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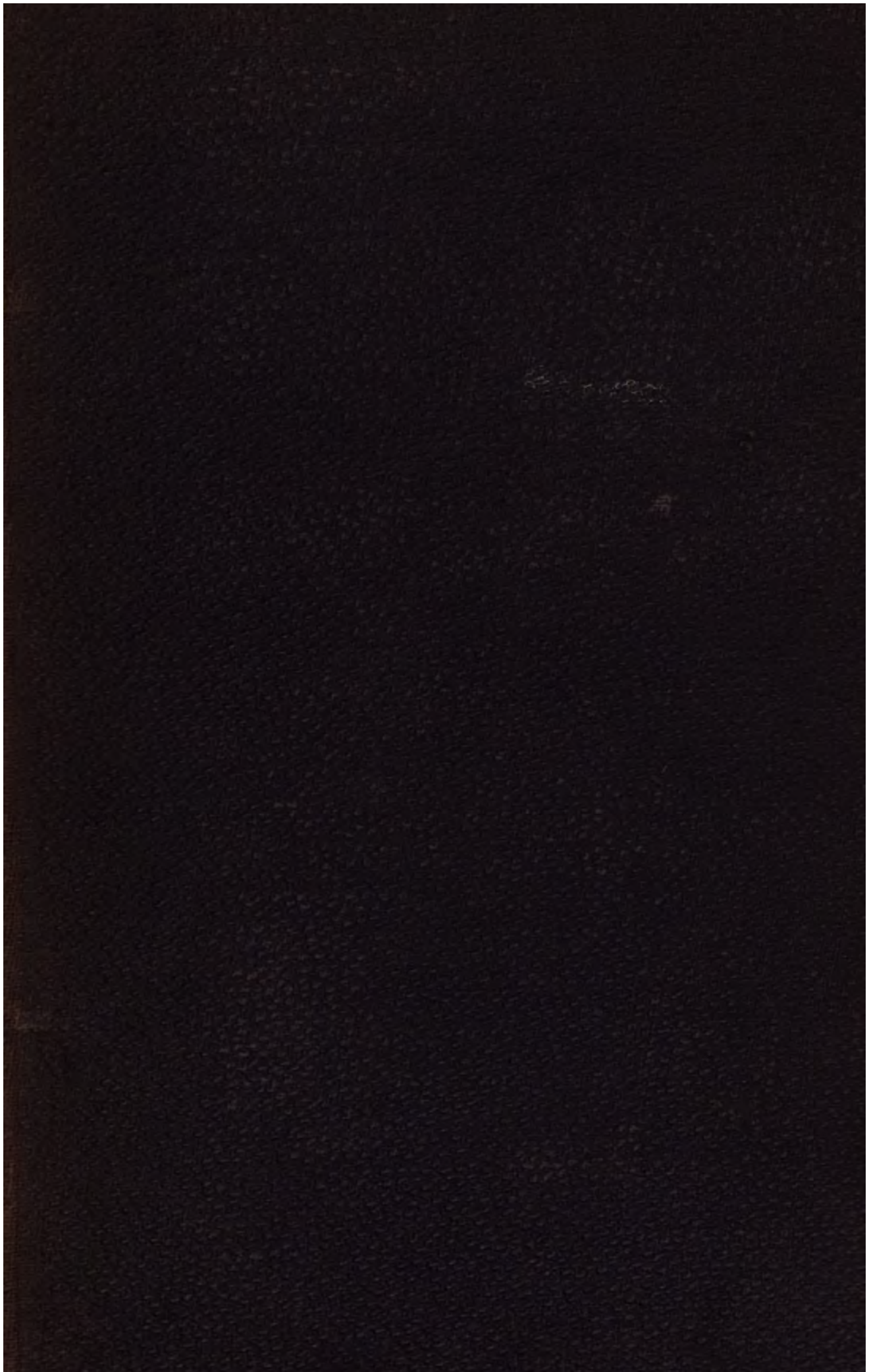
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