatred doth most rankle the heart, when it is kept in and dissembled. (*v. 13.*) The bloodiest of all projects have ever wont to be covered with religion; because the worse any thing is, the better show it desires to make: and contrarily, the better colour is put upon any vice, the more odious it is; for as every simulation adds to an evil, so the best adds most evil.

No motive is so powerful to the vulgar sort as the name of commodity: the hope of this makes them prodigal of their blood. (*v. 23.*) Sinister respects draw more to the profession of religion than conscience.

To punish above the offence is no less injustice than to offend. *v. 25.*

God doth not inflict sensible judgments upon

all His enemies, lest the wicked should think there were no punishment abiding for them elsewhere. He doth inflict such judgments upon some, lest He should seem careless of evil. *Gen. xxxviii. 7—10.*

A faithful man's promise is his debt, which no fear of damage can dispense with. (*v. 11. 26.*) It is the weakness of nature rather to hazard a sin than a danger; and to neglect our own duty for wrongful suspicions of others.

Immodesty of outward fashion or gesture bewrays evil desires. (*v. 14.*) The heart that means well will never wish to seem ill: for commonly we affect to show better than we are.

Many are faithful in all things save those which are the greatest and dearest. *Compare v. 11. with 20.*

Shame is the easiest wages of sin, and the surest, which even begins first in ourselves. (*v. 23.*) Nature is not more forward to commit sin, than willing to hide it.

God will find a time to bring his children upon their knees, and to wring from them penitent confessions. *v. 26.*

Because we are dear to our Father, and complain of sins, therefore we are hated of our carnal brethren. *Gen. xxxvii. 2—4*

The concealment of our hopes or abilities hath not more modesty than safety. *v. 6.*

We men work by likely means ; God by seeming contraries. God's decree runs on ; and while we either think not of it, or oppose it, is performed. *See the History of Joseph, Gen. xxxvii.—xlvi.*

God will even raise up some secret favorers of his own among those that are most malicious. *Gen. xxxvii. 21, 22. 26, 27.*

Why should we condemn any man's meanness, when we know not his destiny ?

One sin is commonly used for the veil of another. *v. 32.*

The heart that is bent upon God, knows how to walk steadily and indifferently between the pleasures of sin and fears of evil. (*Gen. xxxix. 7, 8.*) A good heart will rather lie in the dust than rise by wickedness. *v. 9.*

He that will be safe from the acts of evil must wisely avoid the occasions. *v. 10.*

As sin ends ever in shame when committed, so it makes us past shame, that we may commit it. *v. 12.*

What safety is there against great adversaries, when even arguments of innocence are used to convince of evil? *v. 14, 15.*

The afflictions of God's children turn ever to their advantage. *v. 21.*

How easily doth our own prosperity make us forget either the deservings or miseries of others! (*Gen. xl. 23.*) But as God cannot forget his own, so least of all in their sorrows.

Humility goes before honor; serving and suffering are the best tutors to government. *Gen. xli. 37—44.*

The sparing hand is both full and beneficial: (*v. 49.*) whereas the lavish is not only empty but injurious.

No piety can exempt us from the evils of neighbourhood. No man can tell by outward events, which is the Patriarch, and which the Canaanite. (*Gen. xlii. 1, 2.*) It is a vain tempting of God to cast ourselves upon an immediate provision, with neglect of common means.

It is wisdom sometimes to conceal our knowledge, that we may not prejudice truth. *v. 7.*

How oft have sinister respects drawn weak goodness to disguise itself, even with sins! *v. 15.*

Nothing doth so powerfully call home the conscience as affliction; neither need there any other art of memory for sin, besides misery. *v. 21.*

It is a wise course to be jealous of our gain;

and more to fear than to desire abundance. *v.* 28.

Protraction is a kind of ease, in evils that must come. *v.* 38.

It is not enough to find our own hearts clear in suspicious actions, except we satisfy others. *Gen.* xliii. 12.

How easy is it to find advantages where there is a purpose to accuse! *Gen.* xliv. 2.

Our happiness is greater and sweeter, when we have well feared and smarted with evils. *Gen.* xlv. 4.

Many passions do not well abide witnesses, because they are guilty to their own weakness. *v.* 1.

As a bone once broken is stronger after well setting, so is love after reconcilment. *v.* 15.

Over-excellent objects are dangerous in their sudden apprehensions; there is no earthly pleasure whereof we may not surfeit: (*v.* 26.) of the spiritual we can never have enough.

Life is better than honour. (*v.* 28.) He is not worthy of honour, that is not thankful for life.

The pleasure of good things is not in their being, but in our enjoying. (*v.* 28.) The sight of the eye is better than to walk in desires.

The intermission of comforts hath this advantage, that it sweetens our delight more in the return, than was abated in the forbearance. *Gen. xlvi. 30.*

The guilty conscience can never think itself safe. (*Gen. l. 15—17.*) Those that know they have deserved ill are wont to misinterpret favours, and think they cannot be beloved.

Good meanings cannot be more wronged than with suspicion. *v. 17.*

How much stronger are the bonds of religion than of nature! *Ib.*

Mercy stays not for outward solemnities. *Compare Gen. xlv, 5. with l. 19.*

## CHAPTER II.



**I**T is a rare thing to find posterity heirs of their father's love. (*Exod.* i. 8—11.) How should men's favour be, but like themselves, variable and inconstant? There is no certainty but in the favor of God, in whom can be no change, whose love is entailed upon a thousand generations.

There is no more hateful sight to a wicked man, than the prosperity of the conscionable. *v.* 9.

Wickedness is ever cowardly, and full of unjust suspicions: it makes a man fear where no fear is; fly, where none pursues him. *v.* 10.

Injustice is upheld by violence; whereas just governments are maintained by love. *v.* 11.

God's vine bears the better with bleeding. *v.* 12.

Whossoever hath loosed the reins unto cruelty, is easily carried into incredible extremities. *v.* 15, 16.

There is no sin whose harbour is more un-



safe than that of malice; but oft-times the power of tyrants answers not their will. Evil commanders cannot always find equally mischievous agents. *v. 17.*

Oft-times those that make conscience of greater sins are overtaken with less. (*v. 19.*) It is well and rare if we can come forth of a dangerous action without any soil; and if we have escaped the storm, that some after-drops wet us not.

That law of retaliation which God will not allow to us, because we are fellow creatures, He justly practiseth in us. (*Compare Exod. i. 22. with xiv. 27, 28.*) God would have us read our sins in our judgments, that we might both repent of our sins, and give glory to his justice.

Corruption when it is checked, grows mad with rage; (*Exod. v. 1—4.*) as the vapour in a cloud would not make that fearful report if it met not with opposition. A good heart yields at the stillest voice of God; but the most gracious motions of God harden the wicked.

Every vice hath a title and every virtue a disgrace. *v. 8. 17.*

Many times God writes messages of majesty and honor, even in the faces of children. *Exod. ii. 2.*

When we seem most neglected and forlorn in ourselves, then is God most present, most vigilant. *v. 5—9.*

How wisely and secretly doth God bring to pass his own purposes in our ignorance and regardlessness! *v. 10.*

How well doth pity beseem great personages, and most in extremities. *v. 9.*

Religion doth not call us to a weak simplicity, but allows us as much of the serpent as of the dove. Lawful policies have from God both liberty in the use, and blessing in the success. *Ib.*

A good heart cannot endure to be happy alone, and must needs, unbidden, share with others in their miseries. *v. 11.*

It is only our infidelity that binds us so to the world, and makes us prefer the momentary pleasures of sin unto that everlasting recompense of reward. *See Heb. xi. 23—26.*

Those actions which may be approved unto God, are not always safe with man. *Exod. ii. 15.*

While we are in this Egypt of the world, all unkind strifes would easily be composed, if we did not forget that we are brethren. *v. 13.*

It is no easy matter to bear a reproof well, if never so well tempered. (*v. 14.*) Next to

the not deserving a reproof is the well taking of it.

Malice makes men incapable of good counsel: and there are none so great enemies to justice, as those which are enemies to peace.

*Ib.*

It is the duty of men, much more of Christians, to advise against sin. *v. 13.*

A wicked heart never looks inward to itself, but outward to the quality of the reprover: if that afford exception, it is enough; as a dog first runs to avenge on the stone. *v. 14.*

What matter is it to me who he be that admonishes me? Let me look home into myself; let me look to his advice: if that be good, it is more shame to me to be reproved by an evil man. *Ib.*

No friend is so commodious in some cases as an adversary. *v. 14, 15.*

Where God's warrant will not protect us, it is good for the heels to supply the place of the tongue. *Ib.*

A good man will be doing good wheresoever he is: his trade is a compound of charity and justice. As therefore evil dispositions cannot be changed with airs\*, no more will good. *v. 17.*

\* *Cælum non animum mutant.*

It is a lesson which all God's children must learn to take out, to want and to abound. *v. 21; also Phil. iv. 12.*

No adversity can make a good man neglect good duties. *Exod. ii. 15. 17.*

A good nature is ready to answer courtesies. *v. 20.*

Those which are unequally yoked may never look to draw one way. (*See 2 Cor. vi. 14.*) He had need to be more than a man that hath a Zipporah in his bosom, and would have true zeal in his heart. *Compare Exod. ii. 21. with iv. 25.*

That great men may not be ashamed of honest vocations, the greatest that ever were have been content to take up with mean trades. (*Exod. iii. 1. MOSES; 1 Sam. xvi. 11. DAVID; Acts xviii. 3. PAUL.*)—The contempt of honest callings in those who are well-born, argues pride without wit.

God never graces the idle with his visions. (*Exod. iii. 1, 2.*) When He finds us in our callings, we find Him in the tokens of his mercy. Satan appears to the idle man in manifold temptations; or rather, presents himself, and appears not.

It is good to come to the place of God's presence: God may perhaps speak to thy

heart, though thou come but for novelty. (*v.* 3.) Absence is without hope.

We must come to God: we must not come too near Him. (*v.* 5.) When we meditate on the great mysteries of his word, we come to Him: we come too near Him when we search into his counsels. The waves of the sea had not more need of bounds, than man's presumption.

Any thing that was our ancestors' pleases us; their houses, their vessels, their coat-armour: how much more their God! (*v.* 6.) How careful should parents be to make holy choices: every precedent of theirs is a monument and motive to their posterity.

No length of time can separate the souls of the just from their Maker. *Ib. and Rom.* viii. 38, 39.

God is no less awful to his own, in his very mercies: (*Ps.* cxxx. 4.) for to them no less majesty shines in the favours of God, than in his judgments and justice. *Exod.* iii. 6.

Frequency of conversation gives us freedom of access to God; and makes us pour out our hearts unto Him as freely and as fearlessly as to our friends. *Compare Exod.* iii. 6; *v.* 22; viii. 12. 30.; ix. 33.; x. 18.; &c.

The more fit any man is for whatsoever vo-

cation, the less he thinks himself. (*Exod.* iii. 11.) Forwardness argues insufficiency.

God's best servants are not ever in an equal disposition to good duties. *Ib.*

How unworthy is he of life, who with the same breath that he receives, denies the Giver of it! *Exod.* v. 2.

God can be content the devil should win himself credit, where He means to judge; and holds the honor of a miracle well lost, to harden an enemy. *Exod.* vii. 11.

All God's judgments stand ready, and wait but till they are called for. *v.* 20.

How dependant and servile is the life of man, that cannot either want one element, or endure it corrupted! *v.* 24.

Whatsoever any man makes his god\*, besides the True One, shall be sometime his tormentor. *Exod.* viii. 6.

Who can marvel to see the best virtues counterfeited by wicked men, when he sees the devil emulating the miraculous power of God? *v.* 7.

God doth commonly use Satan in executing of judgment; never in the works of mercy to men. *Ib.*

\* The Egyptians worshipped the river Nile.

That spirit which is powerful to execute the greatest things when he is bidden, is unable to do the least when he is restrained. *v. 18.*

While wicked minds have their full scope, they never look up above themselves; but when once God crosses them in their proceedings, their want of success teaches them to give God his own. (*v. 19.*)

Good thoughts make but a thoroughfare of carnal hearts: they can never settle there. *Compare v. 28. with 32.*

Wheresoever mere Nature is, she is still improvident of future good, sensible of present evil, inconstant in good purposes, unable through unacquaintance, and unwilling to speak for herself; niggardly in her grants, and uncheerful. *v. 25—28.*

Grace often resisted turns to desperateness. *Exod. x. 28.*

Evermore when God's messengers are abandoned, destruction is near. *Exod. x, 29, and xii. 29.*

How sweetly doth God dispose of all second causes, that while they do their own will they do his! *Exod. xii. 30, 31.*

It is the wondrous mercy of God, that He hath respect, as to his own glory, so to our

infirmities. (*Exod. xiii. 17.*) His goodness so orders all, that evils are not ready for us, till we be ready for them.

God is both a cloud and a fire to his children; ever putting Himself into those forms of gracious respects, that may best fit their necessities. *v. 21, 22.*

As good motions are long ere they can enter into hard hearts, so they seldom continue long. *Exod. xiv. 5.*

All God's vengeance have their end, the final perdition of his enemies, which they cannot rest till they have attained. *v. 6.*

How easily can God make the cruellest of his creatures both our friends and patrons! *v. 22.*

Wicked men make equal haste, both to sin and from judgment; but they shall one day find that it is not more easy to run into sin than impossible to run away from judgment. *v. 23—25.*

Every main affliction is our red sea, which while it threatens to swallow, preserves us. *v. 29.*

The long deferring of a good, though tedious, yet makes it better when it comes. *Exod. xv. 22—25.*

Satan gives us pleasant entrances into his ways, and preserves the bitterness for the end.



God inures us to our worst at first, and sweetens our conclusion with pleasure. *Ib.*

Never have any had so bitter draughts upon earth as those whom God loves best. The palate is an ill judge of his favors. *Exod. xv. 23.*

It is the hard condition of authority, that when the multitude fare well they applaud themselves; when ill, they repine against their governors. *v. 24.*

No benefit can stop the mouth of impatience. If our turn be not served for the present, former favours are either forgotten or contemned. *Ib.*

We may not presume on likelihoods, but depend upon warrants. *Exod. xvii. 5, 6.*

It is the praise of Omnipotency to work by improbabilities. Let no man despise the means when he knows the Author. *Ib.*

When our own provision fails us, then not to distrust the provision of God is a noble trial of faith. *Exod. xvi. 3.*

Nature is jocund and cheerful while it prospereth: let God withdraw his hand, no sight, no trust. *Ib.*

We are all never weary of receiving, soon weary of attending. *Ib.*

Sins are so much the greater, as they are more universal: so far is evil from being ex-

tenuated by the multitude of the guilty, that nothing can more aggravate it. (v. 2.) The leprosy of a whole body is more loathsome than that of a part.

It is our faithlessness that in visible means we see not Him that is invisible. v. 3.

Carnal minds are for the flesh-pots of Egypt, though bought with servitude: spiritual are for the presence of God, though redeemed with famine. *Ib.*

It is a base cowardliness, as soon as ever we are called from the garrison to the field, to think of running away. Then is our fortitude worthy of praise, when we can bear to be miserable. *Ib.*

God loves to over-deserve of men, and to exceed not only their deserts, but their very desires, in mercy. How good shall we find Him to those that please Him, since He is so gracious to offenders! v. 12.

If God's mercy sometimes provoke the worst to repentance by his temporal favors, yet He ever reserves so much greater reward for the righteous, as eternity is beyond time, and heaven above earth. *Ib.*

Needs must they come whom God brings. (v. 13.) As not many quails, so not one sparrow falls without Him. How much more are the actions of his best creature, man, directed

by his providence! Why do we not repose upon his mercy?

God will be waited for, and will give the consummation of his blessings at his leisure. (*v. 12.*) In the evening of our life we have the first pledges of his favor; but in the morning of our resurrection must we look for our perfect satiety of the true manna, the bread of life.

We need no miracles when we have means. *v. 35.*

God delights to have us live in a continual dependance upon his Providence, and each day renew the acts of our faith and thankfulness. *v. 19.*

The outward manna fell not at all on the Sabbath: the spiritual manna, though it baulks no day, yet it falls double on God's day; and if we gather it not then, we famish. *v. 26, 27.*

It is a marvel if God do not evermore hold us short of something, because He would keep us still in exercise. (*Exod. xvii. 3.*) We should forget at whose cost we live, if we wanted nothing.

They distrust God's Providence in their necessity, (*v. 3.*) who are willing to follow his guidance in their welfare. (*v. 1.*) Sufferings are greater trials than actions.

To seek to the second means, with neglect of the first, is the fruit of a false faith.

No argument is enough for an incredulous heart; not reason, sense, nor experience. *v. 7.*

Impatience is full of misconstruction. If it be possible to find out any gloss to corrupt the text of God's actions, they shall be sure not to escape untainted. *v. 3.*

We shall find difficulties in all great enterprises; if we be sure we have begun them from God, we may securely cast all events upon his providence, which knows how to dispose and how to end them. *v. 4.*

Mere fear is not sinful: it is impotence and distrust, that accompany it, which make it evil. How well is that fear bestowed, that sends us the more importunately to God! *Ib.*

Nothing more raises up the heart in present affiance, than the recognition of favors or wonders past. *v. 5.*

It is just with God that they who would be contending with their best friends, should have to contend with enemies. *v. 8.*

Prayer, without means, is a mockery of God. (*v. 9.*) Then only can we pray with hope when we have done our best.

Though virtue lies not in the place, yet choice must be made of those places which may be the most help to our devotion. *Ib.*

The God of Spirits doth most respect the soul of our devotion: yet it is both unmannerly and irreligious to be misgestured in our prayers. (*v. 11.*) The careless and uncomely carriage of the body helps both to signify and make a profane soul.

A faithless man may as well hold his hand and tongue still: he may babble, but he prays not: he prays ineffectually and receives not. Only the prayer of the righteous availeth much, and only the believer is righteous. *Ib.*

Even in our prayers will God allow us to respect our own infirmities. In cases of our necessity He regards not the posture of the body, but the affections of the soul. *v. 12.*

How well it becomes the just to be thankful! (*v. 15, 16.*) Even very nature teaches us men to abhor ingratitude in small favors.

It is fit that our reverence to God's presence should appear in our very garments, that both without and within we may be cleanly: (*Exod. xix. 10, 11.*) but little would neatness of vestures avail us with a filthy soul.

God loves at once familiarity and fear,—familiarity in our conversation, and fear in his commands. *v. 12.*

I see the difference of God's carriage to men in the Law and in the Gospel. There the very earth was prohibited them, on which

He descended : (*Ib.*) here his very body and blood are offered to our touch and taste. *Matt.* xxvi. 26.

Natural men must have God at their beck ; and if He come not at a call, He is cast off : (*Exod.* xxxii. 1.) whereas his holy ones wait long and seek Him.

Sudden fears, when they have possessed weak minds, lead them to shameful errors. *v.* 2—5. Importunity and violence may lessen, but they cannot excuse a fault.

Sin will take heart by the approbation of the meanest looker on ; but if authority once second it, it grows impudent. *v.* 19.

The grossest of all sins cannot prejudice the calling of God : (*Compare Exod.* xxviii. 3. with xxxii. 2—5.) yea, as the light is best seen in darkness, the mercy of God is most magnified in our unworthiness.

The fervent prayers of the faithful hold the hands of the Almighty. *Exod.* xxxii. 11.

The more a man can leave himself behind him, and aspire to a care of community, the more spiritual he is. (*Ib.*) Nothing can make a man so good a patriot as religion.

He that will ever hope for good himself must return good for evil unto others. *Ib.*

Happy is that man who can make God's

glory the scope of all his actions and desires.  
v. 12, 13.

The goodness of God winks at the errors of honest zeal, and so loves the strength of good affections, that it passeth over their infirmities.  
v. 19.

There is no less charity than justice in punishing sinners with death. God delights no less in a killing mercy than in a pitiful justice.  
v. 27.

Abstinence merits not; for religion consists not in the belly, either full or empty: but it prepares best for good duties. (*Exod. xxxiv. 28.*) Full bellies are fitter for rest.

The more familiar acquaintance we have with God, the more do we partake of Him. He that sets himself apart to God, shall find a kind of majesty and awful respect put upon him in the minds of others. v. 29, 30.

How many have excellent graces, and perceive them not! *Ib.* Here below it is enough if we can shine in the eyes of others; above, we shall shine, and know it.

When the soul is once cleared from sin, it shall run to that glory with joy, the least glimpse whereof now appals it, and sends it away in terror. *Ib.*

It is good for a man sometimes to hide his graces. (v. 33.) Some talents are best im-

proved by being laid up. Christian modesty teaches a man not to expose himself to the fairest shew. Modest graces shall shine through their veils, when the vain-glorious shall bewray their shame through their covering.



### CHAPTER III.

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**G**OD, as He is Himself eternal, so He loves permanency and constancy of grace in us : if we be but a flash and away, God regards us not. (*Levit. vi. 13.*) It is but some presumptuous heat in us that decays upon every occasion : that fire which is celestial, continues.

If God hath kindled his Spirit in us, we may not expect He shall every day begin again : we have the fuel of the Word and Sacraments, Prayers and Meditations, which must keep it in. *v. 12.*

When we bring zeal without knowledge, misconceits of faith, carnal affections, the devices of our will-worship, superstitious devotions into God's service ; we bring common fire to his altar. These flames were never of his kindling : He hates both altar, fire, priest, and sacrifice. *Levit. x. 1, 2.*

If the sons of infidels live godlessly, they do their kind ; their punishment shall be, though just, yet less : but if the children of religious parents, after all Christian nurture,

shall shame their education, God takes it more heinously, and revenges it more sharply. *Ib.*

It is a dangerous thing, in the service of God, to decline from his own institutions. *Ib.*

There is no greater proof of grace, than to smart patiently and humbly, and contentedly to rest the heart in the justice and wisdom of God's proceeding. *v. 3.*

Those whom God hath called to his immediate service, must know that He will not allow them the common passions and cares of others. *Ib.*

Nothing is either more pleasing unto God, or more commodious to men, than that when He hath executed judgment, it should be seen and wondered at; for therefore He strikes some, that He may warn all. *v. 5.*

## CHAPTER IV.

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**WHOSOEVER** seeks the land of promise shall find many lets. *Numb. xii. 15.*

Who is so holy that he sins not? *v. 2.*

Authority cannot fail of opposition, if it be never so mildly swayed. *Ib.*

Self-love makes men unreasonable, and teaches them to turn the glass, to see themselves bigger, others less than they are. *Ib.*

Nothing will more try a man's grace, than questions of emulation. *Ib.*

As no wrong can escape God, so least of all those which are offered to princes. *Numb. xii. 4.*

The less a man strives for himself, the more God is his champion. (*Ib.*) God ever takes his part that fights not for himself.

Mildness and fortitude may well lodge together in one breast; to correct the misconceits of those, who think none valiant but they that are fierce and cruel. *Compare Exod. ii. 11, 12. 17. with Numb. xii. 3.*

Where the sin is not afraid of the light,

God loves not the reproof should be smothered.  
*Numb. xii. 5.*

The withdrawing of God's presence is the presence of his wrath. (*v. 9, 10.*) While he stays to reprove, there is favour in his displeasure; but when He leaves either man or Church, there is no hope but of vengeance. The final absence of God is hell itself.

Deformity is a fit cure of pride. *Ib.*

The universal antidote for all the judgments of God is our humble repentance. *v. 11, 12.*

Never any opposed the servants of God, but one time or other they have been constrained to confess a superiority. *Ib.*

How far are they from a meek disposition, who are not content God should revenge, but are ready to prevent God's revenge with their own. *v. 13.*

God either denies or defers the grant of our requests for our good. (*v. 14.*) There is no policy in a sudden removal of just punishment: unless the rain so fall, that it lie and soak into the earth, it profits nothing.

If the judgments of God should be only as passengers, and not sojourners at least, they would be no whit regarded. *Ib.*

When we will send forth our senses to be our scouts in matters of faith, and rather dare

trust men than God, we are worthy to be deceived. *Numb. xiii. 32.*

It is an unworthy thing to plead hardness of achieving, where the benefit will more than requite the endeavour. *Ib.*

When we measure our spiritual success by our own power, we are vanquished before we fight. He that would overcome, must neither look upon his own arm, nor upon the arm of his enemy; but the mouth and hand of Him that promised and can perform. *v. 33.*

Distrust makes our dangers greater, and our helps less than they are, and forecasts even worse than they shall be: and if evils be possible, it makes them certain. *Ib.*

As there is no society free from some corruption, so it is hard if in a community of men there be not some faithfulness. *v. 30.*

True Christian fortitude teaches us not to regard the number or quality of the opponents, but the equity of the cause. (*Ib.*) Faith is courageous, and makes nothing of those dangers wherewith others are quelled. There is none so valiant as the believer.

Feeble minds, when they meet with crosses they looked not for, repent of their good beginnings, and wish any difficulty rather than that they find. (*Numb. xiv. 2.*) How many

have pulled back their foot from the narrow way, for the troubles of a good profession!

We have never so much need to be importuned, as in those things whose benefits should make us most importunate. *v. 5—9.*

Crossed wickedness proves desperate, and instead of yielding, seeks for revenge. (*v. 10.*) Nothing is so hateful to a resolute sinner as good counsel.

When lesser warnings will not serve, God looks into his quiver for deadly arrows. *Numb. xvi. 5.*

There is no assurance of a man for one act: whom one sin cannot fasten upon, another may. (*Compare Exod. xxxii. 28. with Numb. xvi. 8—11.*) It is no praise to have done once well, unless we continue.

High towers must look for lightning. We offer not to undermine but those walls which we cannot scale. *Numb. xvi. 3.*

The way not to repine at those above us, is to look at those below us. (*v. 9, 10.*) There is no better remedy for ambition, than to cast up our former receipts, and to compare them with our deservings, and to confer our own estate with inferiors: so shall we find cause to be thankful that we are above any, rather than of envy that any is above us.

Innocency is no shelter from ill tongues:

malice never regards how true any accusation is, but how spiteful. *v. 12—14.*

Lenity is ill bestowed upon stubborn natures: it is an injurious senselessness not to feel the wounds of our reputation. *v. 15.*

There can be no greater revenge than the imprecation of the righteous. *Ib.*

God's vengeance, when it is at the hottest, makes differences of men. (*v. 23, 24.*) Ever before common judgment there is a separation.

Those that shall perish are blinded. (*v. 27.*) Pride and infidelity obscure the heart, and make even cowards fearless.

It is a dangerous thing to usurp sacred functions. (*v. 29—33.*) The ministry will not grace the man; the man may disgrace the ministry.

It is a madness to run away from punishment, and not from sin. *v. 34.*

By how much more faithful and familiar we are with God, so much earlier do we discern his judgments. *v. 46.*

When the world hath poured out all its contempt, we (the priesthood) are they that must reconcile men unto God; and without us they perish. *v. 47.*

It is not for God's ministers to stand upon their own perils in the common causes of the Church. *Ib.*

When we come with supplications in our hands, we need not fear the strokes of God. We have leave to resist the divine judgments by our prayers, with favour and success. *v. 47.*

How hardly can any people miscarry, that have faithful ministers to sue for their safety! Nothing but the increase of hearty prayers can cleanse the air from the plagues of God. *Ib.*

Incredulous minds will not be persuaded with any evidence. *Numb. xvii. 5.*

There is nothing more material than that men should be assured their spiritual guides have their calling and commission from God; the want whereof is a prejudice to our success. It should not be so; but the corruption of men will not receive good but from due messengers. *Ib.*

It is the choice of God that makes the distinction in our calling of Christianity: we are all equally devoid of possibility of grace; all equally lifeless; only the grace and effectual calling of God makes the difference. *v. 8.*

It is fit God should make choice of his own attendants. He that gives and knows our abilities, can best set us on work. *Ib.*

That servant of God is worthy to faint, that holds it not a sufficient encouragement to see the evident proofs of his Master's favour. *Ib.*



God knows how to pull down the highest stomach, and can extort glory to his own name from the most obstinate gainsayers. *v. 12, 13.*

So long as there is a world, there will be opposition to the chosen of God. (*Numb. xx. 18—21.*) He that will pass to the promised land, must neither stand upon length of way nor difficulty.

How often have we heard men that have been displeased with others, tear the name of their Maker in pieces. (*Numb. xxi. 5.*) But if to strive with a mighty man be unwise and unsafe, what shall it be to strive with the Almighty God! *Compare Ps. lxxviii. 56, and 1 Cor. x. 9.*

Unless nature be allowed to be her own carver she is never contented: he that is full despiseth an honey-comb. *Numb. xxi. 5.*

How sweet and delicate is the Gospel; Not only the fathers of the Old Testament, but the angels desired to look into the glorious mysteries of it; and yet we are cloyed! This supernatural food is too light: the bread-corn of our human reason and profound discourse would better content us. *Ib.*

The ears of God are open not only to the prayers of faith, but to the imprecations of infidelity. (*Numb. xxi. 6. Compare xiv. 2.*)

It is just with God to take us at our word, and to effect that which our lips speak against our heart.

God's anger is so much more by how much less notified. (*Numb.* xxi. 6.) It is with God as with us men, that still revenges are ever most dangerous.

They that complain without a cause shall have cause to complain for something. (*Ib.*) Discontented humours seldom escape unpunished.

There needs no solicitor where there is a sense of smart. (*v.* 7.) It were pity men should want affliction, since it sends them to their prayers and confessions. We should never seek God, if his hand did not find us out.

In the troublesome desert we are all stung by (sin) that old and fiery serpent. O Saviour, it is to Thee we must look and be cured! (*v.* 8).

Wicked men never care to observe God's judgments till themselves be touched. *Numb.* xxii. 3, 4.

Carnal men that are secure of the vengeance of God till it come, are mastered with it when it doth come; and not knowing which way to turn them, run forth at the wrong door. *v.* 5, 6.

Entireness with wicked consorts is one of

the strongest chains of hell, and binds us to a participation both of sin and punishment. An easy occasion will knit wicked hearts together in conspiracy against the Church of God. *v. 4—7.*

If either strength or policy could prevail against God's Church it could not stand. (*v. 12.*) It is a sign of a desperate cause to make Satan either our counsellor or our refuge.

If there be one project worse than another, a wicked heart will find it out. Nothing but destruction will content the malicious. *v. 17.*

Not the sound of God's voice, but the matter which He speaks, argues love. He may speak to an enemy: He speaks peace to none but his own. *v. 20.*

I have ever seen that God loves to take occasion of proceeding with us from ourselves, rather than from his own immediate prescience. (*v. 9, 10, 11.*) Hence it is that we lay open our wants, because He will deal with us from our own mouths.

The hand of God is in the restraint of many evils which we never knew to be towards us. (*v. 12.*) He that keepeth Israel is both a sure and a secret friend.

How oft are wicked men curbed by a divine hand, even in those sins which their heart

stands to. (*v. 32.*) Whence is it that the world is not overrun with evil, but from this, that men cannot be so ill as they would ?

Concealment of some truths is sometimes as faulty as a denial. (*v. 38.*) True fidelity is not niggardly in her relations.

O that we could be as importunate for our good, as wicked men are for compassing their own designs ! A denial doth but whet the desires of vehement suitors. (*v. 15, 37, 40.*) Why are we faint in spiritual things, when we are not denied, but delayed ?

Nature thinks it impossible to contemn honour and wrath ; and because too many fools are thus taken, cannot believe that any would escape. *Ib.*

How near truth and falsehood can lodge together ! Piety on the lips, and covetousness in the heart. *v. 18, 19.*

When we ask what we are bidden, our suits are not more vehement than welcome : but when we beg prohibited favours, our presumption is troublesome and abominable. (*v. 22.*) No good heart will endure to be twice forbidden.

Some things God permits with an indignation : not for that He gives leave to the act, but that He gives a man over to sin in the act. (*Compare v. 12 with 20.*) This sufferance im-

plies not favour, but judgment. How much better it is to have gracious denials than angry yieldings !

A small persuasion heartens the willing. (v. 20, 21.) Covetous men need neither clock nor bell to awaken them : their desires make them restless. O that we could with as much eagerness seek the true riches, which alone can make us happy !

It is one of the worthy employments of good angels to make secret oppositions to evil designs : many a wicked act have they hindered without the knowledge of the agent. (v. 22.) To stop the course of evil, either by dissuasion or violence, is an angelical service.

If an heavenly spirit stand in the way of a sorcerer's sin, (*Ib.*) how much more ready are all those spiritual powers to stop the miscarriages of God's dear children : how oft had we fallen yet more, if these guardians had not upheld us, whether by removing occasions, or by casting in good instincts. As our good endeavours are often hindered by Satan, so are our evil ones by good angels : else were not our protection equal to our danger ; and we could neither stand nor rise.

It is not so much glory to God to take away wicked men, as to use their evil to his own holy purposes. (v. 35.) It sufficeth that the

angels of God resist their purposes, while their persons continue.

There is no mouth into which God cannot put words; and how oft doth He choose the weak and unwise to confound the learned and mighty. *v. 28.*

We grudge to be stayed in the way to death, and fly upon those which oppose our perdition. *v. 23; compare 32, 33.*

We little think it, but God shall call us to an account for the unkind and cruel usages of his poor mute creatures. (*v. 32.*) He hath made us lords, not tyrants; owners, not tormentors. He that hath given us leave to kill them for our use, hath not given us leave to abuse them at our pleasure.

O the honour that hath been formerly done by heathens, to them that have borne but the face of prophets! (*v. 36, 37.*) I shame and grieve to compare the times and men.

It hath ever been seen that the false worshippers of God have made more pompous shews, and fairer flourishes of their piety and religion, than the true. *Numb. xxiii. 1.*

Our first mother Eve bequeathed this dowry to her daughters, that they should be our helpers to sin: the weaker sex is the stronger in this conquest. *Numb. xxv. 1.*

A man besotted with filthy desires is fit for any villainy. *v. 2.*

If we have not grace to resist the beginnings of sin, where shall we stay? *v. 8.*

As the sins of great men are exemplary, so are their punishments. (*Compare v. 7, 8, with 14, 15.*) Nothing procures so much credit to government, as strict and impartial executions of great and noble offenders.

Those that have once passed the bounds of modesty soon grow shameless in their sins. (*v. 6.*) While sin hides itself in corners, there is yet hope: for where there is shame, there is a possibility of grace.

It is not enough for us to stand gazing upon the wickedness of the times, yea, although with tears, unless we endeavour to redress it. *v. 6, 7, 8.*

When we have done what we came for, it is time for us to be gone. This earth is made for action, not for fruition. The services of God's children should be ill rewarded, if they must stay here always. (*Numb. xxvii. 13.*) He that lends them to the world, owes them a better turn than this earth can pay them. It were injurious to wish that goodness should hinder any man from glory.

## CHAPTER V.



**IT** is the goodness of our God that He will not have his children die any where, but where they may see the land of promise before them. *Deut. xxxiv. 1—4.*

It is neither harsh nor news to God's children, to hear or think of their departure : to them death has lost its horror through acquaintance : they have so often thought and resolved on the necessity and on the issue of their dissolution, that they cannot hold it either strange or unwelcome. *Ib.*

God forewarns one by sickness, another by age, another by his secret instincts, to prepare for their end. If our hearts be not now in readiness, we are worthy to be surprized. *Ib.*

How vainly shall we hope to make amends to God for our former trespasses, by our better behaviour. When we have forgotten our sins, yet God remembers them, and, though not in anger, yet He calls for our arrears. *v. 4. Compare Numb. xx. 12, and xxvii. 13, 14.* Alas, what shall become of them, that, amongst



many millions of sins, have scattered some few acts of formal service !

Except where ordinary means fail us, it is no use appealing to the immediate help of God. *Compare Josh. i. 2—9, with ii. 1.* Heaven is promised to us, but not to our carelessness, infidelity, disobedience. He that hath set this blessed inheritance before us, presupposes our wisdom, faith, holiness.

## CHAPTER VI.

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**EITHER** faith or friendship are never tried but in extremities. *Josh. ii. 1—11.*

Only then do we make a right use of the works of God, when by his judgments upon others, we are warned to avoid our own. *v. 9, 10, 11.*

He that hath given us charge of our lives, will not suffer us to cast them upon wilful adventures. *v. 16, 22.*

Either success or discomfiture begins ever at the heart. A man's inward disposition doth more than presage the event. *v. 2, 11 and 24.*

As a man raises up his own heart before his fall, and depresses it before his glory; so God raises it up before his exaltation, and casts it down before his ruin. *Ib.*

Delays, whether in the business of God, or our own, are hateful and prejudicial. Many a one loses the land of promise by lingering. *Josh. iii. 1.*

God loves to give us cools and heats in our

desires ; and will so allay our joys, that the fruition hurt us not. *v. 1, 2.*

If the mercy of God have brought us within sight of heaven, let us be content to pause awhile, and upon the banks of Jordan fit ourselves for our entrance. *Ib.*

Who can wish a better guide than the God of Heaven, in his word and sacraments ? Who can know the way into the land of promise so well as He who owns it ? And what means can better direct us thither, than those of his institution ? *v. 9, 10, 11.*

It is a dangerous thing to be too bold with the ordinances of God. (*v. 4.*) Under the Law we might look at Christ aloof : now, under the Gospel we may come near Him : He calls us to Him ; yea, He enters into us.

There is an holiness required, to make us either patients or beholders of the great works of God : how much more, when we should be actors in his sacred services ! *v. 5.*

There can be no Christian without belief in God : but those that are near to God in his immediate service must go before others, no less in believing than they do in example. *v. 13.*

We have no right of inheritance in the spiritual Canaan, the Church of God, till we have

received the sacrament of our matriculation.  
*Josh. v. 2—7.*

It is the pleasure of God to hold us both in work and in expectation ; and though He require our continual endeavours, for the subduing of our corruptions, during the six days of our life, yet we shall never find it perfectly effected, till the very evening of our last day.  
*Josh. vi. 20.*

A good heart groans under the sense of his infirmities, fain would be rid of them, and strives and prays ; but when he hath done all, until the end of the seventh day it cannot be. *Ib.*

How mean and homely are those means which God commonly uses in the most glorious works ! If we find the ordinances of God poor and weak, let it content us that they are of his choosing, and such as whereby He will so much more honour Himself, as they in themselves are more inglorious. *v. 5, and 20.*

It is the presence of God's ark, and our conjoined prayers, that are effectual to the beating down of wickedness. *Ib.*

The death of malefactors, the punishment of wicked men, seem harsh to us ; but we must learn of God that there is a punishing mercy.  
*v. 6.*

The actions of our faith and charity will be sure to pay us ; if late, yet surely. *v. 22—25.*

Our innocency stands not so much in having few precepts, as in keeping those we have. So much more guilty are we in the breach of one as we are more favoured in the number. *Compare Josh. vi. 17, 18, with vii. 1, 11, &c.*

A lewd man is a pernicious creature: that he damns his own soul is the least part of his mischief: he commonly draws vengeance upon a thousand, either by the desert of his sin, or by the infection. *Josh. vii. 12.*

It is no blame to authority, that some sins are secretly committed: the holiest congregation or family may be blemished with some malefactors. *v. 13.*

Good success lifts up the heart with too much confidence; and while it dissuades men from doing their best, oft-times disappoints them. *v. 3.*

It is to no purpose to pray against punishment while the sin continues. *v. 10.*

The confession of our sins doth no less honour God, than his glory is blemished by their commission. *v. 20.*

It is well for our souls that we have repented, but the laws of men take no notice of our sorrow. *Ib.*

There is no wisdom in staying till a judgment come home to us: the only way to avoid it is to meet it half way. *Josh. ix. 3—15.*

It is no new policy that Satan would beguile us with a vain colour of antiquity, clothing falsehood in rags. (*v. 5.*) If we be caught with this Gibeonitish stratagem, it is a sign we have not consulted with God. *v. 14.*

The general denunciations of the vengeance of God enwrap all sinners ; yet may we not despair of mercy. *Compare v. 15, with i. 1—9.*

In cases and persons unknown, it is safe not to be too credulous : charity itself will allow suspicion, where we have seen no cause to trust. *v. 7.*

Even wicked men gain by the outside of good actions : good men make a benefit of their sins. *v. 22—27.*

If a convert come home, the angels welcome him with songs, the devils follow him with uproar and fury, his old partners with scorns and obloquy. *Josh. x. 1—5.*

Malice in a wicked heart is the king of passions : all others vail and bow, when it comes in place. *Compare v. 2, with 5.*

The malice of the wicked hastens the pace of their own judgment. (*v. 6, 7, 8.*) No rod is so fit for a mischievous man as his own.

True contentment seldom dwells high ; while meaner men of humbler spirits enjoy both earth and heaven.

If ever we will send up prayers to our

Joshua, it will be when we are beleaguered with evils. If we trust to our own resistance we cannot stand : we cannot miscarry, if we trust to His. *v. 6—10.*

The greatest obligation to a good mind is another's trust ; which to disappoint were mercilessly perfidious. *Ib.*

Speed in bestowing doubles the gift : a benefit deferred loses the thanks, and proves unprofitable. *v. 9.*

The praise is to the workman, not to the instrument. *v. 10.*

There is no evasion, where God intends a revenge. (*v. 11.*) It is a good care how we may not anger God : it is a vain study how we may fly from his judgments when we have angered Him. If we would run out of the world even there shall we find his revenges far greater. *See Ps. cxxxix. 7—12.*

The request of a faithful man commands. (*Josh. x. 12, 13.*) What is there that God cannot do ? And what is there which God can do, that faith cannot do ?

The first care of true Israelites must be the safety of religion. (*Josh. xxii. 10.*) The world, as it is inferior in worth, so must it be in respect.

Every overture, in matter of religion, is worthy of suspicion, worthy of our speedy

opposition. (*v. 11—20.*) God looks for an early redress of the first beginnings of impiety.

Wisdom is a good guide to zeal, and only can keep it from running out into fury. *v. 13, 14.*

Sudden cruelty stands not with religion. He which will not Himself break the bruised reed, how will He allow us either to bruise the whole, or to break the bruised, or to burn the broken? *Ib.*

How two contrary qualities fall into love! It is not naturally suspicious; and yet many times suggests jealous fears of those we affect. *v. 12.*

In cases which are doubtful and uncertain, it is safe either to suspend the judgment, or to pass it in favour: otherwise a plain breach of charity in us shall be worse than a questionable breach of justice in another. *Ib.*

God's proceedings have their right use, when they are both carefully remembered, and made patterns of what He may do. *v. 11, 12.*  
*Compare Josh. vii. 1—15.*

Even in those actions whereby an offence may be occasioned, though not given, charity binds us to clear both our own name and the conscience of others. *Josh. xxii. 21—29.*

It is not safe to measure all men's actions by our own conceit, but rather to think there may be a further drift and warrant of their act than we can attain to see. *Ib.*



## CHAPTER VII.

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**I**F foolish pity be a more humane sin, yet it is no less dangerous than cruelty. Cruelty kills others, unjust pity kills ourselves. *Judges ii. 1—3.*

He who hath bidden us cleanse our hearts of all our corruptions, will yet permit some of these thorns still in our sides, for exercise, for humiliation. *Ib.*

How powerful the presence of one good man is in a church or state, is best found in his loss. *v. 8—15.*

The security of any people is the cause of their corruption. Standing waters soon grow noisome. (*Judges iii. 11, 12.*) It is both hard and happy not to be the worse for liberty.

The very purpose of affliction is to make us importunate. God hears the secret murmurs of our grief, yet will not seem to hear us, till our cries be loud and strong. *v. 15.*

If our prayers want success, they want heart; their blessing is according to their vigour. *Ib.*

It is not to be enquired, whom we think meet .

for any employment, but whom God hath called.

*Judges* iv. 4, 5.

To prescribe that to others which we draw back from doing ourselves, is an argument of hollowness and falsity. *v.* 9.

How many worldly hearts sleep in the midst of their spiritual perils? *v.* 21.

The judgments of God, the further they go, the sorer they are. *Judges* vi. 1—6.

It is a good sign when God chides us: reproof makes way for deliverance, humiliation for comfort. *v.* 7—10.

The worst estate, out of hell, hath either some comfort, or at least some mitigation: in spite of the malice of the world, God makes secret provision for his own. *v.* 11.

What shifts nature will make to live! O that we could be so careful to lay up spiritual food for our souls! We could not but live, in spite of all adversaries. *Ib.*

It pleases God to acknowledge his own graces in men, that He may interchange His own glory with their comfort: (*v.* 12.) how much more should we confess the graces of one another? An envious nature is prejudicial to God.

The main care of a good heart is still for the public; neither can it enjoy itself, while the Church of God is distressed. *v.* 13.

Wherever God chastises, there He is ; yea, there He is in mercy. Nothing more proves us his, than his stripes : He will not bestow whipping where He loves not. *Ib.*

Fond nature thinks God should not suffer the wind to blow upon his dear ones, because herself makes this use of her own indulgence : but none out of the place of torment have suffered so much as his dearest children. *Ib.*

Sins, not afflictions, argue God absent. *Ib.*

He that gives us ere we ask, how much more will He give when we ask ? *v. 15, 16.*

The strongest faith will ever have some touch of infidelity. *v. 17, 18.*

Humility is both a sign of following glory, and a way to it, and an occasion of it. *v. 15.*

In matters of faith we cannot go upon too sure grounds. *v. 17.*

They who are rightly affected with the glad news of our spiritual deliverance, study to shew their loving respects to the messengers. *v. 19.*

Such pleasure doth God take in the thankful endeavours of his servants, that He patiently waits upon the leisure of our performances. *v. 18.*

Wouldst thou fain be rid of any judgment ? Inquire what false altars and groves thou hast in thy heart : down with them first. *v. 28*

He hath no religion that can suffer an indignity offered to his God. *v. 30.*

Our very dreams many times are not without God: there is a providence in our sleeping fancies. *Judges vii. 13, 14.*

Those that fight for our souls against spiritual powers may challenge bread from us; and it is shameless unthankfulness to deny it. *Judges viii. 5, 6.*

Nothing is more horrible to evil minds, than to read their own condemnation in the happy success of others. *v. 6.*

Justice is sometimes so severe, that a tender beholder can scarce discern it from cruelty. *v. 16.*

Those that are most unworthy of honour are hottest in the chace of it, whilst the conscience of better deserts bids men sit still, and stay to be either importuned or neglected. *Judges ix. 1, 2.*

It is hard to say whether there be more pride or ignorance in ambition. I have noted this difference between spiritual and earthly honour, and the clients of both: we cannot be worthy of the one, without earnest prosecution; nor with earnest prosecution worthy of the other. The violent obtain heaven: only the meek are worthy to inherit the earth.

That which an aspiring heart hath projected,

it will find both argument and means to effect.  
*v. 4, 5, 6.*

All sins will easily go down with the man that is resolved to rise. *v. 5.*

The prosperity of the wicked is short and fickle: a stolen crown cannot be made of any but brittle stuff. *v. 56, 57.*

He that hath been unfaithful to one, knows the way to be perfidious, and is only fit for his trust who is worthy to be deceived; (*v. 25.*) whereas faithfulness, besides the present good, lays a ground of further assurance.

The friendship that is begun in evil cannot stand: wickedness, both of its own nature, and through the curse of God, is ever unsteady. *Ib.*

God finds a time to reckon with wicked men for all the arrearages of their sins. (*v. 53, 54.*) Our sins are not more our debts to God, than his judgments are his debts to our sins, which at last He will be sure to pay home.

Vain fools are niggardly of their reputation, and prodigal of their souls. *v. 54.*

The common gifts of God respect not the parentage or blood, but are indifferently scattered where He pleases to let them fall. *Judges xi. 1. 11.*

By contrary paces to ours, it pleaseth God to come to his own ends. (*v. 2. 11.*) He that:

fetches good out of evil, raises the glory of men out of their ruin.

Necessity will drive us to seek up all our helps, even those whom our wantonness had despised. *v. 2. 5—8.*

We cannot make too sure work, when we have to do with unfaithful men. *v. 6—9.*

We are all naturally ambitious, and are ready to buy honour, even with hazard. (*v. 9.*) O that we could bend our eyes upon the recompense of our reward!

To make war any other than our last remedy, is not courage, but cruelty and rashness. *v. 12—28.*

Vows are as they are made, like unto scents: if they be of ill composition, nothing offends more; if well tempered, nothing is more pleasant. *v. 30, 31.*

When we vow what we cannot, or what we ought not to do, we mock God instead of honouring Him. *Ib.*

It falls out often, that those times and occasions, which promise most contentment, prove most doleful in the issue. *v. 35.*

It is good, in a fair morning, to think of the storm that may rise ere night, and to receive both good and evil fearfully. *v. 34—36.*

An unlawful vow is ill made, but worse performed. *v. 39.*

If we be truly dutiful to our Father in heaven, we would not slip our necks out of the yoke, though we might; nor fly from his commands, though the door were open. *Ib.*

Afflictions have this advantage, that they occasion God to shew that mercy to us, whereof the prosperous are incapable. *Judges xiii. 2, 3.*

Credulity to men is faulty and dangerous; but in the matters of God is the greatest virtue of a Christian. *v. 8.*

Never any man prayed for direction in his duties to God, and was repulsed; rather will God send an angel from heaven to instruct us, than our good desires shall be frustrate. *Ib.*

The head must overlook the body; it is the duty of the husband to be careful that the wife do her duty to God. *v. 13, 14.*

True piety is not uncivil; but while it magnifies the Author of all blessings, is thankful to the means. (*v. 15.*) Secondary causes are worthy of regard; neither need it detract any thing from the praise of the Agent to honour the instrument.

It is not only rudeness, but injustice, in those who will be content to hear good news from God, with contempt of the bearers. *Ib.*

All honest motions are not fit to be yielded to: good intentions are not always sufficient grounds of condescension. *v. 16—18.*

If we sometimes ask what we know not, it is no marvel if we receive not what we ask. *Ib.*

Where there are beginnings of faith, the mercy of God will add perfection. *v. 19, 20.*

This is the infirmity of our nature, to be afflicted with the causes of our joy, to be astonished with our confirmations, to conceive death in that vision of God wherein our life and happiness consist. *v. 22.*

It falls out sometimes, that the weaker vessel is the fuller: that wife is no helper, which is not ready to give spiritual comfort to her husband. *v. 23.*

God will not accept gifts, where he intends punishment, and professes hatred. (*Ib.*) If we can find assurance of God's acceptation of our sacrifices, we may be sure He loves our persons.

To follow nothing but the eye in the choice of a wife, is to make sense not a counsellor but a tyrant. *Judges xiv. 1, 2, 3.*

If Religion be any other than a cypher, how dare we not regard it in our most important choice? To dote upon a fair skin, when we see a Philistine under it, is sensual and brutish. *Ib.*



Affection is not more blind than deaf. It must needs be a weak motion that can plead no reason but appetite. *v. 3.*

As it becomes not children to be forward in their choice, so parents may not be too peremptory in their denial. (*v. 4.*) The one is disobedience, the other may be tyranny.

The same hand that prepared a lion for Samson, hath proportionable matches for every Christian: God never gives strength, but He employs it. *v. 5, 6.*

If that roaring lion that goes about continually, seeking whom he may devour, find us alone; where is our hope? Not in our heels; he is swifter than we: not in our weapons; we are naturally unarmed: not in our hands; we are weak and languishing: but in the Spirit of that God by whom we can do all things. *Ib.*

Great talkers shew that they desire only to be thought eminent; whereas the deepest waters are least heard. *v. 9.*

The mercies of God are ill bestowed upon us, if we cannot step aside to view the monuments of his deliverances: dangers may be at once past and forgotten. *v. 8.*

Samson had not found his honey-comb, if he had not turned aside to see his lion; so we shall lose the comfort of God's benefits, if we do not not renew our perils by meditation. *Ib.*

Is any man by his temptation or fall, become more circumspect? there is honey out of the lion! Is any man, by his humiliation under the hand of God, grown more faithful and conscionable? there also is honey out of the lion! Every Christian is the better for his evils. *Ib.*

Good may not be refused because the means are accidentally evil: honey is honey still, though in a dead lion. (*v. 9.*) They are less wise and more scrupulous than Samson, who abhor the graces of God because they find them in ill vessels.

It is both lawful and fit, in things not prohibited, to conform ourselves to the manners and rites of those with whom we live. *v. 10.*

The courtesies of the world are hollow and thankless: neither doth it ever purpose so ill, as when it shews fairest. Open defiance is better than false love. *v. 11—15.*

Adam the perfectest man, Samson the strongest man, Solomon the wisest man, were betrayed with the flattery of their helpers. As there is no comfort comparable to a faithful yoke-fellow, so woe be to him that is matched with a Philistine! *v. 17.*

Slight occasions may not break the knot of matrimonial love? and if any just offence have slackened it on either part, it must be fastened

again by speedy reconciliation. *v. 20, and xv. 1, 2.*

Lawful wedlock may not be dissolved by imaginations, but by proofs. *Judges xv. 2.*

Those judgments which begin in outward things, end in the owners. *v. 5—8.*

How many, to shun pain and danger, have yielded to evil; and in the long run have been met in the teeth with that mischief which they had hoped to have left behind them. *Compare xiv. 15, with xv. 6.*

A fearful man can never be a true friend: rather than incur any danger, he will be false to his own soul. *Judges xv. 11, 12.*

If we be not as ready to suffer ill as to do good, we are not fit for the consecration of God. *v. 12, 13.*

Wicked men never see fairer prospects, than when they are upon the very threshold of destruction. *v. 14.*

How easily do vigour of body and infirmity of mind lodge under one roof! *Judges xvi. 1, 4.*

If a temptation have drawn us aside, to lie down in sin, it is happy for us if we can arise, ere we be surprised with judgment. *v. 3.*

The bountiful hand of God leaves us rich in common graces, when we have mis-spent our better store. (*Ib.*) Like as our first parents,

when they had spoiled themselves of the image of their Creator, yet were left wealthy of noble faculties of the soul.

Present impunity argues not an abatement of the wickedness of sin, or of the dislike of God. (*Ib.*) And evil is not evil because it is punished, but because it is forbidden.

Sin is steep and slippery ; and if, after one fall, we have found where to stand, it is the praise, not of our footing but of the hand of God. *Ib.*

A wide conscience will swallow any sin. (*v. 6.*) Trust him in nothing, that makes not a conscience of every thing.

All sins, all passions, have power to infatuate a man, but lust most of all. *v. 7.*

Every willing sinner is a Samson : let us not inveigh against his senselessness, but our own. *Ib.*

It is not so great wisdom to prove them whom we distrust, as it is folly to trust them whom we have found treacherous. *v. 10, 11.*

Warning not taken is a certain presage of destruction. *v. 9. 12. 14. 17.*

Whosoever slackens the reins to his sensual appetite, shall soon grow unfit for the calling of God. *v. 20.*

It is more safe to keep ourselves out of the way of solicitation, than to stand upon our power of denial. *v. 16, 17.*

If God withdraw his graces, when He is too much provoked, who can complain of his mercy? *v. 20.*

Oppression is able to make a wise man mad; and the greater the courage is, the more painful the insult. *v. 28—30.*

No devotion is so fervent as that which arises from extremity. *v. 28.*

A carnal heart cannot forego that wherein it delights, without impatience; cannot be impatient without curses. *Judges xvii. 2.*

Many that make no conscience of committing sin, yet make a conscience of facing it: it is well for them that they are novices in evil. *v. 2. 4.*

I know not whether the causeless curse be more worthy of pity or derision: it hurts the author, not his adversary. *v. 2.*

Even evil actions have oft-times good meanings. *v. 3.*

Those sins which nature conveys not to us, we have by imitation. Those sons may bless their second birth who are delivered from the sins of their education. *v. 5.*

We are beholden to government for order, for peace, for Religion. We are worthy of nothing but confusion, if we bless not God for authority. *v. 6.*

What should become of the Levites, if there were no King? and what of the Church, if no

Levites? No King, therefore, no Church!  
*v. 6—9.*

When need meets with unconsciableness, all conditions are easily swallowed, of unlawful entrances, of wicked executions. *v. 10, 11.*

It were happy if Christians could imitate the love of idolaters towards them which serve at the altar. *v. 11. 13.*

The carnal heart pleases itself with an outward formality, and so delights to flatter itself, as that it thinks if one circumstance be right, nothing can be amiss. *v. 13.*

Worldly minds had rather enjoy a false worship with ease, than take pains for the true. (*Ib.*) Those that are curious in their diet, in their purchases, in their attire, in their contracts, yet in God's business are very indifferent.

Mercy becomes well the heart of any man, but most of a Levite. *Judges xix. 3.*

The recovery of any good is far more pleasant than the continuance. *Ib.*

Even when we let ourselves loosest to our pleasures, the hand of God, though invisibly, is writing bitter things against us. *v. 4. 26.*

Such contentment doth sincere affection find in the presence of those we love, that death itself hath no other name but departing. *v. 9.*

The greatest comfort of our life is the fruition of friendship; the dissolution whereof is the greatest pain of death. *Ib.*

If we hang never so importunately upon one another's sleeves, and shed floods of tears to stop their way, yet we must be gone hence. *Ib.*

How worthy is that only love to take up our hearts, which is not open to any danger of interruption, which shall outlive the date even of faith and hope, and is as eternal as that God and those blessed spirits whom we love!

An honest man's heart is where his calling is. *v. 10.*

It is lawful enough in terms of civility to deal with infidels; yet the less communion with God's enemies, the more safety. *v. 12.*

Both expectation and fear do commonly disappoint us; for seldom do we enjoy the good we look for, or smart with a feared evil. *v. 15.*

The first sign of a settled godlessness is, that a Levite is suffered to lie out of doors. (*Ib.*) Where no respect is given to God's messengers, there can be no religion.

Each man knows best to commiserate that evil in others, which himself hath passed through. (*v. 16—21.*) All that profess the name of Christ are countrymen, yet strangers here below.

Industrious spirits are the fittest receptacles of all good motions. *v. 16.*

What smiles soever wickedness casts upon the heart while it solicits, it will owe us a displeasure, and prove itself a faithful debtor. *Compare v. 2, with 25, 26.*

The abetting of evil is worse than the commission: this may be upon infirmity, but that must be upon resolution. *Judges xx. 13.*

Even good zeal cannot bear out presumption: victory lies not in the cause, but in the God that owns it. *v. 21.*

Wicked men cannot see their prosperity a part of their curse; neither can examine their actions, but the events. *v. 32.*

It is seldom seen, but that which we do with fear, prospereth; whereas confidence in undertaking lays even good endeavours in the dust. *v. 26—28.*

The hope of life in our prosperity is the next contentment to an enjoying of life in ourselves. *Judges xxi. 17.*

Oaths do not only require justice, but judgment; wise deliberation, no less than equity. (*v. 6, 7.*) If we bind ourselves to inconvenience, we may justly complain of our own fetters.

Even the justest revenge of men is capable of pity. (*v. 3.*) Charitable minds are grieved



to see that done, which they would not wish undone.

It is a dangerous injustice to lay the burden of our sins upon God, who tempteth no man, nor can be tempted with evil: while we so remove our sin, we double it. *Ib.*

To exempt ourselves, whether from singularity or stubbornness, from the common actions of the Church, when we are lawfully called to them, is an offence worthy of judgment. *v. 8.*

Into what troublesome and dangerous straits do men thrust themselves by either unjust or inconsiderate vows. *v. 22.*

All but atheists, howsoever they let themselves loose, yet in some things find themselves restrained, and shew to others that they have a conscience. *Ib.*

Stolen marriages are both unnatural and full of hazard: for love, whereof marriage is the knot, cannot be forced.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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**ONE** rod is not enough for a stubborn child.  
*Ruth* i. 1.

Nothing but necessity can dispense with a local relinquishing of God's Church : not pleasure, nor profit, nor curiosity. *Ib.*

The name of home is so sweet, that we cannot leave it for a trifle. *Ib.*

Those who are famished out, God calls, yea drives from thence. *Ib.*

The Creator and Possessor of the earth hath not confined any man to his necessary destruction. *Ib.*

It is too much niceness to forbear the benefit we might make of the faculties of profane or heretical persons : we have more right to the good such men can do, than they that do it. *Ib.*

We cannot heartily think of our home above, while we are furnished with worldly contentments : when God strips us of them, straightway our mind is homeward. *v. 3—6.*

How well doth it become Christians, when

left comfortless in the midst of the Moab of this world, to resolve the contempt of all dangers, in their way to their home! *Ib.*

Goodness is of a winning quality wheresoever it is; and even among infidels, will make itself friends. *v. 10.*

Good dispositions love not to benefit themselves with the disadvantage of others; and had rather be miserable alone, than draw in partners to their sorrows. (*v. 11—15.*) Ill minds care not how many companions they have in misery, nor how few in good.

None but a regenerate heart can chuse rather to suffer adversity with God's people, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. *v. 16, 17.*

The next degree unto godliness, is the love of goodness. (*Ib.*) He is in a fair way to grace that can value it.

The hollowest heart can be content to follow one that prospereth: adversity is the only furnace of friendship. *Ib.*

They who are truly brought down, make it not dainty that the world should think them so. *v. 19, 20.*

God finds it best, many times, to cross the likely projects of his dearest children, and to multiply those afflictions which they feared single. *Ib.*

What assurance is there of those earthly

things, whereof one hour may strip us. (*v. 21.*)  
How justly do we contemn this uncertainty,  
and look up to those riches which cannot but  
endure when heaven and earth are dissolved!

There is no harder lesson to a generous  
mind, nor that more beseems it, than either to  
bear want, or to prevent it. *Ruth ii. 2.*

Little do we know, when we go forth in the  
morning, what God means to do with us, ere  
night. *Ib.*

God's thoughts are above our's, and do so  
order our actions, as we, if we had known,  
should have wished. *v. 3.*

Reverence and loving respects to parents,  
never yet went away unrecompensed. *v. 11.*

Even the best estate requires the careful  
managing of the owner: (*v. 4.*) after all the  
trust of others, the master's eye feeds the  
horse.

We are all stewards, and what account can  
we give to our Master, if we never look after  
our estate? *Ib.*

All the business of the family speeds the  
better for the master's benediction. *Ib.* Those  
affairs are likely to succeed that take their  
beginning with God.

Charity is well matched with Religion,  
without which good words are but hypocrisy.  
*Compare v. 4, with 8, 9.*

Our barns shall be as full of curses, as of corn, if we grudge the scattered ears of our field to the hands of the needy.

If we may refresh the souls of the poor with the very offals of our estate, and not hurt ourselves, woe be to us if we do it not.

Those which shall receive great blessings, are ever thankful for little. *v. 10.*

If poor souls be thankful to us for a handful or a sheaf, how should we be affected to our God\*, for full fields, full barns, full garnerers. *Ib.*

It is not for want of love that God gives us no greater measure of grace, but for want of our fitness and capacity. (*v. 9.*) He hath reserved greater preferments for us, when it shall be seasonable for us to receive them. *v. 15—17.*

If the rich can exchange their alms with the poor for blessings, they have no cause to complain of an ill bargain. (*v. 19, 20.*) Our gifts cannot be worth their faithful prayers; therefore it is more blessed to give than to receive.

It is a discourtesy, where we are beholden, to alter our dependency. *v. 22, 23.*

\* ————— think, oh grateful think,

How good the God of Harvest is to you,

Who pours abundance o'er your flowing fields!

*Thompson's Seasons.—Autumn.*

How shall the God of Heaven take it, that while He gives and proffers largely, we run to the world, that can afford us nothing but vanity and vexation? *Ib.*

Our courses were very uncertain, if God had not given us rules, whereby we may examine the examples of the best saints, and as well censure as follow them. Let them that stumble at the boldness of Ruth, imitate the continence of Boaz! *Ruth* iii. 6—14.

It is no thank to many, that they are free of some evils; perhaps they wanted not will, but convenience. But if a man, when he is filled with all helps to sin, can repel the pleasure of sin out of conscience, this is true fortitude. *Ib.*

No action can give us true comfort, but that which we do on the ground of obedience. *Ib.*

They who are fearful of sinning are careful not to be thought to sin. *v.* 14.

A good heart is no less afraid of a scandal, than of a sin: whereas those that are resolved not to make any scruple of sin, despise others' constructions, not caring whom they offend, so they may please themselves. *Ib.*

Love, wheresoever it is, cannot be niggardly. (*v.* 15.) We measure the love of God by his gifts: how shall He abide to send us away empty from those treasures of goodness!

Virtue, in whomsoever it is found, is a great dowry; and where it meets with an heart that knows how to value it, is accounted greater riches than all that is hid in the bowels of the earth. *v. 11.*

How many are there that do so over-love their issue, that they regard neither sin nor shame in advancing it; and that will rather endanger their soul than lose their name! *Ruth iv. 6.*

All the substance of the earth is not worth a virtuous and prudent wife. *v. 10—12.*

Who ever forsook the Moab of this world for the true Israel, and did not at last rejoice in the change? *v. 14, 15.*

## CHAPTER IX.



**T**HE continuance of an unknown sin cannot mar the uprightness of a man's heart with God. (1 *Sam.* i. 2, 3.) The least touch of knowledge or wilfulness mars his sincerity.

It is a shame for him who teaches God's people that they should not appear before the Lord empty, to bring no sacrifice for himself. If Levites be profane, who should be religious! *v.* 3.

There is nothing more comely than cheerfulness in the services of God. (*v.* 4, 5.) What is there in all the world, wherewith the heart of man should be so lift up, as with the conscience of his duty done to his Maker?

No good husband will dislike his wife for a fault out of the power of her redress. *v.* 5—8.

It is the property of true mercy to be most favourable to the weakest. *Ib.*

God knows how to dispense his favours so, that every one may have cause both of thankfulness and humiliation: there is no one that hath all, no one but hath some. *Ib.*



If envy and contempt were not thus equally tempered, some would be over-haughty, and others too miserable. *v. 5, 6.*

Envy, though it take advantage of our weaknesses, yet is ever raised upon some grounds of happiness : it is ever an ill effect of a good cause. *Ib.*

There is no evil of another wherein it is fit to rejoice, but his envy ; and this is worthy of our joy and thankfulness, because it shews us the price of that which we had, and valued not. *Ib.*

They that are truly gracious know how to receive the blessings of God, without contempt of them that want. *Ib.*

Envy, when it is once conceived in a malicious heart, is like fire in billets of juniper, which is said to continue more years than one. *v. 7.*

By how much more tender the heart is, so much more deeply is it ever affected with unkindnesses ; as wax receives and retains that impression, which in hard clay cannot be seen. *Ib.*

There is one universal receipt for all evils, prayer : when all helps fail, this remains ; and while we have a heart, comforts it. *v. 9, 10.*

The way to obtain any benefit is to devote

it in our hearts to the glory of that God of whom we ask it. *v. 11.*

It is often found, that those which are themselves conscionable, are too forward to the censuring of others. *v. 14.*

Guiltiness is commonly clamorous and impatient; whereas innocence is silent, and careless of misreports. *v. 15.*

It is natural to all to wipe off aspersions of evil; but none do it with such violence as they who are faulty.

Even the best may err, but not persist in it. (*v. 17.*) When good natures have offended, they are unquiet till they have hastened satisfaction.

Wherefore serves the priest, but to sacrifice for the people? The best sacrifices are the prayers of faith. *Ib.*

The conscience may rest well, when it tells us that we have neglected no means of redressing our affliction; for then it may look either for amendment or patience. *v. 18.*

That journey cannot hope to prosper, that takes not God with it. (*v. 19.*) The way to receive blessings at home is to be devout at the temple.

God will rather work miracles, than faithful prayers shall return empty. *v. 20.*

That wise Disposer of all things knows it fit

to hold us short of those favours that we sue for; whether for the trial of our patience, or the exercise of our faith, or the increase of our importunity, or the doubling of our obligation. *Compare v. 5, with 20.*

There is no necessity of significant names; but we cannot have too many monitors to put us in mind of our duty. *v. 20.*

If the wife be a vine, the husband should be an elm, to uphold her in all worthy enterprises, lest she fall to the ground, and prove fruitless. *v. 22, 23.*

God knows how to dispense with necessities; but if we suffer idle and needless occasions to hold us from the tabernacle of God, our hearts are but hollow to Religion. *Ib.*

Those hearts which are truly thankful, do no less rejoice in repayment than in their receipt; and do as much study how to shew their humble and fervent affections for what they have, as how to compass favours when they want them. *v. 24.*

The obligation of a secret vow is no less than if it had ten thousand witnesses. *v. 25—28.*

We are unprofitable witnesses of the mercies of God, and the graces of men, if we do not glorify Him for others' sakes, no less than for our own. *v. 28.*

There is no so certain way of increase, as to lend or give to the Owner of all things. *1 Sam. ii. 21.*

If the conveyance of grace were natural, holy parents would not be so ill suited with children. *v. 12.*

If our children be good, let us thank God for it ; this is more than we could give them : if evil, they may thank us and themselves ; us for their birth-sin, themselves for the improvement of it to the height of wickedness.

If they which serve at the altar degenerate, their wickedness is so much more than others', as their place is holier. *Ib.*

There can no offence be justly taken, even at men, much less at God, for the sake of men. (*v. 17.*) No man's sins should bring the service of God into dislike : it is a dangerous ignorance not to distinguish between the work and the instrument.

It often falls out that we fall out with God, because we find cause of offence from men ; and give God just cause to abhor us, because we abhor his service unjustly. *Ib.*

Complaints are long muttered of the great, before they dare break out into open contestation. Public accusations of authority argue intolerable extremities of evil. *v. 22.*

In vain do we rebuke those sins abroad, which we tolerate at home. *v. 23, 24.*

As it is with ill humours, that a weak dose doth but stir and anger them, not purge them out; so it fareth with sins: an easy reproof doth but encourage wickedness, and makes it think itself slight as that censure importeth. *Ib.*

A vehement rebuke to a capital evil is but like a strong shower to a ripe field, which lays that corn that were worthy of a sickle. *Ib.*

It is a breach of justice not to proportionate the punishment to the offence: of the two extremes, rigour is more safe for the public weal, because the over-punishing of one offender frights many from sinning. *Ib.*

It is better to live in a common-wealth where nothing is lawful, than where every thing. *Ib.*

Indulgent parents are cruel to themselves and their posterity. (*v. 25.*) Parents need no other means to make themselves miserable, than sparing the rod.

It is not the manner of God to grace the unworthy. *1 Sam. iii. 1. See also ii. 12.*

God ever loves to prepare his servants for his employments, and will not commit his errands but to those whom He addresseth. *v. 3—10.*

God begins early to season their hearts with fear, whom he means to make eminent instruments of his glory. *v. 11—14.*

It is the mercy of God to make us witnesses of the judgments of others, that we may be forewarned, ere we have the occasions of sinning. *Ib.*

No wise man will be hasty to bring ill tidings to the great. *v. 15.*

Guiltiness needs no prophet to assure it of punishment. *v. 17.*

The mind that is troubled projecteth terrible things; and though it cannot single out the judgment allotted to it, yet it is in a confused expectation of some grievous evil. *Ib.*

Every man can open his hand to God while He blesses; but to expose ourselves willingly to the afflicting hand of our Maker, and to kneel to Him while He scourges us, is peculiar only to the faithful. *v. 18.*

We may not measure the displeasure of God by his stripes: many times, after the remission of the sin, the very chastisements of the Almighty are deadly. *1 Sam. iv. 18.*

No repentance can assure us, that we shall not smart with outward afflictions. (*Ib.*) Our care and suit must be, that the evils which shall not be averted, may be sanctified.

Vain men are transported with a confidence in the outside of religion, not regarding the substance and soul of it, which only can give them true peace. *v. 3.*

Presumption doth the same in wicked men which faith doth in the holiest: those that regard not the God of the ark, think themselves safe and happy in the ark of God. *Ib.*

Ill news doth ever either run or fly. *v. 12.*

Who can chuse but think he hath lived too long, that hath outlived the testimonies of God's presence with his Church? *v. 15.*

Not outward magnificence, not state, not wealth, not the favour of the mighty, but the presence of God, in his ordinances, is the glory of Israel. *v. 21.*

It is just with God that those who want grace shall want wit too. *1 Sam. v. 3.*

Wicked men are upon all occasions, glad to be rid of God, but they can with no patience endure to part with their sins; and while they are weary of the hand that punisheth, they hold fast the cause of their punishment. *v. 8, 9.*

The justice of God can make the sins of men their mutual executioners: it is the fashion of wicked men to draw their neighbours into the partnership of their condemnation. *v. 10—12.*

The best of God's ordinances, if they be not

proper to us, are deadly. (*Ib.*) Spiritual things are either sovereign or hurtful, according to the disposition of the receivers.

God knows how to bring the stubbornest enemy upon his knees, and makes him do that out of fear, which his best child would do out of love and duty. 1 *Sam.* vi. 2.

It is happy that God hath such store of plagues and thunderbolts for the wicked: else He would want obedience, and the world peace. *v.* 6.

There are times wherein God withdraws himself from his Church, and seems to leave her without comfort, without protection. *v.* 1.

It were wide with the faithful, if God were not oftentimes with them, when there is no witness of his presence.

Foolish men will be struggling with God till they be utterly either breathless or impotent. *v.* 6.

The false hopes of worldly men cost them dear: they could not be so miserable, if their own hearts did not deceive them with the expectation of impossible favours. *v.* 6.

Nature itself sends us, in divine things, to those persons whose calling is divine. *v.* 2.

It is either distrust, or presumption, or contempt, that carries us our own way in spiritual matters, without advising with them whose



lips God hath appointed to preserve knowledge. *Ib.*

Nothing hinders, but that sometimes good advice may fall from the mouth of wicked men. *v. 3—9.*

Superstition is the ape of true devotion ; and if we look not to the ground of both, it is hard, many times, to distinguish them by the outward acts. *Ib.*

Nature itself teacheth us that God loves a full hand : He that hath been so bountiful as to give us all, looks for a return of some offering from us. *v. 3.*

The sacrifices under the Gospel are spiritual ; with these must we come into the presence of God, if we desire to carry away remission and favour.

Pagans can teach us how unsafe it is to walk in the ways of religion without a guide : (*v. 2.*) with what security may we consult with them who have their directions from the mouth and hand of the Almighty !

God knows no persons in the execution of his judgments. *v. 4.*

The least and meanest of all God's creatures is sufficient to be the revenger of his Creator. *Ib.*

In a multitude it is ever seen, as in a beast ; the body follows the head. *Ib.*

Of all others, great men had need look to their ways: it is in them as in figures, one stands for a thousand. *Ib.*

Every soul must satisfy God, if not in itself, yet in Him in whom we are both one and absolute: we are the body, whereof Christ is the Head: our sin is in ourselves, our satisfaction must be in Him. *Ib.*

All religions have afforded them that could speak well. *v. 3—9.*

Oftentimes even one word bewrayeth a whole pack of falsehood; and though superstition be a cleanly counterfeit, yet some one slip of the tongue discovers it: as we say of devils, which though they put on fair forms, yet are known by their cloven feet. *v. 5.*

There is a special providence of God in the very motions of brute creatures: they do the will of their Maker: every act that is done either by them or to them, makes up the decree of the Almighty. *v. 12.*

It is hard not to overjoy in a sudden prosperity; and to use happiness is no less difficult than to forbear it. *v. 13 and 19.*

Nature is too subject to extremities; and is ever either too dull in want, or wanton in fruition: it is no easy matter to keep a mean, whether in good or evil. *Ib.*

It is not a following act of devotion that can

make amends for a former sin : death is owing immediately upon an offence ; but God will take his own time for the execution. *v. 19.*

Many a heart is lifted up in a conceit of joy, when it hath just cause of humiliation. *Ib.*

It is a fearful thing to use the holy ordinances of God with an unreverent boldness. (*Ib.*) Fear and trembling become us in our access to the Majesty of the Almighty.

It is the fashion of natural men to justify themselves in their own courses : if they cannot charge any earthly thing with the blame of their suffering, they will cast it on heaven. *v. 20.*

That a man pleads himself guilty of his own wrong, is no common work of God's Spirit.

Where there is a misconceit of God, it is no marvel if there be a defect of charity. *v. 21.*

It is no boot to teach nature how to tell her own tale : smart and danger will make a man witty. (*Ib.*) He is rarely constant that will not dissemble for ease.

It is good to be suspicious of the evasions of those which would put off misery.

God's children cannot by any means be discouraged from their honour and love to his ordinances. (1 *Sam.* vii. 1.) If their Saviour be a rock of offence, and the occasion of falling, to millions in Israel, they can feed tem-

perately of that whereof others have suffered to death.

The mercies of God draw more tears from his children, than his judgments do from his enemies. (*v. 2.*) There is no better sign of good nature or grace, than to be won to repentance with kindness.

Not to think of God except we be beaten into it, is servile.

It is great wisdom, in spiritual matters, to take occasion by the forelock, and to strike while the iron is hot. *v. 3.*

The trial of sincerity is the abandoning of our wonted sins. (*Ib.*) God will never acknowledge any convert, that stays in a known sin.

Graces and virtues are so linked together that he who hath one hath all. (*v. 2, and 4.*) The partial conversion of men unto God is but hateful hypocrisy.

It is not more necessary for men to be cheered with hopes, than to be awed with dangers. *v. 3.*

Where God intends the humiliation of his servants, there shall not want means of their dejection. *Ib.*

No warnings will serve obdurate hearts: wicked men are even ambitious of destruction.

Judgments need not go to find them out: they run to meet their bane. *v. 7.*

Boldness and fear are commonly misplaced in the best hearts: when we should tremble we are confident; and when we should be assured we tremble. (*v. 7, 8.*) Nothing should affright those who are upright with God.

In temporal things nothing hinders but we may fare better for other men's faith, than for our own. (*v. 8.*) It is no small happiness to be interested in them who are favourites in the court of heaven.

A good heart is easily won to devotion. *v. 9.*

If presumption did not make wicked men mad, they would never lift their hand against the Almighty. (*v. 10.*) What are they in his hands, when He is disposed to vengeance!

God doth not use to put off his old servants: their age endears them to Him: if we be not unfaithful to Him, He cannot be unconstant to us. *1 Sam. viii. 1, and 5.*

God will let us find that grace is by gift, not by inheritance. *v. 3.*

That monarchy is the best form of government there is no question; but good things may be ill desired. *v. 5—7.*

Where there is a settled course of good government, however blemished with some weak-

nesses, it is not safe to be over-forward to a change, though it should be for the better. *v. 10—18.*

God hath not appointed, to every time and place, such forms as are simply best in themselves; but those which are best to them unto whom they are appointed.

Wilful men are blind to all dangers, are deaf to all good counsels. *v. 19, 20.*

There is no readier way to error, than to make others examples the rule of our desires or actions. (*v. 20.*) If every man have not grounds of his own whereon to stand, there can be no stability in his resolutions or proceedings.

When men are carried with outward shews, it is a sign God means them a delusion. *1 Sam. ix. 2.*

Little can we, by the beginning of any action, guess at God's intention in the conclusion. *v. 3.*

Obedience was a fit entrance into sovereignty. (*Ib.*) The disobedient and scornful are good for nothing: they are fit neither to be subjects nor governors.

He that was afterward an ill king approved himself a good son: (*v. 3—5.*) it is no arguing from private virtues to public; from dexterity in one station to the rest.

A several grace belongs to the particular carriage of every place whereto we are called, which if we want, the place may well want us.

A blind obedience in some cases doth well ; but it doth far better when it is led with the eyes of discretion ; otherwise we may more offend in pleasing than in disobeying. *v. 5.*

Great is the benefit of a wise and religious attendant : such an one puts us into those duties and actions which are most expedient and least thought of. *v. 6—8.*

God's prophets are public persons : as their function, so their notice concerns every man. (*Ib.*) There is no reason God should abate any of the respect due to his ministers under the Gospel.

Thankfulness is not measured of good men by the weight, but by the will of the retribution. (*v. 8.*) How much more will God accept the small offerings of his weak servants, when He sees them proceed from great love !

Those that live within the sunshine of religion cannot but be somewhat coloured by the beams. *v. 12, 13.*

Where there is practice and example of piety in the better sort, there will be a reflection of it upon the meanest. *Ib.*

It is no small benefit to live in religious

and holy places : we shall be much to blame, if all goodness fall beside us. *Ib.*

The body may eat and drink with contentment, when the soul hath been first fed, and hath first feasted the Maker of both. *v. 13.*

It is an unmannerly godlessness to take God's creatures without the leave of their Maker ; and well may God withhold his blessing from them who have not the grace to ask it. *Ib.*

Every Christian may sanctify his own meat : but where they are present that are peculiarly sanctified to God, this service is fittest for them. *Ib.*

It is commendable to teach children the practice of thanksgiving ; but the best is ever the most meet to bless our tables, and those especially whose office it is to offer our prayers to God. *Ib.*

The over-ruling hand of the Almighty works us insensibly, and all our affairs, to his own secret determinations ; so as, while we think to do our own will, we do his. *v. 18.*

Our own intentions we may know ; God's purposes we know not : we must go the way we are called, let Him lead us to what end He pleaseth. *Ib.*

It is our duty to resign ourselves and our ways to the disposition of God, and patiently



and thankfully to wait the issue of his decrees.  
*v. 21.*

It is one of the greatest praises of God's wisdom, that He can turn the evil of men to his own glory: advancement is not always a sign of love, either to the man or to the place. *v. 20. See viii. 11—18.*

Some men God raiseth up in judgment, that they may fall the more uneasily: there are none so miserable as those that are great and evil. *Ib.*

There is an affable familiarity that becometh greatness. It is not good for eminent persons to stand always upon the height of their state.  
*v. 19.*

Wise and holy men, as they are not ambitious of their own burthen, so they are not unwilling to be eased, when God pleaseth to discharge them. *v. 20.*

They make an idol of honour, who are troubled with their own freedom, or grudge at the promotion of others. *Ib.*

That is not ever the best and fattest which God chuseth; but that which God chuseth is ever the fittest. *v. 21.*

The strength or weakness of means is neither spur nor bridle to the determinate choice of God: yea, rather, He holds it the greatest proof of his freedom and omnipotence to advance the unlikeliest. *Ib.*

Fair beginnings are no sound proof of our proceeding and ending well: they that be good bear more fruit in their age.

The calling of God never leaves a man unchanged: neither did God ever employ any man in his service, whom He did not enable to do the work He set him. *1 Sam. x. 9.*

It is no marvel if princes excel the vulgar in gifts, no less than in dignity: (*v. 10.*) their crowns and their hearts are both in one and the same hand.

When once we know God's decree, in vain shall we strive against it; (*v. 22.*) before we know it, it is indifferent for us to work to the likeliest.

Honour is heavy when it comes upon the best terms: how should it be otherwise when all men's cares are cast upon one?

The quietest throne is full of cares, but the perplexed of dangers.

How easy it is for us to mistake our own estates! to rejoice in that which we shall find the just cause of our humiliation. *v. 24.*

The end of a thing is better than the beginning: the safest way is to reserve our joy till we have good proof of the worthiness and fitness of the object. *Ib.*

What are we the better for having a blessing, if we know not how to use it? *v. 25.*

There are reciprocal respects of princes and people, which if they be not observed, government languisheth into confusion. *Ib.*

Earthly monarchs must walk by a rule which if they transgress, they shall be accountable to Him that is higher than the highest, who hath deputed them. *Ib.*

There was never yet any man to whom some took not exception. *v. 27.*

Mal-contents will rather devise than want cause of flying out; and rather than fail, the universal approbation of others is ground enough of their dislike. *Ib.*

It is a vain ambition of those that would be loved of all. *Ib.*

The Spirit of God, when He enjoins us peace, adds withall, "if it be possible;" and favour is more than peace. A man's comfort must be in himself, the conscience of deserving well.

Nothing but grace can teach us to make use of others' judgments. *1 Sam. xi. 1. 11.*

The enemies of God's Church cannot be so malicious as they would, cannot approve themselves so malicious as they are. *v. 2. 11.*

Evils are easily grieved for, not easily redressed. *v. 4.*

When God hath any exploit to perform, He raiseth up the heart of some chosen instrument

with heroical notions for the achievement : (v. 6.) when all hearts are cold and dead, it is a sign of intended destruction.

As in God, so in his deputies, mercy and justice should be inseparable. v. 12, 13.

It is no praise of mercy, since it is a fault in justice, to remit another man's satisfaction : our own we may. *Ib.*

Every one can be a friend to him that prospereth. v. 12—15.

God will not let his people run away with the arrears of their sins, but when they least think of it, calls them to an account. (1 Sam. xii. 1—19.) God may be angry enough with us while we outwardly prosper.

When we begin to be past the feeling of our sin, we may begin to feel God's displeasure for our sins : where He loves, He would both forgive and reclaim. *Ib.*

Where God intends utter vengeance, He lets men harden themselves to a reprobate senselessness, and make up their own measure without contradiction, as purposing to reckon with them but once, for ever !

Discretion in the choice of seasons for re-proving, is no less commendable and necessary, than zeal and faithfulness in re-proving. Wise mariners do not hoist sails in every wind.

He that will cast a stone at an offender must be free himself. *v. 1—5.*

The conscience stops the mouth of the guilty man, and chokes him with that sin which lies in his own breast.

A man's heart can best judge of himself: others can best judge of his actions. *Ib.*

Happy is that man that can be acquitted by himself in private, in public by others, by God in both. *Ib.*

It is very safe for a man to look into himself by others' eyes. *Ib.*

In vain shall a man's heart absolve him who is condemned by his actions.

How happy a thing is it for a man to be his own friend and patron: he needs not fear foreign broils who is at peace at home.

A good conscience will make a man undauntedly confident, and dare put him upon any trial: where his own heart strikes him not, it bids him challenge all the world, and take up all comers.

He that hath a false and foul heart lies at every man's mercy, lives slavishly, and is fain to daub up a rotten peace with the basest conditions.

Perfect gold will be but the purer with trying; whereas falsehood, being a work of dark.

ness, loves darkness, and therefore seeks where it may work closest.

Innocency and uprightness become every man well; but most public persons, who shall else be obnoxious to every offender.

The throne and the pulpit, of all places, call for holiness; no more for example of good, than for liberty of controlling evil.

The sins of our teachers are the teachers of sin: the sins of governors do both command and countenance evil.

That is not accounted of God done, which is not lawfully done. *1 Sam. xiii. 11—14.*

Both enmity and safeguard are from heaven; it is the surest policy always to have peace with God.

Goodness hath ever been a stronger guard than valour.

No Israelite but hath some cowardly blood in him: if we had no fear, faith would have no mastery. *v. 6, 7.*

Doubt and resolution are not meet measures of our success: a presumptuous confidence goes commonly bleeding home; when an humble fear returns in triumph. *v. 5—7.*

Where the temporal and spiritual state combine not together, there can follow nothing but distraction in the people.

Those governors that would command the hearts of men, must shew them God in their faces. *v. 8.*

Hypocrites rest only in formalities : if the outward act be done, it sufficeth them, though the ground be distrust, the manner irreverence, the carriage presumption. *v. 9, 10.*

Our faith is most commendable in the last act : it is no praise to hold out until we are hard driven. Then, when we are forsaken of means, to live by faith in our God, is worthy of a crown. *Ib.*

God will have no worship of our devising : we may only do what He bids us. *Ib.*

Never did any true piety arise out of the corrupt puddle of man's brain : if it flow not from heaven, it is odious to heaven. *Ib.*

There is no sin that hath not its ground in unbelief. (*Ib*) Man could not sin if he distrusted not.

It is the ordinary course of God to prove us by delays, and to drive us to exigencies, that we may shew what we are. *v. 8—10.*

There must be discretion, there may not be partiality in our censures of the greatest. God makes difference of sins, none of persons : if we make difference of sins, according to persons, we are unfaithful both to God and man. *v. 11—14.*

Our sins strip us not of our hopes in heaven only, but of our earthly blessings. The way to entail a comfortable prosperity upon our seed after us, is our conscionable obedience to God. *v. 14.*

As hope is the mother of fortitude, so nothing doth more breed cowardliness than despair: every thing dismays that heart which God hath put out of protection. *1 Sam. xiv. 2.*

That man's faith is well underlaid, that upholds itself upon the omnipotency of God. *v. 6.*

There can be no faith where there is no promise; and where there is a promise, there can be no presumption. *v. 10.*

The disposition of our words is from the Providence of Almighty God. *v. 12.*

If wicked men say, Our tongues are our own, they could not say so, but from Him whom they defy in saying so, and who makes their tongue their executioner.

If difficulties discourage us, we shall but climb to fall. *v. 13.*

We cannot be sure to be friends among ourselves while God is our enemy. *v. 16.*

Hypocrites, while they have leisure, will perhaps be holy. *v. 18.*

Worldly minds regard holy duties no farther than they may stand with their own carnal pur-



poses. (*v.* 19.) Very easy occasions shall interrupt them in their religious intentions.

Hypocrisy is ever marked with a blind and thankless zeal. *v.* 24.

The voluntary services of hypocrites are many times more painful than the duties enjoined by God. *Ib.*

A rash vow is seldom ever free from inconvenience. The heart that hath unnecessarily entangled itself draws mischief either upon itself or others. *v.* 24—27.

Sooner will an hypocrite find out another man's sin than his own. *v.* 38.

Even the prayers of wicked men are sometimes heard, though in justice, not in mercy. *v.* 41.

Vows rashly made may not be rashly broken. *v.* 44.

What shall become of those who may know the charge of their Heavenly Father, and will not! which do know his charge, and will not keep it! Affectation of ignorance and willing disobedience are desperate. *Ib.*

He whose anger to the vessels of wrath is everlasting, even in temporal judgment revengeth late. *1 Sam.* xv. 2, 3.

We may lay up wrath for our posterity. *Ib.*

He that thinks, because punishment is deferred, that God hath forgiven or forgotten his

offence, is unacquainted with justice, and knows not that time makes no difference in eternity. *Ib.*

Malicious wickednesses, of all others, as they are in greatest opposition to the goodness and mercy of God, shall be sure of the payment of greatest revenge. *Ib.*

Sins of infirmity do but mutter; spiteful sins cry loud for judgment in the ears of God.

It is the manner of God first to separate before He judges; as a good husbandman weeds his corn ere it be ripe for the sickle. (*v. 6.*) Why should not we separate ourselves, that we might not be judged?

Covetousness or mis-affection is commonly guilty of the impurity of those which are at once more eminent in dignity and in offence. *v. 8.*

To sacrifice disobediently is wilfully to mock God in honouring him. *v. 14, 15.*

Wicked men, while they think by carnal means to make their peace, plunge themselves deeper into misery. *v. 27—29.*

It is an unnatural senselessness not to be affected with the dangers, the sins of our governors. *v. 35.*

Even the best of God's saints want not their infirmities. *1 Sam. xvi. 2.*

It is not to be expected that the most faithful hearts should be always in an equal height of resolution. *Ib.*

We are not only allowed but commanded to be innocently serpentine. *Ib.* See also *Matth.* x. 16.

Every important action requires a sacrifice to bless it; much more that act which imports the whole church or commonwealth. *v.* 5.

It is a good thing to stand in awe of God's messengers, and to hold good terms with them upon all occasions. *v.* 4.

We may not presume to sacrifice unto God unsanctified: this were to mar an holy act, and to make ourselves more profane, by profaning that which should be holy. *v.* 5.

Even the holiest prophet, when he goes without God, runs into error: the best judgment is subject to deceit. *v.* 6, 7.

Our eyes can be led by nothing but signs and appearances, and those have commonly in them either a true falsehood or an uncertain truth. *Ib.*

Even the worst spirits have not only permission, but commission from heaven, for the infliction of judgments. *v.* 14, 15.

Where the Almighty purposes an advancement, obscurity can be no prejudice: small

means shall set forward that which God hath decreed. *v. 18.*

The Giver of all graces hath so placed his favours, that the greatest enemies of goodness shall see somewhat in the holiest men that they shall affect, and for which they shall honour the persons of them whose virtues they dislike. *v. 21, 22.*

A good heart hath learned to frame itself unto all conditions, and can change estates without change of disposition. (1 *Sam. xvii. 15*) The worldly mind can rise easily, but, when it is once up, knows not how to descend either with patience or safety.

Carnal hearts are carried away with presumption of their own abilities; and, not finding matches to themselves in outward appearance, insult over the supposed impotency of others. *v. 8—10.*

Insolence and self-confidence argue the heart to be nothing but a lump of proud flesh.

We cannot challenge men, and not challenge God, who both takes vengeance and gives success.

Valour is not merely of nature: nature is ever like itself: by this rule he that is once valiant should never turn coward. *v. 11.*

We have no strength but what is given us:

and if the Author of all good gifts remit his hand for our humiliation, either we fight not, or are foiled.

Sometimes the same soul dare challenge all the powers of darkness, which otherwhile gives way to a temptation.

They who have not grace to believe can yet say, There is glory laid up for the faithful. *v. 25.*

While base hearts are moved by example, the want of example is encouragement enough for an heroic mind. *v. 32.*

It is quarrel enough among many towards a good action, that it is not their own. *v. 28.*

The hatred of brethren is so much more as their blood is nearer: the malice of strangers is simple; but of a brother is mixed with envy. *Ib.*

The more unnatural any quality is, the more extreme it is: a cold wind from the South is intolerable.

He is fit to be God's champion that hath learned to be a victor of himself. *v. 29.*

He whom the regard of others' envy can dismay, shall never do aught worthy of envy.

Never any man undertook an exploit of worth, and received not some discouragement in the way. *v. 33.*

No discouragement can weaken that heart which receives its strength from faith. *v.* 34—37.

Valour is never made good but by trial. *Ib.*

Experience of good success is no small comfort to the heart. *Ib.*

He that hath found God present in one extremity, may trust him in the next. *Ib.*

Every sensible favour of the Almighty invites both his gifts and our trust. *Ib.*

While others labour for outward fortification, happy and safe were we if we could labour for innocence. *v.* 39, 40.

It is not to be enquired how excellent any thing is, but how proper: those things which are helps to some, may be incumbrances to others. *v.* 38, 39.

If we could wish another man's honour, when we feel the weight of his cares we should be glad to be in our own coat. *Ib.*

Where the heart is armed with an assured confidence, a sling and a stone are weapons enough: (*v.* 40.) to the unbelieving no helps are sufficient.

The inward munition is so much more noble, because it is of proof for both soul and body: if we be furnished with this, how boldly shall we meet with the powers of darkness, and go away more than conquerors!

Faith gives both heart and arms. *v. 32 and 40.*

Seldom ever was there a good end of ostentation: presumption is at once the presage and the cause of ruin. *v. 44.*

It is a cold courage that stands only upon defence. *v. 48.*

Where there is power or possibility of nature, God uses not to work miracles, but chuses the way that lies most open to his purposes. *v. 49. Compare v. 4—7.*

Nothing more honours God than the turning of wicked men's forces against themselves: there are none of his enemies but carry with them their own destruction. *v. 51.*

Similitude of dispositions and estates ties the fastest knots of affection. (*1 Sam. xviii. 1.*)  
A wise soul hath piercing eyes, and quickly discerns the likeness of itself in another.

Where God uniteth hearts, worldly respects are too weak to dissever them.

Honour shews the man; and if there be any blemishes of imperfection, they will be seen in the man that is unexpectedly lifted above his fellows. *v. 5 and 14.*

He is out of the danger of folly whom a speedy advancement leaveth wise. *Ib.*

We need not the torment of a worse spirit than envy. *v. 8, 9.*

Envy is blind to all objects, save other men's happiness. (*Ib.*) If the eyes of men could be contained within their own bounds, and not rove forth into comparisons, there could be no place for this vicious affection.

It is well for the innocent, that wicked men cannot keep their own counsel. *v. 11.*

Hatred and fear are ordinary companions. *v. 11, 12.*

There is never so much danger of the false-hearted, as when they make the fairest weather. *v. 17*

The purpose of any favour is more than the value of it. *v. 21.*

They that have the jaundice see all things yellow: so they who are overgrown with malicious passions think all men like themselves. *1 Sam. xix. 1.*

If we be not careful to observe good moods when we deal with the passionate, we may exasperate instead of reforming. *v. 4—6.*

Oft-times wicked mens judgments are forced to yield unto that truth, against which their affections maintain a rebellion. *Ib.*

If good thoughts look into a wicked heart, they stay not there: as they that like not their lodging are soon gone. *v. 6. 10.*

The flashes of lightning may be discerned in the darkest prisons.



The light that shines into an holy heart is constant, like that of the sun, which varies not his course for any sublunary occasions.

The bonds of matrimonial love are, and should be, stronger than those of nature. *v. 11—13.*

Treason is ever odious; but so much more in the marriage-bed, by how much the obligations are deeper.

Many a one hath come into God's house to carp, or scoff, or sleep, or gaze, and hath returned a convert. *v. 20, 21.*

Many men have had their mouths opened to prophesy unto others, whose hearts have been deaf to God. *v. 23.*

All hearts are in the hand of their Maker: how easy is it for Him who gave them their being to frame them to his own bent! *Ib.*

In vain are those professions of love which are not answered with action. *1 Sam. xx. 41, 42.*

A weak man's rules may be better than the best man's actions. *1 Sam. xxi. 2.*

God lets us see some blemishes in his holiest servants, that we may neither be too highly conceited of flesh and blood, nor too much dejected when we have been miscarried into sin. *Ib.*

Ceremonies must give place to substance.

God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. v. 6.  
*See also Matt. xii. 3, 4—7.*

Charity is the sum and the end of the law.  
*Ib. See Rom. xiii. 10.*

It may be a dangerous transgression of the law to observe the words, and neglect the scope of God.

It is good to take all occasions of renewing the remembrance of God's mercies to us, and our obligations to Him. v. 9.

Even He that knows the heart shuts his door upon none: how much less should we dare exclude any, who can only judge of the heart by the face. v. 7.

When we see our auditors before us, little do we know with what hearts they are there, or what use they will make of their pretended devotion. *Ib. Compare xxii. 9.*

Wicked purposes are easily checked, not easily broken off. 1 *Sam. xxiv. 1, 2.*

Sometimes we lie open to evils, and happy it is for us, that He only knows it, who pities instead of tempting us. v. 3.

How just is it with God, that those who seek mischief to others, find it to themselves. v. 4.

Those temptations are most powerful, which fetch their force from the pretence of a religious obedience. *Ib.*

There is nothing more dangerous than to

make construction of God's purposes out of eventual appearances. *Ib.*

Tender consciences are moved to regret at those actions which strong hearts pass over with a careless ease. (*v. 5.*) There is no less difference of consciences than of stomachs.

Every gracious heart is in some measure scrupulous, and finds more safety in fear than in presumption. *Ib.*

By how much that state is better where nothing is allowed, than where all things; by so much is the strict and timorous conscience better than the lawless.

There is good likelihood of that man who is at all scrupulous of his ways: but he who makes no bones of his actions is apparently hopeless.

There is no heart that sometime or other relents not. *v. 16—20.*

Let no man think himself the better for good motions: the praise and benefit of these guests is not in the receipt, but in the retention.

No charity binds us to a trust of those whom we have found faithless. *v. 22.*

A man that is weather-wise, though he find an abatement of the storm, yet will not stir from under his shelter, while he sees it thick in the wind.

A good prophet is the common treasure, wherein every gracious soul hath a share.

(1 *Sam.* xxv. 1.) That man hath a dry heart, who can part with God's prophet without tears.

Earthly possessions are not always accompanied with wit and grace. *v.* 3.

Virtue is not, like unto lands, inheritable. *Ib.*

Wealth in our matches should be as some grains or scruples in the balance, superadded to the gold of virtuous qualities, to weigh down the scales. *v.* 2, 3.

It is no measuring of men by the depth of the purse: our estimation must be led by their inward worth, which is not alterable by time, nor diminished with external conditions.

Even the best deservings may want: no man may be contemned for his necessity: perhaps he may be so much richer in grace, as he is poorer in estate. *v.* 4—11.

Our compassion or respect must be ruled according to the cause of another's misery.

It is no small benefit that we receive in a safe protection: well may we think our substance due, where we owe ourselves. *v.* 14—16.

Many a one speaks fair that means ill; but when the mouth speaks foul, it argues a corrupt heart. *v.* 10, 11.

If healing with good words be justly punishable, (*James* ii. 15, 16.) what torment is there for those that wound with evil.

It is a good disparagement that preserveth. (v. 25.) There is the same way to our peace in heaven : the way to escape judgment is to confess our own vileness.

A good heart is easily stayed from sinning, and is glad when it finds occasion to be crossed in ill purposes. v. 32, 33.

Good men think themselves happy, that since they had not the grace to deny sin, yet they have not the opportunity to accomplish it. *Ib.*

How should it encourage us to admonish our brethren, to see that if we prevail, we have blessings from them ; (*Ib.*) if we prevail not, yet we have blessings from God, and thanks of our own hearts.

Nothing is more plentiful, commonly, than a churl's feast. v. 36.

There is nothing wherein wisdom is more seen, than in a temperate use of prosperity. Excess is a true argument of folly. *Ib.*

A beast or a stone is as capable of good counsel as a drunkard. *Ib.*

It is just with God, that they who live without grace should die without comfort : neither can we expect better while we go on in our sins. v. 37, 38.

Our loving God is more angry with the wrongs done to his servants than themselves

can be; and knows how to punish that justly, which we could not undertake, without wronging God more than men have wronged us. *Ib.* See *Rom.* xii. 19.

None are so fit to be great, as those that can stoop lowest. *v.* 41.

Those marriages are well made, wherein virtues are matched, and happiness is mutual.

Good motions that fall into wicked hearts are like sparks falling upon wet tinder; lightsome for a time, but soon out. *1 Sam.* xxvi. 1. *Jer.* xxiv. 16—20.

How invincible is the charity and loyalty of an honest heart. *xxvi.* 9.

How shameful is our inequality of disposition to do good! We know we cannot miss of the reward of well-doing, and yet do it not. *v.* 21. 25.

The best faith is but like the twilight, mixed with some shades of darkness and infidelity. *1 Sam.* xxvii. 1.

We utterly mistake the greatest earthly holiness, if we exempt it from infirmities.

Much greatness doth but make a fairer mark for evil: there is true firmness and safety in mediocrity. *v.* 5.

It is no matter that we change our soil, if we change not our God: He will no where be wanting to us, if we can every where acknowledge Him. *v.* 6, 7.

It is hard for the best man to say how far he will be tempted. *v. 10.*

The true servants of God are in their places when they are in opposition to his enemies: profession of hostility becomes them better than leagues of amity. *1 Sam. xxix. 3.*

The common graces of God's children are able to attract love from the most obstinate enemies of goodness. *v. 6—9.*

That we see wicked men oppose themselves to some sins, there is neither marvel nor comfort in it. *1 Sam. xxviii. 3.*

If we quit not all sins, Satan will be content that we should either abandon or persecute some.

Where there is no place for holy fear, there will be place for the servile. *v. 5.*

Extremity of distress will send even the profanest man to God. (*v. 6.*) A forced piety is thankless and unprofitable.

It is unreasonable to hope to find God at our command when we would not be at his; to look that God should regard our voice in trouble, when we would not regard his in peace. *Ib.*

There cannot be a more fearful sign of a heart given up to a reprobate sense, than to cast itself wilfully into those sins which it hath vowed to detest. *v. 7. Compare v. 3.*

Foolish men give away their souls for nothing. *v. 15, 16.*

The itch of impertinent and unprofitable knowledge hath been the hereditary disease of all the sons of Adam and Eve. How many have perished to know that which hath procured their perishing. *Ib.*

How ambitious should we be to know those things, the knowledge whereof is eternal life!

Many an ill office are they put to who serve wicked masters. *v. 7.*

It is no small happiness to attend them from whom we may receive precepts and examples of virtue.

Honest actions never shame the doers. *v. 8.*

Such is the power of conscience, that even those who are most affected to evil are ashamed to be thought such as they desire to be. *Ib.*

It is no small advantage of justice, that it affrights sin, if it cannot be expelled. *v. 9.*

Could we forethink what our sin would cost us, we durst not but be innocent.

Hope of impunity draws on sin with boldness. (*v. 10.*) Were it not for the delusions of false promises, Satan should have no clients.

How ill doth it become us to give that counsel to others, whereof we have more need in our own persons. *v. 13.*

Well may lewd men be good preachers, when Satan himself can play the prophet. (*v. 15—19.*) There is at no time so much



danger of that evil spirit as when he speaks best.

Till we have sinned, Satan is a parasite: when we have sinned, he is a tyrant.

How much better it is serving that Master, who, when we are most dejected with the conscience of evil, heartens us with inward comfort, and speaks peace to the soul in the midst of tumult.

In vain is comfort expected from God, if we consult not with Him. 1 *Sam.* xxx. 7, 8.

When God's ministers and his ordinances are laid by as superfluous, there can be nothing but uncertainty of success, or certainty of mischief. *Ib.*

There is a mercy and care due to the most despicable piece of all humanity, wherein we cannot be wanting, without the offence, without the punishment of God. *v.* 11, 12.

Worldly wisdom teacheth us to sow small courtesies, where we may reap large benefits of recompence.

Wonderful is the providence of God, even over those that are not, in the nearest bonds, his own! *v.* 13.

It pleases God to extend his common favours to all his creatures; but in miraculous preservations He is still wont to have respect to his own. *v.* 15.

Destruction is never nearer than when security hath chased away fear. *v. 16.*

The mercy of our God forgets not to interchange our sorrows with joy, and the joy of the wicked with sorrow. *v. 16—19.*

How partial are we wont to be with our own causes; where self-love hath bred a quarrel, every man is subject to flatter his own case. *v. 21, 22.*

Those that represent God on earth should resemble Him in their proceedings. It is his mercy to measure us by our wiles, not by our abilities. *v. 23—25.*

Death is not partial: all dispositions, all merits, are alike to it: it is the common gate both to heaven and hell: we all pass that, ere our turning to either hand. *1 Sam. xxxi. 2.*

The best cannot be happy, but through their dissolution.

What metal are those men made of, that can suggest, or resolve, or attempt the violation of Majesty? *v. 4.*

Wicked men care more for the shame of the world, than the danger of their souls. *Ib. 5.*

There is no greater murderer than vain-glory.

Evil examples, especially of the great, never escape imitation. *v. 5.*

The case is deadly, when the prisoner breaks

the gaol, and will not stay for the delivery.  
*v. 4, 5.*

Such a close relation is there betwixt a prince and a subject, that the dishonour of either is inseparable from both. *v. 11—13.*

It is an unjust ingratitude in those men who can endure the disgrace of them under whose shelter they live.

## CHAPTER X.

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**H**ow safe and happy is the man, who is resolved to do nothing without God. *2 Sam. ii. 1.*

Many a one miscarries in the rash prosecution of a good quarrel, when the abettors of the worst part go away with victory. *v. 23.*

Self-love sometimes borrows the face of honest zeal. *2 Sam. iii. 7.*

Hypocrites make use of God for their own purposes, and care only to make divine authority a cover for their own designs. *v. 18.*

Nothing is more odious than to make Religion a stalking horse to policy.

The chief care of good princes must be the advancement of Religion: for what should the deputies of God rather do, than honour Him whom they represent? *2 Sam. vi. 1, 2.*

The best intention cannot excuse, much less warrant us, in unlawful actions. (*v. 6, 7.*) There is nothing more dangerous than to be our own carvers in matters of devotion.

Then only shall we make a right use of the

judgments of God upon others, when we shall fear them in ourselves. *v. 9.*

As it is not good to refrain from holy businesses, so it is worse to do them ill. *Ib.*

Awfulness is a safe interpreter of God's secret actions, and a wise guide of our own. *Ib.*

The God of Heaven will not receive any thing from men on free cost: He will pay liberally for his lodging. *v. 11.*

The view of God's favours upon the godly is no small encouragement to confidence and obedience. *v. 12.*

The sense of God's past displeasure doubles our care to please Him, and our joy in his recovered approbation. *v. 12—15.*

Those that think there is disgrace in the ephod, are far from the spirit of the man after God's own heart. *v. 14.*

Worldly hearts can see nothing in actions of zeal, but folly and madness: piety hath none but a distasteful relish to their palate. *v. 16. 20.*

Contumelies that are cast upon us in the cause of God, may safely be repaid. *v. 21.*

If we be meal-mouthed in the scorns of religion, we are not patient, but zeal-less. \

It is true love that outliving the person of a friend, is inherited of his seed. *2 Sam. ix. 1—7.*

Favours are wont so much more to affect us, as they are less expected by us. *v. 8.*

Humiliation is a right use of God's affliction. (*Ib.*) It is not for us to nourish the same spirits in our adverse estate, that we found in our highest prosperity.

There is no more certain way to glory and advancement, than a lowly dejection of ourselves. (*v. 9, 10.*) How will our gracious God lift up our heads unto true honour, before men and angels, if we can be sincerely humbled in his sight!

The falsehood of carnal men makes them unjustly suspicious of others. *2 Sam. x. 3.*

The freer a man is from vice himself, the more charitable he uses to be unto others.

It is just both with God and man, that they who know not how to take favours aright, should smart with judgments. *v. 7.*

Kindness repulsed, breaks forth into indignation: how much more when it is repaid with an injurious affront! *Ib.*

Even ill causes, once undertaken, must be upheld, although with blood. *v. 6.*

It is one of the mad principles of wickedness, that it is a weakness to relent, and rather to die than yield. *Ib.*

The tongue of a commander fights more than his hand. *v. 12.*

All valour is cowardice to that which is built upon Religion. *Ib.*

The industrious man hath no leisure to sin : the idle hath neither leisure nor power to avoid it. *2 Sam. xi. 1, 2.*

The earth stands still, and is all dregs : the heavens ever move, and are pure !

We have no reason to complain of the assiduity of work : the toil of action is answered by the benefit : if we did less we should suffer more.

There can be no safety to that soul where the senses are let loose. *v. 2—4.*

He is more than a man, whose heart is not led by his eyes : he is no regenerate man whose eyes are not restrained by his heart. *Ib.*

Eminent persons had need be careful of their demands : they sin by authority that are solicited by the mighty. *v. 4.*

Sin is not acted alone : if but one party be wise, both escape.

Let the mover be never so glorious, if he stir us to evil, he must be entertained with defiance. *See 2 Cor. xi. 14.*

As there are some acts wherein the hypocrite is a saint, so there are some wherein the greatest saint upon earth may be an hypocrite. *v. 6—15.*

Even the best actions are not always reasonable, much less the indifferent. *v. 11.*

Grace is stronger than wine. *v. 13.*

He knows not where to stay, that hath willingly slipped into a known wickedness. *Compare v. 4 and 14.*

Every gleam of earthly comfort can dry up the tears of worldly sorrow. *v. 26, 27.*

If God's best children have been sometimes suffered to sleep in a sin, at last He hath awakened them in a fright. *2 Sam. xii. 1—12.*

If any profession or state of life could have privileged from sin, the angels had not sinned in heaven, nor man in paradise. *v. 7, 8.*

We have open ears and quick tongues to the vices of others. How severe judges can we be to our very own crimes in others! How flattering parasites to another's crimes in ourselves! (*v. 5, 6.*) The life of doctrine is in application.

It is a treacherous flattery in divine errands to regard greatness. *v. 7.*

While we do well, God gives and says nothing; when we do ill, He casts his benefits in our teeth, that our shame may be so much the more, by how much our obligations have been greater. *v. 7, 8.*

The blessings of God, in our unworthy car-



riage, prove but the aggravations of sin and additions to judgment.

The greatest griefs are not most verbal. God cares not for phrases, but for affections. *v. 13.*

If we cannot be so good as we would, it is reason we should do God so much right as to say how evil we are.

It is strange to see how easily sin gets into the heart, how hardly it gets out of the mouth!

The tongue is so feed with self-love, that it is loth to give any verdict against the heart or hands.

Who would not accuse himself, to be acquitted of God?

Since we have sinned, why should we be niggardly of that action wherein we may at once give glory to God, and relief to our souls?

Where God hath forgiven, though He doth not punish, yet he may chastise; neither doth He always forbear correction where He remits revenge. (*v. 13, 14.*) So long as He smites us not as an angry Judge, we may endure to smart from Him as a loving Father.

There is no child that would be scourged, if he might escape for crying. *v. 16.*

If any means under heaven can avert judg-

ments, it is our prayers ; but it is not in the power of the strongest faith to preserve us from all afflictions. *v. 16—19.*

Till we know the determinations of the Almighty, it is free for us to strive in our prayers—to strive with Him, not against Him : when once we know them, it is our duty to sit down in silent submission. *v. 15—23.*

The grief that goes before an evil for remedy can hardly be too much ; but that which follows an evil past remedy cannot be too little. *Ib.*

Immoderate sorrow, for losses past hope of recovery, is more sullen than useful.

Where the father of a family brings sin home to the house, it is not easily swept out. *Compare 2 Sam. xii. with xiii. pass.*

Ordinary pleasures will not content those whom the conceit of greatness, youth, and ease, have let loose to their appetite. *2 Sam. xiii. 1—11.*

Ill advice is so much more dangerous, as the interest of the giver is more. *v. 3.*

There cannot be a more worthy improvement of friendship, than in a fervent opposition to the sins of them whom we profess to love.

Unlawful acts seek for secrecy : good meaning suspects nothing. *v. 9.*

If we could see the back of sinful pleasures,

ere we behold their face, our hearts could not but be forestalled with a just detestation. *v.* 14, 15.

Nothing is more unsafe to be trusted than the fair looks of a festered heart. *v.* 27, 28.

Happy is the man, that by an unfeigned repentance acquits his soul from his known evils, and improves the days of his peace to the prevention of future vengeance. *v.* 23—28.

Good eyes see light through the smallest chink. *2 Sam.* xiv. 1.

We love ourselves better than others, but we see others better than ourselves: whoso would perfectly know his own case, let him view it in another's person. *v.* 19—21.

The best of God's saints may be blinded with affection: but when they shall once see their errors, they are careful to correct them. *v.* 24.

It is equally the wisdom of parents to hide their hearts from their best children, and their faces from the ungracious. *Ib.*

Natural parents know not how to retain an everlasting anger against the fruit of their loins: (*v.* 33.) how much less shall the God of mercies be irreconcilably displeased with his own?

Great spirits will not rest content with a moderate prosperity. *2 Sam.* xv. 1—6.

An aspiring mind is ever impatient, and holds time itself an enemy, if it thrust itself betwixt the hope and the fruition.

Ambition is never but in travail, and finds no intermission of painful throes, till she have brought forth her abortive desires. How happy were we, if our affection could be so eager of spiritual and heavenly promotions!

Excess and novelty of expensive ostentation in public persons gives just cause to suspect either vanity or a plot. *Ib.*

Ambition is no niggard of her pains: seldom ever is good meaning so industrious! *v. 2.*

No music can be so sweet to the ears of the unstable multitude, as to hear well of themselves, ill of their governors. *v. 3.*

The more deformed any act is, the fairer vizard it still seeketh. *v. 7, 8.*

How easy is it to beguile harmless intentions. (*v. 11.*) Those that will suffer themselves to be carried with semblances of truth and faithfulness must needs be as far from safety as from innocence.

There is no small cruelty in the picking out of a time for mischief: that word would scarce gall at one season, which at another killeth. *2 Sam. xvi. 5—8.*

The same shaft flying with the wind pierces

deep, which, against it, can hardly find strength to stick upright.

It is the murder of the tongue to insult upon those whom God hath humbled, and to draw blood of that back which is yet blue from the hand of the Almighty.

The malice of base spirits sometimes carries them further than the courage of the valiant.

Honour and welfare are but flattering mirrors of men's affections.

Adversity will not deceive us, but will make a true report; as of our own powers, so of the dispositions of others.

This practice have wicked men learned of their master, to take the utmost advantage of our afflictions.

It is not possible that eminent persons should be free from imputations: innocence can no more protect them than power.

There are seasons wherein lawful motions are not fit to be cherished: anger doth not become a mourner: one passion at once is enough for the soul. *v. 10—12.*

Wicked men are never the freer from guilt or punishment, for that hand which the holy God hath in their offensive actions.

There can be none so strong motive of our

meeke submission to evils, as the acknowledgment of their original. *Ib.*

It is the advantage of great crosses that they swallow up the less. (*Ib.*) If we can therefore suffer because we have suffered, we have profited by our affliction.

A weak heart faints with every addition of succeeding trouble: the strong recollects itself, and is grown so skilful, that it bears off one mischief with another. *Ib.*

Hope doth not only uphold, but cheer up the heart, in the midst of sorrow. *v. 12.*

The retribution of temporal favours go but by peradventures; (*Ib.*) of eternal are certain and infallible: if we suffer we shall reign.

Evil natures grow presumptuous upon forbearance. (*v. 13.*) In good dispositions, injury unanswered grows weary of itself, and dies in a voluntary remorse.

The changes of worldly minds are thankless, since they are neither wrought out of conscience nor love, but only by slavish fear of just punishment. *2 Sam. xix. 18—20.*

Policy and grace are not always lodged under one roof. *2 Sam. xvi. 21.*

As it is with faces, so it is with counsel; that is fair that pleaseth. *2 Sam. xvii. 14.*

The acts of God must abate nothing of our's; rather must we labour, by doing that which He requireth, to further that which He decreeth. *v. 21, 22.*

Pride causes men both to misinterpret disgraces and to overrate them. *v. 23.*

Worldly wisdom is no protection from shame and ruin. *Ib.*

How preposterous is the care of idle worldlings, that prefer all other things to themselves; and, while they look at what they have in their coffers, forget what they have in their breasts!

If God takes with one hand, He gives with another: while his divine bounty serves us with good meat, though not in our own dishes, we have good reason to be thankful. *v. 27—29.*

Heaven shall want power, and earth means, before any of the household of faith shall want maintenance.

With honest hearts, all respects either of blood or friendship, cease in the case of treason. *2 Sam. xviii. 14.*

There is no enmity so dangerous as that which comes masked with love. (*2 Sam. xx. 9, 10.*) Thus spiritually deals the world with us: it kisses and stabs us at once: if it did

not embrace us with one hand, it could not murder us with the other.

Wicked politics care not so much for the commission of villainy as for the notice : smothered evils are as not done. *v. 9—12.*

So vast are the gorges of some consciences, that they can swallow the greatest crimes, and find no strain in the passage.

Surely the soul acknowledgeth no sex, neither is varied according to the outward frame. *v. 16—22.*

It is injurious to measure the act by the person, and not rather to esteem the person for the act.

The continuance of an affliction sendeth us to God, and calls upon us to ask for a reckoning ; (2 *Sam.* xxi. 1.) whereas, like men stricken in their sleep, a sudden blow rather astonisheth than teacheth us.

Never man smarted causelessly from the hand of divine justice. *Ib.*

Without inquiry we shall know nothing : upon enquiry, nothing shall be concealed from us that is fit for us to know. *Ib.*

The eminence of the person makes the offence more remarkable, to the eyes both of God and men. *Ib.*

Every sin hath a tongue ; but that of blood over-cries and drowns the rest. *Ib.*



Even when we think not of it, is the righteous Judge avenging our unrighteous vexations. *v. 2, 3.*

The measure we mete unto others is, with much equity, re-measured unto ourselves. *v. 5, 6.*

Good counsel is never the worse for the foul carriage: (*2 Sam. xxiv. 3.*) there are some dishes of which we may eat, even from sluttish hands.

The purpose of sin in a faithful man is odious, much more the resolution. *v. 4.*

That which authority may sin in commanding, is done of the inferior, not with safety only, but with praise. *Ib.*

It is possible for a sin to sojourn in the holiest soul as a stranger, but it shall not dwell there as an owner. *v. 10.*

God is more angered with a spiritual and immediate affront offered to his Majesty in our pride and false confidence in earthly things, than with a fleshly crime, though heinously seconded. *v. 11, 12. Compare 2 Sam. xii. 13.*

Humble confessions and devout penance cannot always avert temporal judgments. *v. 15.*

The better any man is, the more sensible he is of his own wretchedness. *v. 17.*

As in places, so in persons, it is not to

be heeded what they are, but what God will: that is worthiest which He is pleased to accept. *v. 18, 19.*

As unto dainty palates, so unto godly souls; that tastes sweetest which costs most. (*v. 24.*)  
It is an heartless piety that cares only to serve God cheap.

## CHAPTER XI.

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**T**HE holiest soul dwells not in an impregnable fort. *1 Kings i. 1.*

It is more than God owes us, if we receive comfort in those children whom we have overloved: the indulgence of parents at last pays them home in crosses. *v. 6.*

If we would not have God wanting to us, we may not we wanting to ourselves. (*v. 11—14.*) Honest policies do not misbecome the holiest prophets.

We are engaged, if we have promised; but if we have sworn, we are bound. *v. 17.*

Ever after the feast is ended comes the reckoning. *v. 41.*

Graceless courage were but the whetstone of tyranny. *1 Kings ii. 2, 3.*

If there be any thing that in our desires of the prosperous condition of our children, takes place of goodness, our hearts are not upright. *Ib.*

That happiness is built upon sand or ice, which is raised upon any foundation besides virtue.

Due punishment of malefactors is the debt of authority. *v. 5. 8, 9.*

Generous natures cannot be unthankful. *v. 7.*

The weaker vessels are commonly used in the most dangerous suggestions of evil. *v. 13—18.*

It is an injurious weakness to be drawn upon, by any respects, to the furtherance of faulty suits of unlawful actions. *Ib.*

No outward dignity can take away the rights and obligations of nature. *v. 19.*

In unfit supplications we are most heard when we are repelled. (*v. 20—24.*) Thus doth our God many times answer our prayers with merciful denials; and most blesseth us in crossing our desires.

No man can be entangled with general words against his own just and honest intentions. *Compare v. 20 and 23.*

The policies of wicked men befool them at last. *v. 25.*

Such honour have good princes given to the ministers of the sanctuary, that their very coat hath been defence enough against the sword of justice: (*v. 26.*) how much more should it be of proof against the contempt of base persons!

If God pays slowly, yet He pays sure:

(v. 27.) delay of certain punishment is neither any hindrance to his justice, nor any comfort to our miseries.

It is the fashion of our foolish presumption to look for protection, where we have not cared to yield obedience. v. 28.

The worst men would be glad to make use of God's ordinances for advantage. Necessity will drive the most profane and lawless man to God. *Ib.*

God hath no sanctuary for a wilful homicide.

How sweet is life, even to those who have been prodigal of the blood of others!

It is not in the power of all our deserts to buy off one sin.

It is a foolish niceness to put more shame in the doing of justice than in the violating of it. v. 34.

Blood is a restless suitor, and will not leave its clamouring for judgment, till the mouth be stopped with revenge.

The just God infatuates those whom He means to plague\*. v. 36—46.

Covetousness and presumption of impunity are the destruction of many a soul. v. 40.

Earthly things either are our servants, or

\* Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.

should be : how commonly do we see men run out of the bounds set by God's law, to hunt after them, till their souls incur a fearful judgment. *Ib.*

How wary had those men need to be, who are obnoxious ! *v. 41.*

Vengeance against rebels may sleep, it cannot die : a sure though late judgment attends those that dare lift up either their hand or tongue against the sacred persons of God's vicegerents. *v. 44.*

Such is the mercy of our God, that He will not suffer our well-meant weaknesses to bereave us of his favours : He pities rather than plagues us for the infirmities of upright hearts. *1 Kings iii. 3, 4.*

The night cannot but be happy, whose day hath been holy. (*v. 5.*) Well may we look to enjoy God when we have served Him.

The night follows the temper of the day : and the heart so useth to sleep as it wakes. *v. 6—9.*

As God hath no reason to give his best favours unasked, so hath He no will to withhold them where they are asked. *v. 10—14.*

So doth God love a good choice, that He recompenses it with overgiving. *Ib.*

God likes not to have his gifts lie dead, where He hath conferred them. *v. 16—28.*

Even pagans have their arts from heaven : how justly may we improve their graces to the service of the God of heaven. *1 Kings* v. 6.

Many a one works for the Church of God that hath yet no part in it.

Due respirations are requisite in the holiest acts. *v. 14.*

There is no man so mean but he may be some way useful to the house of God. (*v. 15.*) Even the services that are more homely are not less necessary.

Who can dishearten himself in the conscience of his own insufficiency, when he sees God can as well serve Himself of his labour as of his skill ?

God is not all for the eye : He pleaseth Himself with the hidden value of the living stones of his spiritual temple. *v. 17.*

How many noble graces of God's servants have been buried by obscurity, not discerned so much as by their own eyes !

Hypocrites regard nothing but shew : God nothing but truth.

Whatever tumults are abroad, it is fit there should be all quietness and sweet concord in the Church. *1 Kings* vi. 7.

The mind that never doubts shall learn nothing : the mind that ever doubts shall never profit by learning. *1 Kings* x. 1—9.

It is not good to suffer doubts to dwell too long upon the heart; there may be good use of them as passengers, dangerous as inmates.

When we come to a rich treasure we need not be bidden to carry away what we are able. *v. 3.*

It is not good neglecting the opportunities of furnishing our souls with profitable and saving knowledge. *Ib.*

What use do we make of Solomon's Teacher, if sitting at the feet of Christ we leave our hearts either ignorant or perplexed?

How shameful is it to come always with close hands to them that teach us the great mysteries of salvation! *v. 2 and 10.*

There are some whose speeches are witty, while their carriage is weak; whose deeds are incongruities, while their words are apophthegms. It is not worth the name of wisdom, which may be heard only, and not seen. *v. 6, 7.*

Good discourse is but the froth of wisdom: the pure and solid substance of it is in well-framed actions.

It is not easy to conceive how great a blessing it is to live under those lips which do both preserve knowledge and utter it. *v. 8, 9.*

If we were not gluttoned with good counsel, we should find no relish in any worldly con-



tentment, in comparison hereof; but he that is full despiseth an honey-comb. *Ib.* See also *Prov.* xxvii. 7.

There is no earthly proof of God's love to a nation, comparable to the substitution of a wise and pious governor: to him we owe our peace, our life, and, which is deservedly dearer, the life of our souls, the *Gospel.* v. 9.

Affections are those feet of the soul, on which it either stands or falls. (*1 Kings* xi. 1, 2.) If one woman undid all mankind, what marvel is it if many women ruin one?

Satan has found this bait to take so well, that he never changed it since he crept into paradise.

All lies open, where the covenant is not both made with the eye, and kept.

Whoso lays the reins on the neck of his carnal appetite, cannot promise where he will rest.

It is not so much to be heeded how the soul is informed, as how it is disciplined: the light of knowledge doth well, but the due order of the affections doth better.

There can be no safety to that soul, where is not a strait curb upon the desires: if our lusts be not held under as slaves, they will rule as tyrants.

The ways of youth are steep and slippery,

wherein, as it is easy to fall, so it is commonly relieved with pity: but the wanton inordinations of age are not more unreasonable than odious.

There is no time wherein we can be safe, while we carry this body of sin about us: youth is impetuous, mid-age stubborn, old age weak, all dangerous.

Even our permission appropriates crimes to us: we need no more guiltiness of any sin than our willing toleration. *v. 7, 8.*

The multitude is ever prone to pick quarrels with their governors, and whom they feared alive, to censure dead. *1 Kings xii. 4.*

Many a life, many a soul, many a flourishing state, hath been ruined by undisciplined monitors. *v. 8—11.*

As sin is a punishment of sin, it is a part of justice: the Holy One of Israel doth not abhor to use even the grossest sins to his own just purposes. *v. 15.*

Shall we envy or be ashamed, to see how much the prophets of the Old Testament could do; how little those of the New? (*v. 24.*) If our commission be no less from the same God, the difference of success cannot go away unrevenged.

Satan is no less a counterfeit than an enemy

of God: he knows it is more easy to adulterate religion than to abolish it. *v. 28.*

Leaden priests are well fitted to golden deities. *v. 31.*

We are not worthy to profess ourselves servants of the True God, if we do not hold his service worthy of the best.

In vain shall we pretend to worship our God, if we grudge Him the just days and rites of his worship. *v. 32.*

The prophets of God go upon many a thankless errand: he is no messenger for God that fears the faces of men. *1 Kings xiii. 1—3.*

There is no opposition whereof we are so sensible as that of religion. *v. 4.*

Resolute wickedness is impatient of a reproof, and instead of yielding to the voice of God, rebelleth. *Ib.*

In extremities the worst men can be content to sue for favour, where they have spent their malice. *v. 6.*

We do no whit savour of heaven, if we have not learned to do good for evil. *Ib.*

No stone is more hard or insensate than a sinful heart: the changes of judgment and mercy do but obdure it instead of melting. *Compare v. 4, 6, 34.*

Many a one would be liberal of their purses,

if they might be allowed to be niggardly of their obedience. *v. 7.*

The surest way is to keep aloof from the infection of wickedness. *v. 8.*

Many a one hath had visions from God who shall never enjoy the vision of God. (*v. 18.*)  
A little holiness is worth much illumination.

There is no temptation so dangerous as that which comes shrouded under a veil of holiness, and pretends authority from God Himself. *Ib.*

Satan may affright us as a fiend, but seduces us as an angel of light. *Compare v. 7, 8, 9, with 18, 19.*

No pretences can warrant the transgression of a divine command. *v. 20—22.*

Violent deaths do not always argue the anger of God: even death itself is to his servants a fatherly castigation. *v. 24.*

It is hard to find a man absolutely wicked: some grace will bewray itself in the most forsaken breasts. *v. 29—32.*

Not simply the rod argues love, but the temper of the hand that wields it, and the back that feels it. *1 Kings xiv. 13.*

It is the property of a carnal heart to confine both his obligations and his hopes to the means, neglecting the Author of good. *v. 1—3.*

Vain is the respect that is given to the servant, where the master is contemned. *v. 7—12.*

There was never wicked man that was not infatuate, and in nothing more than in those things wherein he hoped most to transcend the reach of others. *v. 5, 6.*

What high favours doth God sometimes cast away upon unworthy subjects! How do his abused bounties double both their sin and judgment! *v. 7, 8.*

Sometimes God strikes in favour, but more often forbears out of severity: the best are fittest for heaven, the earth is fittest for the worst. *v. 13.*

It is fit the body should be duly respected on earth, whose soul is glorious in heaven.

Were not the children of good parents sometimes evil, and the children of evil parents good, virtue would seem natural, and the Giver lose his thanks. *1 Kings xv. 11.*

Nature is worthy of forgetfulness and contempt, in opposition to the God of Nature. *v. 13.*

If never any example could be pleaded for purity of religion, it is enough that the precept be express. *See Exod. xx. 3—6.*

Practice must be corrected by law, and not the law yield to practice.

It is a good sign of a well-meant devotion, when we can abide it chargeable; as contra-

rily, a niggardly hand argues a cold and hollow heart. *v. 15.*

God will not see weaknesses where He sees truth. (*v. 14.*) How pleasing a thing is sincerity, that, in favour thereof the mercy of our just God digests many an error.

We cannot easily put upon God a greater wrong than the alienation of our trust: earthly means are for use, not for confidence. *v. 18, 19.*

Man can only denounce what God will execute, which, when it is once revealed, can no more fail than the Almighty Himself. *1 Kings xvii. 1.*

We cannot command the sun with Joshua, nor the thunder with Samuel, nor the rain with Elijah: it shall content us if we can fix the sun of righteousness in the soul, if we can thunder out the judgments of God against sin, if we can water the earthen hearts of men with the former and latter rain of heavenly doctrine.

The wisdom of God doth not think fit to make a beaten path of miracles: He will have our own endeavours concur to our preservation. (*v. 3.*) He that wilfully stands still to catch dangers, tempteth God instead of trusting Him.

Let not our faith be wanting to Him, whose care can never be wanting to us. *v. 4.*

If we have wherewith to sustain nature,

though not to pamper it, we owe thanks to the Giver.

Nothing is more comfortable to God's children, than to see the sensible demonstrations of the divine care and providence.

It is no unusual thing with God to suffer his own dear children to be inwrapped in the common calamities of offenders. (*v. 7.*) He makes a difference in the use and issue of their stripes, not in the infliction. The corn is cut down with the weeds, but to a better purpose.

God's choice is not led in the string of human reasons: his holy will is the guide and the ground of all his elections. *v. 9.*

How opportunely hath God provided succours for our distresses! It is his glory to begin where we have given over; that our relief might be so much the more welcome, by how much it is less looked for. *v. 12—14.*

In all achievements the difficulty of the enterprize makes way for the glory of the actor. *v. 11—14.*

When can we hold ourselves secure from evil? No sooner is one of these serjeants compounded withal, than we are arrested by another. *v. 17.*

How ready are we to mistake the grounds of our afflictions, and to cast them upon false causes! *v. 18.*

What could we want if we did not slack to ply heaven with our prayers? *v. 21, 22.*

Even the strongest faith sometimes staggers, and needs new acts of heavenly support: (*v. 24.*) the end of miracles is the confirmation of truth.

The mercy of God is fain to provide new helps for our infirmities, and graciously condescends to our own terms, that He may work out our faith and salvation.

God holds the credit of his messengers precious, and neglects nothing that may grace them in the eyes of the world. *1 Kings xviii. 1. See xvii. 1.*

There is nothing in which God is more tender, than in proving the veracity of Himself in his ministers.

Policy and religion do as well together, as they do ill asunder: (*v. 4.*) religion without policy is too simple to be safe; policy without religion is too subtle to be good: their match makes themselves secure, and many happy.

Goodness commands confidence, where it cannot have imitation. *v. 5.*

Those that are truly gracious cannot be niggardly of their observances to the messengers of God. *v. 7.*

Many a hard plunge must that man needs



be driven to, who would hold his conscience together with the service of a tyrant. *v.* 9—14.

No earthly glory can daunt him who hath the clear and heartening visions of God. *v.* 18:

Foolish men are plagued for their offences; and it is no small part of their plague, that they see it not. *Ib.*

Nothing is more odious to God, than a profane neutrality in main oppositions to religion. *v.* 21. *See Rev.* iii. 14—16.

Hope holds up the head of our holy desires, and perseverance crowns them. *v.* 43, 44.

Neither scourges nor favours can work any thing with the obstinately wicked. *1 Kings* xix. 2.

To be always and unchangeably good, is proper only to the glorious spirits in heaven. *v.* 3, 4.

To call for death, out of a satiety of life, out of an impatience of suffering, is a weakness unbecoming a saint. *Ib.*

Grace is no enemy to good nature: well may the respects of our earthly parents stand with our duties to our Heavenly Father. *v.* 20.

There is no cause to fear that man who trusts in himself. *1 Kings* xx. 10—21.

Security is the certain usher of destruction.

(v. 16.) We have never so much cause to fear, as when we fear nothing.

Superstition infatuates the heart out of measure ; neither is there any fancy so absurd or monstrous, which credulous infidelity is not ready to entertain with applause. v. 23.

Riches and poverty are more in the heart than in the hand ; he is wealthy that is contented ; he is poor that wanteth more. 1 *Kings* xxi. 2—4.

There is no mischief so devilish, as that which is cloaked with piety : simulation of holiness doubleth a villainy. v. 9, 10.

Grief is not always a sign of grace. v. 27.

They that are truly religious dare not but take God with them in all their affairs. 1 *Kings* xxii. 7.

Neither fears nor favours can tempt the ho-lyly resolute : they can trample upon dangers and honours with a careless foot. v. 13.

The being of God is not more sure than his promises, than his sentences of judgment. v. 28.

## CHAPTER XII.

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**I**T is a strange thing to see how wilfully godless men strive against the stream of their own hearts, hating that which they know good, fighting against that which they know divine. *2 Kings i. 9.*

Deadly malice lurks under fair promises, and while it flatters killeth. *Ib.*

It is a just presage and desert of ruin, not to be warned: worthily are they made examples that will not take them. *v. 11, 12.*

We must deprecate that evil which we would avoid: if we would enforce blessings, we must entreat them. *v. 13, 14.*

Faith knows not how to fear, and can as easily contemn the suggestion of perils, as infidelity can raise them. *v. 15.*

It is not for an herald of heaven to be out of countenance, or to mince ought of the most killing messages of his God. *v. 16.*

As always in the other, so oft-times in this world, doth God testify his anger to wicked men. *Ib.*

Some live long that they may aggravate their judgment: others die soon, that they may hasten it. *v. 17.*

Seldom ever was any knowledge given to keep, but to impart: the grace of this rich jewel is lost in concealment. *2 Kings ii. 3, 5.*

God will not work wonders without witnesses, since He doth them on purpose to win glory to his name. *v. 7, 15.*

The mercy of our good God allows his favourites not only to receive but to give; not only to receive for themselves, but to convey blessings to others. *v. 10, and 19—22.*

We cannot be too covetous, too ambitious of spiritual gifts; such especially as may enable us to win most advantage to God in our vocations. *v. 9.*

Our wishes are the true touch-stone of our estate: such as we wish to be, we are. (*v. 9, 10.*) We cannot better know what we are indeed, than by what we would be.

Those that are truly gracious, do no less rejoice in the riches of others' gifts, than humbly undervalue their own. *v. 15.*

It is not to be regarded who the man is, but whom God would make him. *Ib. Compare 1 Kings xix. 19.*

Some men are best satisfied when they have

wearied themselves in their own ways : nothing will teach them wit, but disappointments. *v. 17.*

Our heart is a well of bitter and venomous water, our actions are the streams : in vain shall we cleanse our hands while our hearts are evil. *v. 21.*

Even in the most wicked families it pleaseth God to cast his most powerful restraints, that all are not equally vicious. *2 Kings iii. 2.*

Religion and necessity have both of them much power of humiliation : either zeal or need will make a prophet honoured. *v. 12.*

It is but right and equal, that those whom we have made the comfort and stay of our peace, should be the refuge of our extremity. *v. 13.*

It is in the power of one good man to oblige a world : we receive true, though insensible favours, from the presence of the righteous. *v. 14.*

Next to being good, it is happy to converse with them that are so : if we be not bettered by their example, we are blest by their protection. *Ib.*

God gives respect to his own hours, for the encouragement of our observation : if his wisdom hath set us any peculiar times, we cannot keep them without a blessing. *v. 20.*

Virtue and goodness can pay no debts. 2  
*Kings* iv. 1.

Grace can keep us from unthriftiness, not from want. *Ib.*

It is no small point of wisdom to know where to plant our lamentation; otherwise, instead of comfort, we may meet with scorn. *v.* 1—7.

The bounty of our God gives grace and glory according to the capacity of the receiver: when He ceases to infuse, it is for want of room in the heart. *v.* 6.

If we would walk surely, every action, every motion, must have a warrant. *v.* 7.

Those that are truly pious and devout, think their houses and their hands cannot be too open to the messengers of God. *v.* 8—10.

An ingenuous disposition cannot receive favours without thoughts of return. *v.* 12—17.

Among the worst of God's enemies, some are singled out for mercy. 2 *Kings* v. *passim.*

A small chink may serve to let in much light. *v.* 2, 3.

It is good to acquaint our children with the works of God, with the praises of his prophets. (*Ib.*) A child, a servant, a stranger, may say that which we may bless God to have heard.

True religion teaches us pious and charitable respects to our governors, though aliens from the commonwealth of God. *Ib.*

Great men are wanting to their own perfections, if they do not both know and exercise the graces of their inferiors. *v. 7, 8.*

He that would be a meet subject of mercy, must be thoroughly abased in his own conceit, and must be willingly pliable to all the conditions of his humiliation. *v. 13, 14.*

Folly and pride strive for place in a natural heart, and it is hard to say which is more predominant: no marvel if carnal minds despise the foolishness of preaching, the simplicity of sacraments, the homeliness of ceremonies, the seeming inefficacy of censures. *v. 10—12.*

It is the word, the ordinance of the Almighty, which puts efficacy into those means, which of themselves are both impotent and improbable. *v. 14.*

Dry and barren profession of our obligations, where there is power to requite, are unfit for noble and ingenuous spirits. *v. 15.*

There is much use of godly discretion in directing us when to open, when to shut our hands. *v. 16.*

It is not for us to expect a full stature in the cradle of conversion: as nature, so grace rises by many degrees to perfection. *v. 18.*

No examples, no counsels, will prevail with some hearts. *v. 20.*

Covetousness never lodged in the heart alone ; if it find not, it will breed wickedness. *v. 22.*

Bountiful minds are as zealous in over-paying good turns, as the niggardly are in scanting retributions. *v. 23.*

Whoso lets his tongue once loose to a wilful untruth, soon grows impudent in multiplying falsehoods. *v. 25.*

They shall be ill teachers of others, that have not learned both to want and to abound. *2 Kings vi. 1, 2.*

Honest minds are more careful of what they have by loan than by propriety. (*v. 5.*) In lending, there is a trust which a good heart cannot disappoint without vexation.

In doing some good to our enemies, we do most good to ourselves. *v. 23.*

Not many good turns are written in marble. *v. 24.*

Even the greatest powers must stoop to afflictions in themselves : how should they be able to prevent them in others? *v. 27.*

The worst man may grieve for his smart : only the good heart grieves for his offence. *v. 30.*

This is the fashion of the world : the lewd blame the innocent, and will revenge their own sins upon others' uprightness. *v. 31.*



To despair because God is just, to defy mercy because it lingers, to reject God for correction, is a presumptuous madness, an impious pettishness. *v. 33.*

God's deliverances may overstay our expectation, not the due period of his own counsels. *2 Kings vii. 1.*

It is a foolish and injurious infidelity to question a possibility, where we know the message is God's. *v. 2.*

Well is that man worthy to want the benefit which he will not believe: who can pity to see infidelity excluded from the blessings of earth, from the glory of heaven? *Ib.*

Nature teaches us that it is an injury to engross blessings, and so to mind the private, as if we had no relation to a community. *v. 9.*

Well may we fear a mischief upon ourselves, if we wilfully conceal blessings from others. *Ib.*

We cannot be too jealous of the intentions of an enemy. *v. 12.*

Faith exalts a man above his own sphere infidelity depresses him into the dust. *v. 17.*

The same goodness that relieves our necessity, leaves our competency to the hand of our own counsel: in the one He will make use of his own power, in the other, of our providence. *2 Kings viii. 1, 2. Compare 1 Kings xvii. 8—16.*

Sometimes the conveniences of the soul must yield to bodily necessities. *v. 2.*

Every where will God find room for his own. *Ib.*

Even the worst man doth so love himself, that he can be content to make a beneficial use of those instruments whose goodness he hateth. *v. 8. See vi. 13, 14.*

Wicked men are carried into those heights of impiety, which, in their good mood, they could not have possibly believed. *v. 13.*

What wonder is it that God's messengers are madmen to those, to whom the wisdom of God is foolishness? *2 Kings ix. 11.*

God gives a secret authority to his despised servants, so that they which hate their persons, yet reverence their truth. *v. 13.*

Secrecy is the safest guard of any design : disclosed projects are either frustrated or made needlessly difficult. *v. 15.*

That man means to speed, who can be at once reserved in his counsels, and resolute and quick in his performances. *v. 15, 16.*

Even while we know of no enemies, the watch-tower of due intelligence may not be empty. *v. 17.*

Face doth not more answer to face, than punishment to sin. *v. 25, 26.*

Extremity finds us such as our peace leaves

us: our last thoughts are spent upon that we most care for. *v. 30.*

Counterfeit beauty agrees well with inward uncleanness. *Ib.*

The holy severity of God, in the revenge of sin, sometimes goes so far, that our ignorance is ready to mistake it for cruelty. *2 Kings x. 7, 8.*

It is a blessing upon the plain-hearted, that they can be believed. *v. 15.*

Falsehood, though it be but tentative, is neither needed nor approved by the God of truth: if policy have allowed officious untruths, religion never. *v. 18, 19.*

A false heart may laudably quit itself of some one gross sin, and in the mean time hug some lesser evil that may condemn it. (*v. 29.*) We lose the thanks of all, if we wilfully fail in one.

A partial obedience may be rewarded with a temporal blessing, (*v. 30.*) but we can never have any comfortable assurance of an eternal retribution, if our hearts and ways be not perfect with God.

Mischief sometimes fails of those appointments, wherein it thinks to have made the surest work. (*2 Kings xi. 1, 2.*) God laughs in heaven at the plots of tyrants, and befools them in their deepest projects.

As the best man hath something in him

worthy of reproof, so the faultiest hath something commendable. *2 Kings* xiii. 14.

When we draw the curtains of those that are eminently gracious, we rather fetch than bring a blessing. *Ib.*

Even while we have the freest choice, we fall upon those actions and circumstances whereby the just and holy will of our God is brought about. Our very neglects, our ignorances, shall fulfil his eternal counsels. *v. 18, 19.*

## CHAPTER XIII.

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**T**HAT vessel can hardly miscarry, where a skilful steersman sits at the helm. (*2 Chron.* xxvi. 5.) The first praise of a good prince is to be judicious and just, and pious in himself; the next is, to give ear to them that are such.

God will be in no man's debt. *Ib.*

Outward munificence cannot stand firm, unless it be built upon providence and frugality. *v.* 10.

How easy is it for the best man to dote upon himself, and to be lifted up so high, as to lose sight both of the ground whence he rises, and of the hand that advanced him ! *v.* 16.

It is a dangerous indiscretion for a man not to know the bounds of his own calling. *Ib.*

Public offences must have open shame. *v.* 19.

There cannot be a more foolish misprision, than because we are great on earth, to think we may be bold with heaven. *Ib.*

It is a dangerous thing to put ourselves into the affairs, into the presence of God, unwar-

ranted : wilful offenders can expect nothing but a fearful revenge. *Ib.*

Superstition hath ever been more successful than truth : goodness, such our nature is, is not so apt to spread. *2 Chron. xxviii. 2.*

A man that is once fallen from truth, knows not where he shall stay. *v. 2, 3, 4.*

He that hath shamefully cast off the God of his fathers, cannot be long without a fearful revenge. *v. 5.*

Length of days is no true rule of God's favour : it is no news for the wickedly great to inherit these earthly glories longer than the best. *2 Chron. xxxiii. 1.*

If the cross bear us not to heaven, nothing can. (*v. 12, 13.*) Afflictions, how crabbed soever, are our best friends ; not indeed for our pleasure, but for our profit : their issue makes them worthy of a welcome.

No man that truly repents is refused ; (*Ib.*) but many a one sins so long that he cannot repent.

What cannot fervent prayers do, either for our rescuing from evil, or for our investing with good ! *Ib.*

If our prosperity and peace, and sweet experience of God's mercy can win us to acknowledge Him, it is more for our peace ; but if we

will needs be taught by stripes, it is no less for his glory. *Ib.*

True repentance begins by destroying those monuments of shame which former error had reared. (*v. 14—17.*) The true method of grace is, first, cease to do evil, then, learn to do well.

There is nothing but hypocrisy in that penitent, who, after all vows and tears, retains his old abominations.

No perfume is so pleasing to God, as that which is cast in by a penitent hand. *v. 16.*

After a common depravation of religion, it is hard to return to the first purity. *v. 17.*

A good pattern is no small help for young beginners. (*2 Chron. xxxiv. 3.*) Examples are the best rules for inexperience.

Never man laboured for the reparation of God's Church, but he met with a blessing more than he looked for. *v. 14, 15.*

A soft heart is the best tempered for God. *v. 19, 27.*

It is no holy sorrow that sends us not to God : it is a happy trouble that drives us to this refuge. *v. 20, 21.*

If our ears be shut to the law, the sin is our's ; but if the law be shut to our ears, the sin is of our governors. *v. 29, 30*

There is no fear of knowing too much ; there is too much fear of practising too little. *Ib.*

God's children may not be sullen under his corrections ; but whether they expect or feel the smart, are no other than submissive to his awful hand. *v. 32.*



## CHAPTER XIV.



**T**HE world stands upon vicissitudes : every nation hath her turn, and must take up her measure. *Ezra* i. 1—4.

It is in vain for any earthly state to promise itself an immutable condition. *Ib.*

If we know that God hath ordained us to life, how carefully should we work out our salvation ! if to good works, how should we abound ! *v.* 2.

Kings can hardly do good alone : their laws are not more followed than their examples. *v.* 6.

A forced discontinuance makes devotion more savoury, more sweet to religious hearts : (*Ezra* iii. 1.) whereas in an open freedom piety doth too often languish.

He cannot be of the sons of Israel, that doth not every day renew his acknowledgments of God. *v.* 4.

The first motions of zeal are commonly strong and fervent. *v.* 2—7.

The entrance of any holy enterprize is com-

monly encountered with many discouragements, which, if we have once overcome, the passage is smooth. *v. 10, 11.*

As it may fall out, it is some part of misery to have been happier : every abatement of the degrees of our former weight lays siege to our thankfulness for lesser mercies. *v. 12.*

Sometimes it proves an advantage to have known no better : he shall more comfortably enjoy present benefits, who takes them as they are, without any other comparison than of the weakness of his own deservings. *Ib.*

It shall be in our final triumph that all tears shall be wiped from our eyes : till then our passions must be mixed according to the occasions. *Ib.*

A small matter hinders the worthiest action. *Ezra iv. 1—5.*

Never was God's Church but subject to reproaches. *v. 11—16.*

Princes have reason to be jealous of their rights. (*v. 17—22.*) Fidelity to our governors is ever both safe and honourable.

If other power hinder us in the work of God, our will may not be guilty. *Ezra v. 1, 2.*

The fidelity of the Almighty never disappointed the confidence of his servants. *Ezra viii. 22, 23.*

Those who find themselves in the ship of

God's Church, cannot but be much troubled with every dangerous leak that it takes. *Ezra ix. passim.*

It cannot be spoken what power there is in a great example, whether to good or evil. *Ezra x. 1.*

Prayers and tears are nothing without endeavours. *v. 2—5.*

The surest obligation to the undoing of an evil act is an oath or covenant made with God for the performance. *v. 3.*

## CHAPTER XV.

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**I**T is not easy for gracious dispositions to turn off the public calamities of God's Church; neither can they do other than lose their private felicities in the common distress of the universal body. *Neh. i. 4.* See *Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6.*

Vain is that grief which hath no other end than itself.

If in all our occasions we do not begin with the First Mover, the course is preposterous, and commonly speeds accordingly. *Neh. ii. 4.*

How well it becomes the great to stoop unto a courteous affability, and to exchange words of respect even with their humble vassals. *v. 2.*

How ready should our tongues be to lay open our cares to the God of all comfort. *v. 5.*

Complaints have ever an unpleasing harshness in them, which must be taken off by some discreet insinuation. *v. 3. 5.*

No business can be so hasty, but our prayer may precede it; the wings whereof are so

nimble that it can fly up to heaven, and solicit God, and bring down an answer, before ever our words need to come forth of our lips. *v. 4.*

In vain shall we hope that any design of ours can prosper, if we have not first sent this messenger on our errand.

There cannot be a greater vexation to wicked hearts, than to see the spiritual Jerusalem in any likelihood of prosperity. *v. 10.*

Envy is usually more quick-sighted than love. *Neh. iv. 1—3.*

That business is likely to prosper that begins with God. *v. 9.*

Many a fearful design had prospered, if wickedness could have been silent. *v. 11.*

Necessity can make even cowards valiant: love makes the valiant irresistible. *v. 14.*

Where love meets with necessity, there can want no endeavour of victory.

Discovered counsels are already prevented. (*v. 15.*) Could we descry the enterprizes of Satan, that tempter would return ashamed.

It is a safe point of wisdom to carry a jealous eye over those whom we have once found hollow and hostile. *v. 16—18.*

There can be no safety to the Church, but where every man thinks his life and welfare consists in his fellows. *v. 19, 20.*

Miseries do not stay for a mannerly succession to each other, but in a rude importunity throng in at once. *Neh. v. 1—5.*

Charity must be the rule of all contracts, the violation whereof, whether in the matter or the price, cannot but be sinful.

They are not Christians, not men, that can enjoy the miseries of their brethren, whether in the flesh or spirit.

It is an ill use made of power, when the weight of it serves only to crush the weak.

Eminency of place cannot be better improved, than by taking down mighty offenders. *v. 7.*

If nobility do embase itself to any foul sin, it is so much more worthy of coercion, by how much the person is of greater mark. *Ib.*

Many of those who have not had grace enough to restrain sin, yet are not so utterly void of grace as to maintain sin. *v. 8—13.*

Our after-wits are able to discern a kind of unreasonableness in those wicked actions, which the first appearance represents unto us plausible.

Gain leads in sin, but shame follows it out. *(v. 8.)* There is hope of that man that can blush and be silent.

No ingenuous disposition can be so tender of

his own disgrace, as the true Israelite is of the reproach of his God. *v. 9.*

They cannot want outward retentives from sin, that live either among friends or enemies: if friends, they may not be grieved; if enemies, they may not be provoked. *Ib.*

No person can be so contemptible, as that his just censure should be contemned.

In dissuading from sin, reason itself cannot prevail more than example. *v. 10.*

He shall never rule well, that doth all he may. *Ib.*

A good governor looks not so much at what hath been done, as what should be. *v. 15.*

Laws are not a greater curb to subjects, than conscience is to good princes. *Ib.*

If the fear of God have once taken up the heart, it goes even with us, and is strong enough to over-master the most forcible temptation. *Ib.*

In vain shall rulers advise against their own practice: when they lead the way, they may well challenge to be followed.

Seldom hath it been seen that great persons have not been seconded in evil: why should not their power serve to make partners of their virtues?

True remorse enlargeth the heart, and open,

eth the hand to a bountiful redemption of our errors. *v. 12.*

It is the best point of wisdom to take the first opportunity of fixing good motions, which otherwise are of themselves light and flighty. *Ib.*

When we have a sin in chase, it is good to follow it home, not slackening our pursuit till we have fully prevailed. *v. 13.*

Our good deeds, as they are well accepted of God, so shall they not go unrewarded. (*v. 19.*) Doubtless, as we may offer up our honest obedience unto God, so we may expect and beg his promised retributions.

Fraud is the fittest answered with subtlety; even innocency is allowed a lawful craft. *Neh. vi. 3.*

That man is in an ill case that conceals no truth from an adversary.

It falls out often, that plain dealing puts craft out of countenance. *v. 11.*



## CHAPTER XVI.

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**N**OTHING can fill the heart of man, but He that made it. *Esther* i. 1—8.

The blood that is once inflamed with wine, is apt to boil with rage. *v.* 10--12.

It is not for a good wife to judge of her husband's will, but to execute it. (*v.* 12.) And in a hood-winked simplicity she must follow whither she is led, as one that holds her chief praise to consist in subjection.

Injuries are so much more intolerable as they are dilated: (*v.* 16—18.) those offences which are of narrow extent may receive easy satisfaction: the amends are not possible where the wrong is universal.

They have unlearned the very dictates of nature that can abide the head to be set below the rib. *Ib.*

Many a one had smarted less, if their persons, if their place, had been meaner. *v.* 19.

There is no heart that may not be estranged: it is not safe presuming upon the deepest assurances of dearness. *Ib.*

All things must prosper, where God hath intended the success. *Esther* ii. 17.

Whoso is not wise enough to forecast the danger of an offence, or indiscretion, may have leisure enough of an unseasonable repentance.

*Ib. Compare* i. 12.

That mind is truly great and noble, that is not changed with the highest prosperity. *v.* 20.

No greatness can secure from treachery or violence : he that hath the power of other men's lives is ever in danger of his own. *v.* 21.

The likeliest defence of the person of any prince is the fidelity of his attendants. *v.* 22.

When the sun shines upon the dial, every passenger will be looking at it. *Esther* iii. 2.

Men are commonly impatient to lose the thank of their endeavours, and are prone to hate whom they cannot reform. *v.* 4.

It is a rare thing if the height of favour cause not presumption. *v.* 6.

The diversity of judgment and practice from the rest of the world hath been an old and envious imputation cast upon God's Church. *v.* 8.

In matters lawful, arbitrary, or indifferent, wisdom teacheth us to conform ourselves to others ; but where God hath laid a special

imposition upon us, we must either vary, or sin.

It is not possible that the Church of God should escape persecution, while that which it hath good is maligned; while that offends, which makes it happy.

In vain doth he profess to acknowledge a God in heaven, that denies homage to his deputy on earth.

Worldly hearts are not led by good or evil, but by profit or loss; neither have they grace to know, that nothing is profitable, but what is honest.

No name under heaven hath made so many fools, so many villains, as this of profit.

It were a happy thing if charity could enlarge itself so much as malice. *v. 9.*

Life can never be better adventured, than where it shall be gain to lose it. *Esther iv. 16.*

Where the necessity of God's Church calls to us, no danger should withhold us from all honest means of relief. *Ib.*

Commonly, when we fear most, we speed best. God then, most of all, magnifies his bounty to us, when we have most afflicted ourselves. *Esther v. 2.*

Little do we know, by outward carriages, in what terms we stand with either God or man. *v. 8.*

Malice is a thing full of impatience, and hates delay of execution next to mercy. *v. 14.*

How happy were it for us, if we could be so zealously careful to remove the hindrances of our true spiritual joy, those stubborn corruptions that will not stoop to the power of grace. *v. 13, 14.*

Our most arbitrary or casual actions are overruled by a hand in heaven. *Esther vi. 1, 2.*

Honour is more in him that gives, than in him that receives it. (*v. 7—9.*) To be honoured by the unworthy is little better than disgrace.

The vain hearts of proud men can easily devise those means whereby they may best set out themselves. (*Ib.*) O that we would equally affect the means of true and immortal glory!

The heart of man is never so cold within him as when, from the height of the expectation of good, it falls into a sudden sense of evil. *v. 12.*

Even the greatest minions of the world must sometimes have their turns of sorrow.

Expectation is either a friend or an enemy, according to the occasion. *Esther vii. 2—4.*

Truth may be smothered, but it cannot die; it may be disguised, but it will be known; it may be suppressed, but it will triumph. *v. 6.*

Actions have not the same face, when we look upon them with contrary affections. *v. 5.*  
*Compare iii. 10, 11.*

Ill-deserved greatness doth in vain promise itself a perpetuity of applause. *v. 8—10.*

As charity makes a good sense of doubtful occurrents, so prejudice and displeasure take all things, though well meant, at the worst. *v. 8.*

It is the just judgment of God that presumptuous sinners should be swallowed up of those evils which they would not fear. *v. 10.*

There can be no truer justice than in retaliation: who can complain of his own measure? *Ib. See Ps. vii. 14—16.*

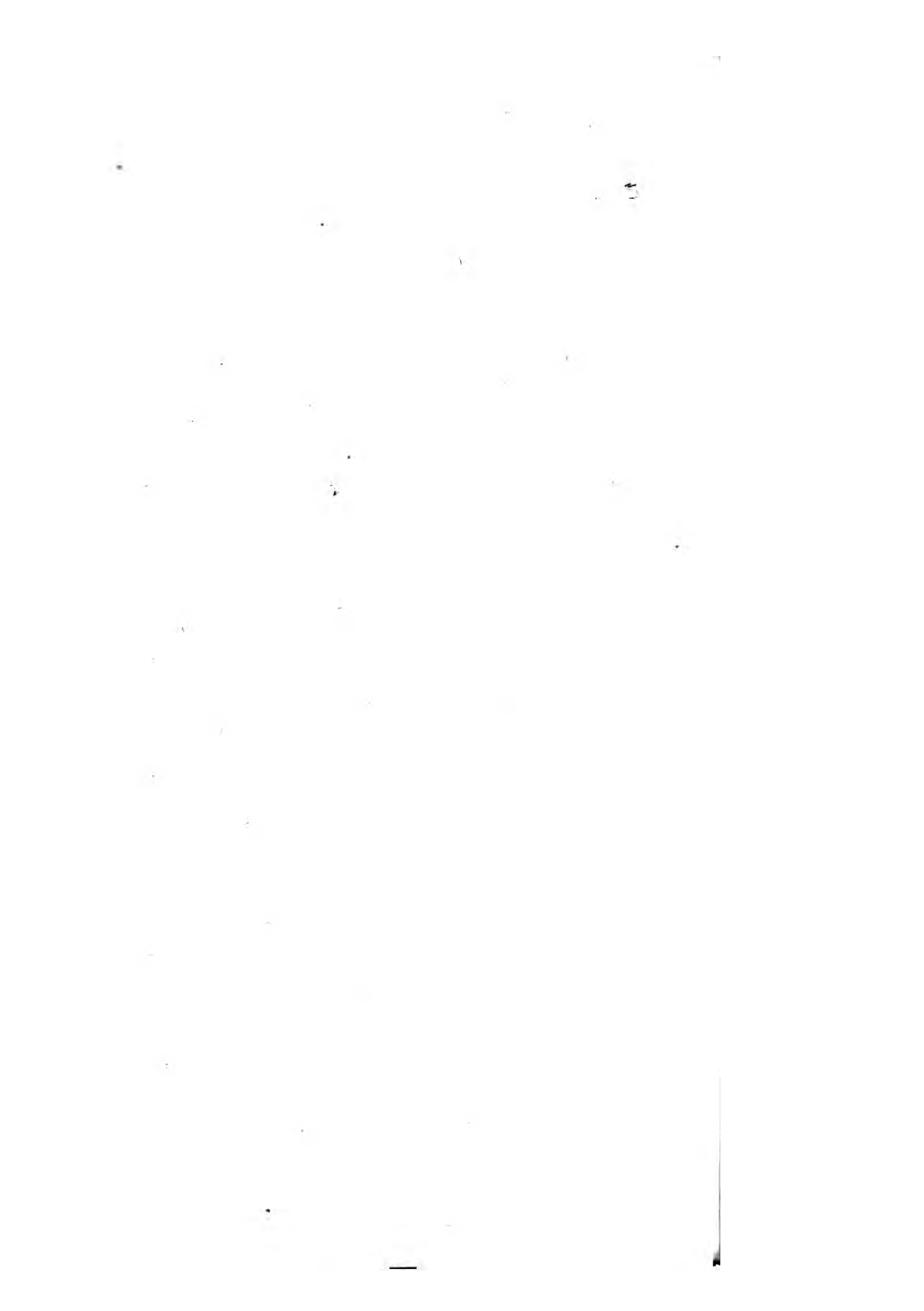
The countenance of the great leads the world at pleasure: fear of authority sways thousands that are not guilty of a conscience. *Esther ix. 3.*

It were pity that the Church of God should not have sunshine as well as storms, and interchanges of joy in their warfare, before they enter upon the unchangeable joy of their endless triumph. *v. 20—22.*

**SACRED APHORISMS.**



**PART II.**



## CHAPTER I.

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**H**UMAN learning, well improved, makes us capable of divine: no man is so apt to see the star of Christ as a diligent disciple of philosophy. *Matt. ii. 1, 2.*

If men could but know how much safety and sweetness there is in divine truth, it could receive nothing from them but welcome and gratulations. *v. 3.*

If God had no witness but in his enemies, we have ground enough for our faith. *v. 4—6.*

There is no villany so great, but will mask itself under a shew of piety. (*v. 7, 8.*) A crafty hypocrite never means so ill as when he speaks fairest.

If with obedience and courage we can follow the calling of God, in difficult enterprises, we shall not want supplies of comfort. *v. 9, 10.*

It is the goodness of God, that in those means wherein we cannot reach Him, He descends to us.

God never begins any business but He makes an end, and ends happily: when our



ways are his, there is no danger of miscarriage. *v. 11, 12.*

We have but the use of our lives, and are bound to husband them to the best advantage of God and his Church. (*v. 13, 14. See x. 23.*) It is a thankless fortitude to offer our throats unto the knife.

We cannot be too speedy in the execution of God's commands; (*v. 14.*) we may be too late.

It is just with God to punish those who would beguile others with illusion. *v. 16. Compare v. 8.*

It is good in our own business to follow reason or custom: but in God's business, if we have any other guide than Himself, we presume, and cannot expect a blessing. *v. 20, 21.*

Plausibility is no fit preface to regeneration: if the heart of man had continued upright, God might have been entertained without contradiction; but now violence must be offered to our corruption, ere we can have room for grace. *Matt. iii. 7—12.*

Never will Christ come into that soul, where the herald of repentance hath not been before Him. *Ib.*

The more holy a man is, the more sensible will he be of his unholiness. *v. 14.*

The heavens are never shut while either of the Sacraments is duly administered or received. *v. 16.*

It is not in the power of the gift of grace to exempt us from the assaults of Satan : it may have the force to repel evil suggestions, but not to prevent them. *Matt. iv. 1.*

We are no sooner stepped forth into the field of God, than Satan labours to wrest our weapons out of our hands, or to turn them against us. *Ib.*

Our privacy, perhaps, may sit down in peace ; but never did man attempt a common good without opposition.

It is a sign both that the work is holy and the Agent faithful, when we meet with strong affronts.

If the state of innocence could have been any defence against evil motions, the first Adam had not been tempted, much less the Second.

We cannot forbid lewd eyes to look in at our windows : we may shut our doors against their entrance.

We may see by this conflict of our Almighty Champion, what manner of adversary we have : how he fights, how he is resisted, how overcome. *v. 10, 11.*

There is nothing more ordinary with our

spiritual enemy, than by occasion of want to move us to unwarrantable courses. *v. 2, 3.*

Nothing in heaven or earth can beat the forces of hell, but the Word of God. (*v. 4.*) How carefully should we furnish ourselves with this powerful munition!

If Satan cannot drive us down to despair, he labours to lift us up to presumption. (*v. 6.*) While we are in this warfare, we must take account that the repulse of one temptation doth but invite to another.

It is the manner of God to cast down that He may raise; to abase, that He may exalt us: Satan raises up that he may throw down, and intends nothing but our dejection in our advancement. *v. 5.*

Height of place gives opportunity of temptation: they have need to stand fast that stand high. *v. 8, 9.*

Let no man marvel to hear heretics or hypocrites quote the Scriptures, when Satan himself hath not spared to cite them. (*v. 6.*) No devil is so dangerous as the religious devil.

Those that wrest or mangle Scripture for their own turn, it is easy to see from what school they come.

There is no time wherein evil spirits are not tormented: there is a time wherein they ex-

pect to be tormented yet more. *Matt.* viii. 29.

They who either doubt or deny the day of final retribution, believe less than devils. *Ib.* See *James* ii. 19.

If we can as heartily pray against sin, for the avoiding of displeasure, as against punishment when we have displeased, there is true grace in the soul. If we have not laboured against our sins, in vain do we pray against punishment.

If it be fearful to think how great things evil spirits can do with permission, it is comfortable to think they can do nothing without permission. *v.* 31, 32.

When once our wretched unthankfulness grows weary of God's presence, who can pity us to be punished with his departure? *v.* 34.

There is no way safer for a man, but to square his actions by the right rule of justice and of charity: then let the world have leave to spend their glosses at pleasure. *Matt.* ix. 34.

They labour for confusion that call for equality: if we look up into heaven, there is the King of gods, the Lord of lords, higher than the highest: if to the earth, there are monarchs, kings, princes, peers, people: if we

look down to hell, there is the prince of devils.

*Ib.*

Nothing can please God more than our importunity in seeking Him: when He withdraws Himself, it is that He may be more earnestly inquired for. *Matt. xiv. 13.*

O that we could have our faithful recourse to Christ in all our spiritual maladies! It were as impossible we should want help, as that He should want power and mercy. *v. 14.*

How well it becomes spiritual guides to regard even the bodily necessities of God's people. (*v. 15.*) Where ability is wanting yet care may not be wanting.

In all our projects and suits, we are still ready to move for that which is most obvious, most likely; when sometimes that is less agreeable to the will of God. *Compare v. 15 with 19.*

It is for all that would be Christ's followers, to lead the life of faith; and even, when means appear not, to wait upon that merciful hand. *v. 19, 20.*

Those whom God professes to feed must needs have enough: the measure of his bounty cannot but run over. *v. 20.*

What is that but a perpetual miracle, which God worketh for our preservation? It is no reason his goodness should be less magnified,

because it is universal. O God, as Thou hast a free hand to give, so let us have free hearts to return Thee the praise of thy bounty!

Our extremities are the seasons of divine aid. *v. 24, 25.*

What power there is in the eye to betray the heart! *v. 26.*

The imperfect composition of the best saint upon earth is as far from pure faith as from mere infidelity. *v. 28—31.*

True faith rests not in great and good desires, but acts and executes accordingly. (*v. 29.*) It will be long enough ere the gale of good wishes can carry us to heaven.

He cannot sink, who trusts the power of his Master; he cannot but sink who doubts it. *v. 30.*

Our faith gives us courage, boldness, and success; infidelity lays us open to all dangers, to all mischiefs.

By how much more excellent and useful a grace faith is, by so much more shameful is the defect of it. *v. 31.*

Our afflictions are the files and whetstones that set on edge our devotions, without which they grow dull and ineffectual. *Matt. xv. 22.*

When we have made our prayers, it is a happy thing to hear the report of them back

from heaven : but if we always do not so, it is not for us to be dejected. *v.* 23, 24.

If we be poor in spirit, God is rich in mercy ; He cannot send us away empty : yet He will not always let us feel his condescent ; crossing us in our will, that He may advance our benefit. *Ib.*

Prayer is as an arrow : if it be drawn up but a little, it goes not far ; but if it be pulled up to the head, flies strongly, and pierces deep. *v.* 25—27.

Faith is an undaunted grace ; it hath a strong heart and a bold forehead : even denials cannot dismay it, much less delays. *Ib.*

The way to speed well at God's hand, is to be humbled in his eyes, and in our own. *v.* 27.

If in extremities we can believe against hope, our faith is so much more noble, as our difficulties are greater. *Matt.* xx. 17—21.

The best men may be mistaken in their own powers. (*v.* 22.) It is one thing to suffer in speculation, another in practice. *See* xxvi. 56.

There cannot be a worse sign than for a man, in a carnal presumption, to vaunt his own abilities.

None but the hand of public authority must reform the abuses of the Temple ; if all be out of course there, no man is barred from sorrow ;

the grief may reach to all; the power of reformation only to those whom it concerneth.

*Matt. xxi. 12.*

There is a reverence due to God's house for the Owner's sake, and for the services' sake.

*v. 13.*

Outward profession, where there is want of inward truth and real practice, doth but help to draw on and aggravate judgment. *v. 19.*

What poor shifts do foolish sinners make to beguile themselves! any thing will serve to charm the conscience, when it lists to sleep.

*Matt. xxvii. 24.*

How full of terrors and inevitable perplexities is guiltiness. *v. 62—66.*



## CHAPTER II.



**WHOSOEVER** would look to receive any benefit from Christ, must come in faith : it is that only which makes us capable of any favour. *Mark v. 25—28.*

There is no hope that virtue should go forth from Christ to us, when no hearty desires go forth from us to Him. *v. 34.*

Might we have our own wills, we should be injurious both to God and ourselves. *v. 33, 34.*

It is no unusual thing for kindness to look sternly for the time, that it may endear itself more when it chooses to be seen. *Ib.*

No voice but his who hath power to remit sin, can secure the heart from the conscience of sin, from the pangs of conscience. *Ib.*

Infidelity is all for ease, and thinks every work tedious. That which nature accounts troublesome, is pleasing and delightful to grace. *v. 35, 36.*

In a perfect faith there is no fear : by how much more we fear, by so much less we believe. *v. 36.*

Our Saviour measures not his gifts by our

petitions, but by our wants and his own mercies. *Ib.*

Death and sleep are alike to Him who can cast whom He will into the sleep of death, and awake when and whom He pleaseth out of that deadly sleep. *v. 39.*

Our infidelity makes us incapable of the secret favours and the highest counsels of the Almighty. *v. 40.*

All God's immediate works are like Himself, perfect. *v. 42.*

It never was the purpose of Divine Power to put ordinary means out of office. *v. 43.*

We are charged not with supplications only, but with intercessions: herein is both the largest improvement of our love, and the most effectual. *Mark vii. 32.*

This beneficence cannot impoverish us; the more we give, we have still the more: it is a safe and happy store, that cannot be impaired by our bounty.

Our prayers must be directed to the usual proceedings of God: his actions must be the rule of our prayers; our prayers may not prescribe his actions. *Ib.*

He that would be healed of his spiritual infirmities must be sequestered from the throng of the world: that soul can never enjoy God, that is not sometimes retired. *v. 33.*

The despair of all other helps sends us importunately to the God of Power. *Mark viii. 17, 18.*

How miserable are they that have nothing but nature! (*v. 21.*) It were better to have been unborn, than not to be born again.

Our good God sometimes holds us short in those abilities whereof we make least doubt, that we may feel whence we had them. *v. 18. 28.*

If his graces were always at our command, they would seem natural, and soon run into contempt: now we are justly held in an awful dependence upon that gracious hand, which so gives as not to cloy us, and so denies as not to discourage us.

Moral uncleanness may seem more heinous to men; nothing is so odious to God as intellectual wickedness. (*v. 19.*) But whether He frown, or whether He smile, it is all to one purpose, that He may win the incredulous and disobedient.

Whither should the rigour of all our censures tend, but to edification, and not to destruction.

It is for the just Judge to say one day to reprobate souls, "Depart from me;" in the mean time it is for us to invite all that are spi-

ritually possessed to the participation of mercy —“ Bring him hither to me.” *Ib.*

As there are degrees of stature in men, so there are degrees of strength in rebellion, in spiritual wickednesses. *v. 28, 29.*

How good is our God to us, that while He hath not thought fit to continue to us those means which are less powerful in dispossessing the powers of darkness, yet hath given us the greater! While we can fast and pray, God will command for us, Satan cannot prevail against us. *v. 29.*

Those things we delight in, we love to behold; the eye and the heart will go together. *Mark xii. 41.*

If vanity have power to stir up our liberality, in order to be seen of men; how shall faith encourage our bounty, in knowing we are seen of our Saviour, and accepted by Him. *Ib.*

As to see God is perfect happiness, so to be seen of Him is true contentment and glory.

We are as sure to receive rewards for what we give, as vengeance for what we ungraciously deny.

God doth not so much regard what is taken out of our store, as what is left in it: He sees at once into the bottom of the purse, and the bottom of the heart, and esteems our gifts according to both. *v. 43, 44.*

It is the comfort of poverty that our affections are valued, and not our presents. *Ib.*

There can be no treason where there is not some trust. *Mark xiv. 10.*

That heart which hath once enslaved itself to red and white earth, may be made any thing. *v. 10, 11.*

As God knows, so Satan guesses who are his, and will be sure to make use of his own. *Ib.*

When Satan enters upon the regenerate, he is met with perpetual skirmishes, and by a holy violence at last repulsed: in others he is plausibly received, and freely commandeth. *Ib. See also John xiii. 27.*

Worldly hearts are penny-wise and pound-foolish: they know how to set high prices upon the worthless trash of this world; but for heavenly things, or the God that owns them, these they shamefully undervalue. *Compare v. 4, 5, with 11. See also Matt. xxvi. 14, 15.*

Whither may we not fall, if we be left to our own strength! it is both wise and holy to misdoubt the worst. *v. 19.*

Who would but think, if the notice of an intended evil cannot prevent it, yet that the threats of judgment should affright the boldest offender? *v. 21.*

**Favours ill used make the heart more capable of farther evil: after our sacramental morsel, if we be not the better, we are surely the worse. v. 20.**

**Feeble minds are apt to bemoan themselves upon light occasions: the grief must needs be violent that causeth a strong heart to break forth into a passionate complaint. v. 33—36.**

**Hard is that man driven, that is fain to complain to his inferiors: it must be only the stronger that can aid the weak. *Ib.***

**What soul is capable of the conceit of the least of those sorrows that oppressed the Holy One?**

**It was the sad weight of the sin of mankind, it was the heavy burden of his Father's wrath for our sin, that wrung from our Redeemer the expression of his exceeding sorrow. *Ib.***

**It is but human, and not sinful, to be loath to suffer what we may avoid.**

**The stabs of an enemy cannot be so grievous as the skin-deep wounds of a disciple. v. 44, 45.**

**All who under a shew of godliness practise impiety, are still betrayers of their Divine Master.**

**Good intentions are no warrant for our ac-**

tions: our weapons are, as our warfare, spiritual. *v. 47.*

When the Prince of Peace bade his followers sell their coat and buy a sword, (*see Luke xxii. 36,*) He meant to insinuate the need of these arms, not their improvement; and to teach them the danger of the time, not the manner of the repulse of danger.

Where the resolutions are fixed, any pretence will serve. *v. 57.*

If the asker be unworthy, the questions captious, words bootless; the best answer is silence. *v. 61.*

We may not so speak as to give advantage to cavils: we may not so be silent as to betray the truth.

Good purposes, when they are not held, do so far turn enemies to the entertainer of them, as that they help to double both his sin and punishment. *v. 72.*

Good hearts cannot be so solicitous for any thing under heaven as for the removal of those impediments which lie between them and their Saviour. *Mark xvi. 3.*

If Christ be hid from too many on earth, it is because a stone of offence lies rolled upon the mouth of their hearts. Who shall roll it away but Infinite Power?

How well it succeeds when we go faithfully about our work, and leave the issue to God: to the wicked, that happens which they fear; to the godly, more than that which they hope for. *v. 4.*



### CHAPTER III.

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**T**HERE is no certainty, but there is likelihood of an holy generation, when the parents are such. *Luke* i. 5, 6.

It is a happy match, when the husband and the wife are one, not only in themselves, but in God ; not more in flesh than in the spirit. *Ib.*

God is a God of order, and hates confusion, no less than irreligion. *v.* 8, 9.

The incense doth ever smell of the hand that offers it.

The more high and sacred our calling is, the more dangerous is neglect : woe be to us, if we slacken those duties wherein God honours us more than we can honour Him. *Ib.*

The glorious spirits, as they are always with us, so most in our devotions ; and as in all places, so most of all in God's house. *v.* 11.

So much difference is there betwixt our faith and our senses, that the apprehension of the presence of the God of spirits, by faith, goes down sweet with us ; whereas the sensible apprehension of an angel dismays us. *v.* 12.

The blessed spirits, though they do not often vocally express it, do pity our human frailties, and secretly suggest comfort to us when we perceive it not. *v. 13.*

It is a fruit of that deadly enmity which is betwixt Satan and us, that he would, if he might, kill us with terror; whereas the good spirits labour altogether for our tranquillity and cheerfulness.

The proof of children makes them either the blessings or the crosses of their parents. *v. 14.*

The weak apprehensions of our imperfect faith are not so much to be censured as pitied. *v. 18.*

If the eye of our mind look upward, it shall meet nothing to avert or interrupt it; but if forward, or downward, or round about, every thing is a block in our way. *Ib.*

We cannot be too careful to raise up to ourselves arguments to settle our faith: there is a difference betwixt desire of assurance and unbelief. *Ib.*

The first preacher of the Gospel was an angel: that office must needs be glorious, which derives itself from such a predecessor. *v. 26—35.*

The faithful heart, when it once understands the good pleasure of God, argues no more,

but sweetly rests itself in a quiet expectation.  
*v. 38.*

All disputations with God, after his will known, arise from infidelity: if we will give nature leave to cavil, we cannot be Christians.

As all the actions of men, so especially the public actions of public men, are ordered by God to other ends than their own. *Luke ii. 1—5. See Micah v. 2.*

Every creature walks blindfold; only He that dwells in light sees whither they go.

It is not our meanness that can exclude us from the best of God's mercies. *v. 8—14.*

Those who are industrious in any calling are capable of further blessings: (*Ib.*) whereas the idle are fit for nothing but temptations.

No earthly thing is too dear to be forsaken for Christ: if we suffer any worldly occasion to stay us from Bethlehem, we care more for that than for our souls. *v. 15.*

The truth and heartiness of obedience is that which God will crown in his meanest servants: (*v. 24.*) the best are not always the wealthiest.

Since in ourselves we cannot be innocent, happy are we that we have the spotless Dove sacrificed for us, to make us innocent in Him *Ib. See 2 Cor. v. 21.*

There is no Church, no Christian heart, which is not a Temple of the living God: there is no Temple of God wherein Christ is not presented to his Father. *v. 22.*

They that will go no farther than they are forced in their religious exercises, are no kin to her whom all generations shall call blessed. *v. 41.*

Worldly cares must give place to the sacred: except we will depart unblest, we must attend God's services till we receive his dismissal. *v. 43.*

Good fellowship doth no way so well as in the passage to heaven: mutual encouragement is none of the least benefits of our holy assemblies. *v. 44.*

He gathers that heareth; he spends that teacheth: if we spend before we gather, we shall soon prove bankrupts. *v. 46.*

Fruitless is the wonder that endeth not in faith: no light is sufficient where the eyes are held through unbelief or prejudice. *v. 47.*

Never any loved Christ, who are not some time exercised with the grief of missing Him; that we may be the more careful to hold, and more joyful in recovering Him. *v. 48.*

What a difference is there between our own voluntary acts and those that are done upon command, not more in the ground of them

than in the issue: those are oftentimes fruitless; these, ever successful. *Luke v. 5, 6.*

No man ever fared the worse for abasing himself to his God. *v. 8—10.*

He is unworthy to be well served, that will not sometimes wait upon his followers. (*Luke vii. 3.*) So we must look down upon our servants here on earth, as that we must still look up to our Master which is in heaven.

If our spiritual miseries be but confessed, they cannot fail of redress. *v. 6—10.*

Our wealth, beauty, wit, learning, honour, may make us accepted of men; but it is our faith only that shall make God in love with us. *v. 9. See Heb. xi. 6.*

Why are we not more affected towards the least measure of grace in any man, than towards all the outward glories of the world?

Where we have laid our tillage, and compost, and seed, who would not look for a crop? but if the uncultured fallow yield more, how justly is that unanswerable ground near to a curse? *Ib.*

Never was any faith unseen of Christ; never was any seen without allowance; never was any allowed without remuneration. *v. 9, 10.*

The infinite mercy of God, which is ever like itself, follows but one rule in his gifts

to us—the faith that He gives. *Ib.* See *Ephes.* ii. 8.

When all our hopes or joys must live or die in one, the loss of that one admits of no consolation. *v.* 12.

Our Saviour never sinned for any man's sake; though for our sakes He was sociable, that He might keep us from sinning. *v.* 36.

The more public the fact is, the greater is the scandal: sin is sin, though in a desert: others' eyes do not make an act more vile in itself, but the offence is multiplied by the number of beholders. *v.* 37.

No disadvantage can deter the penitent sinner from a speedy recourse to Christ: it is not for the distressed to be bashful; it is not for a believer to be timorous. *v.* 37, 38.

We are not worthy of the comfort of our Saviour's presence, if we do not hasten wherever we know He is, to enjoy it.

The soul that is truly touched with a sense of its own sin, can think nothing too good, too dear for the Saviour: any thing, every thing, is too small a price for peace. *v.* 38.

If our satisfaction be not in some kind proportionable to our offence, we are no true penitents.

When the grapes are pressed, the juice runs forth; so when the mind is pressed,

tears distil the true juice of penitence and sorrow. *Ib.*

He who came to take away the sins of the world was incapable of pollution by sin. *v. 39.*

None do so much befriend the demoniac as they that bind him; neither may the spiritually possessed be otherwise handled. *Luke viii. 29.*

Two sorts of chains are necessary for outrageous sinners; good laws, impartial executions; that they may not hurt, that they may not be hurt to eternal death.

The chains of restraint are commonly broken by the fury of wickedness. *Ib.*

The outward bowing is the body of the action; the disposition is the soul of it: therein lies the difference from the counterfeit stoopings of wicked men and spirits. *v. 28. 31.*

What comfort can there be in that which is common to us with devils, who, as they believe and tremble, so they tremble and worship? *Ib.*

The religious heart serves the Lord with fear and trembling; in the fear of a son, not of a slave; in fear tempered with joy; in a joy allayed with trembling.

A smooth tongue and a foul heart carry away double judgments.

Nature teaches every creature to wish a freedom from pain: the foulest spirits cannot but love themselves; and this love must needs produce a deprecation of evil: they cannot pray against sin, but against torment for sin. *v. 28.*

If we could fervently pray against sin, we should not need to pray against punishment, which is no other than the inseparable shadow of that body.

It is the fashion of our nature, where we find ourselves graced with some abilities, to flatter ourselves with the faculty of more. *Luke ix. 54.*

Faith hath done as great things as ever presumption undertook; but there is a great difference in the enterprizes of both.

Even the best heart may easily be miscarried by a well-meant zeal: no affection is either more necessary or better accepted.

How many are there that think there is no wisdom, but in a dull indifference, and chuse rather to freeze than burn!

Rectified zeal is not more commendable and useful, than inordinate and misguided is hateful and dangerous.

Wholesome and blessed is that zeal which is well grounded and well governed; grounded upon the Word of Truth, not upon unstable fancies; governed by wisdom and charity;



wisdom to avoid rashness ; charity to avoid just offence.

As the best men have their weaknesses, so they are not privileged from letting fall unjustifiable actions. *v. 54, 55.*

The faults of uncharitableness cannot be swallowed up in zeal. *Ib.*

They that would imitate God's saints in singular actions, must see that they go upon the same grounds : without the same spirit and the same warrant, it is either a mockery or a sin to make them our copies. *Ib.*

The greater submission the more grace : if there be one hollow in the valley lower than another, thither the waters gather. *Luke x. 39.*

How ready is our weakness, upon every slight discontent, to quarrel with our best friend, yea, with our God ! *v. 40.*

No obligations should so enthrall us, as that our tongues should not be free to reprove faults where we find them. *v. 41.*

The stability or the perpetuity of good adds much to the praise of it. *v. 42.*

It is not impossible that the exercise of the Gospel should be taken from us ; but the benefit and virtue of it is as inseparable from our souls as their being.

Where shall we find one spiritual leper alone ? Drunkards, profane persons, heretics,

will be sure to consort with their matches.  
*Luke xvii. 12.*

Why should not God's saints delight in an holy communion? Why is it not our chief joy to assemble in good?

Never does our Saviour come so close to us, as when in an holy bashfulness we stand afar off. (*v. 12—14.*) We cannot be too awful of Him, too much ashamed of ourselves.

No faithful prayer goes away unrecompensed; but where many good hearts meet, the retribution must needs be answerable to the number of the petitioners. *v. 14.*

Obedience is as well tried in a trifle, as in the most important charge. *Ib.*

What command soever we receive from God, or our superiors, we must not scan the weight of the thing, but the authority of Him who commands. *Ib.*

Either difficulty or slightness are vain pretences for disobedience.

It is a base and unworthy thing for a man so to subject himself to the example of others, as not sometimes to resolve to be an example to others. *v. 15, 16.*

When either evil is to be done, or good neglected, how much better is it to go the right way alone, than to err with company.

What virtue there is in misery, that can

unite even the most estranged hearts. *v. 16.*  
*See John iv. 9.*

The more we are bound to God, the more shameful is our unthankfulness. *v. 18.*

He that desires to see Jesus is in the way to enjoy Him: there is not so much as a remote possibility in the man that cares not to behold Him. *Luke xix. 3, 4.*

In vain shall he hope to see Christ, that doth not outgo the common throng of the world. *v. 4.*

It is the best improvement of our wit, to seek out the aptest furtherances for our souls.

We have to do with a God that measures us by our desires, not by our statures: the soul hath no stature. *v. 5.*

Desires are the language of the soul: they are heard by Him who is the God of spirits. *v. 6.*

It is a dangerous vanity to look outward at other men's sins with scorn, when we have more need to cast our eyes inwardly to see our own with humiliation. *v. 7.*

## CHAPTER IV.

---

**T**HEY are made for themselves whose thoughts are only taken up with their own store or indigence. (*John ii. 3.*) To whom should we complain of any want, but to the Maker and Giver of all things?

How well doth it beseem the eyes of piety and Christian love to look into the necessities of others! *Ib.*

The bounty of our God reaches not to our life only, but to our contentment; neither hath He thought good to allow us only the bread of sufficiency, but sometimes of pleasure. *Ib.*

It is a scrupulous injustice to scant ourselves where God hath been liberal.

The way to have miracles wrought in us is to yield obedience to the Divine Word. *v. 5.*

How liberal are the provisions of Christ! *v. 7—10.*

The munificent hand of God regards not our need only, but our honest affluence. It is our sin and shame if we turn his favour into wantonness.

As it is no small art to hide art, so it is no small glory to conceal glory. *v. 11.*

Earthly greatness is no defence against afflictions. (*John* iv. 46, 47.) Why should we grudge not to be privileged, when we see there is no spare of the greatest?

Why else does our good God send us pain, losses, opposition, but that he may be sought unto? *Ib.* See *Ps.* cxix. 71.

He who doth whatsoever He will, must do it how He will: it is for us to receive, not to appoint. *v.* 49, 50.

Our merciful Saviour meets those in the end whom He crosses in the way. How sweetly doth He correct our prayers, by giving us not what we ask, but better than we ask. *Ib.*

The chosen vessel would be freed from temptations; he receives a supply of grace:—the sick man asks release; he receives patience:—he asks for life, and receives glory. Let us ask what we think best; let Him give what He knows best.

A weak faith may be true, but a true faith increases: (*v.* 51—53.) he that boasts of a full stature in the first moment of his assent, may presume, but doth not believe.

In vain do they pretend power over others, who labour not to draw their families unto God. *v.* 53.

It is a false and vagrant zeal that begins not first at home. *John* viii. 7.

How easily and how far may be the best

miscarried with a common error ! (*John ix. 2.*)  
We are not thankful for our own illumination if we do not look with charity and pity upon the gross mis-opinions of our brethren.

It is the spirit of lenity that must restore and confirm the lapsed.

All God's afflictive acts are not punishments : some are for the benefit of the creature, whether for probation, or prevention, or reformation ; all are for the praise, whether of his Divine Power, or Justice, or Mercy. *v. 3.*

All things receive their virtue from divine institution : (*v. 6, 7.*) how else should a piece of wheaten bread nourish the soul ? how should water wash away spiritual filthiness ? how should the foolishness of preaching save souls ?

No truths have received so full proofs as those that have been questioned. *v. 8, 9.*

It is an unthankful silence to smother the works of God in an affected secrecy. *v. 9.*

Even unjust authority will never want soothing up, in whatever courses, though with disgrace and opposition to the truth. *v. 13.*

It is hard to find out any time wherein charity is unseasonable : as mercy is an excellent grace, so the works of it are fitted for the best day. *v. 14.*

What can strength of grace or dearness of respect prevail against disease, against dissolution ? *John xi. 3.*

It is far from God's purpose to give us leave so to respect ourselves, as that we should neglect Him. *v. 8, 9.*

What a high and happy condition is it for mortal men to aspire unto, that the God of Heaven should not be ashamed to own them for friends! *v. 11.*

It is our comfort and assurance against the terrors of death, and the tenacity of the grave, that our resurrection depends upon Omnipotence. *Ib.*

It is the manner of the Eternal Word, that what He hath said more obscurely in one passage, He interprets more clearly in another. He is the sun which gives us that light whereby we see Himself. *v. 14.*

God and ourselves are not alike affected with the same events: He rejoices when we mourn; He is angry when we are pleased. *v. 15.*

Thus doth God in all our afflictions: [He sees our tears and pities us; but withal, He looks upon our patience, our faith, our crown, and is glad that we are afflicted.

The least grain of the increase of grace is more worth than can be balanced by a large weight of bodily vexation. *Ib.*

Christianity doth not bid us abate any thing of our wariness and honest policy; yea, it re-

quires us to have no less of the serpent than of the dove. *v. 28. Compare v. 8.*

There is a time when we must preach Christ on the house-top; there is a time when we must speak Him in the ear, and as it were with our lips shut.

All our distresses expect good offices from those that love us; but of all others, death, as that which is the extremest of evils. *v. 31.*

It is some kind of ease to sorrow to have partners, as a burden is lightened by many shoulders: yea, the very presence of friends abates grief. *Ib.*

We are no true friends, if our endeavours to redress the distempers of them we love, be not assiduous and unweariable. *Ib.*

The world hath other conceits of the actions and carriage of the regenerate than are truly intended, setting such constructions upon them as their own reason suggests: they think them dying, when behold they live; sorrowful, when they are always rejoicing; poor, while they make many rich. *Ib.*

Where the heart is affected with an awful acknowledgment of Majesty, the body cannot but bow. *v. 32.*

What position can be so fit for us when we make our address to our Saviour? It is an irreligious unmannerliness for us to do less.



Finite causes work within their own sphere: all places are equally near, and all effects easy to the Infinite. *Ib.*

Wisdom and holiness should want much work, if even vehement passions might not be quitted from offence. *v. 33—35.*

How shall we imitate the Saviour, if we do not answer tears, and weep with them that weep.

Little do we know the drift, whether of God's acts or delays; yet we know as much as we are worthy. (*v. 34—43.*) Let it be sufficient for us to understand, that He who can do all things will do that which shall be most for his own honour.

It was ever the will of God that we should do what we may: our hands must do their utmost, ere his will work for us. *v. 39.*

Weak faith is still apt to lay blocks of difficulties in the way of the great works of God. *Ib.*

The best are subject to fits of unbelief and forgetfulness; the only remedy whereof must be the inculcation of God's merciful promises of their relief and support. *v. 40.*

The heart and the eye must go together: he that would have aught to do with God must be sequestered and lifted up from the earth. *v. 41.*

When a soul is to be raised from the death of sin and from the grave of corruption, the

strongest commands, the loudest denunciations of judgment, the shrillest and sweetest promulgations of mercy are but enough. *v. 43.*

Those places and persons that have the greatest helps and privileges afforded them, are not always the most answerable in the returns of their thankfulness. *John xii. 12, 13.*

It is all the care of hypocrites to seek umbrages and pretences for their hateful purposes: malice is not so barren as not to yield crimes enough. *John xviii. 30.*

Some times it may be prejudicial to speak all truths. *v. 33, 34.*

In spite of malice, innocence shall find abettors. *John xix. 4.*

Those graces that lie loose and ungrounded are easily washed away by the first tide of popularity. *v. 13—16.*

What a base idol doth the proud man adore! even the vulgar, which a base man despiseth.

In vain shall we hope, that a carnal heart can prefer the care of his soul to the care of his safety and honour. *v. 15, 16.*

True faith may be wisely reserved, but will not be cowardly. *v. 38.*

Love is restless and fearless. *John xx. 1—4.*

How cold and heartless is our love to the Saviour, if we do not haste to find Him in his Word and Sacraments!

Where there is a true sense of favour and beneficence, there cannot but be a fervent desire of retribution. *v. 1. See Mark xvi. 9.*

There is more strength of zeal, where it takes, in the weaker sex. *v. 10, 11.*

Holy cares ever prove well; holy desires never but speed well. *v. 11, 12.*

God and his angels take notice of every tear of our devotion. *v. 13.*

Many a tender and humble soul afflicts itself with the want of that Saviour whom it hath and feeleth not. (*v. 14.*) Happy is he that can discern him in all forms.

We cannot but be losers by our absence from holy assemblies. *v. 22, 23, 24.*

As all bodies are not equally apt to be wrought upon by the same medicine, so are not all souls by the same means of faith. *v. 25.*

The Saviour of all pitieth the errors and infirmities of his servants, and in his abundant compassion will reclaim and save us, when either we mean not, or will not. *v. 26—29.*

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ERRATUM.

Page 196, line 2, for *Mark viii.* read *Mark ix.*

THE END.

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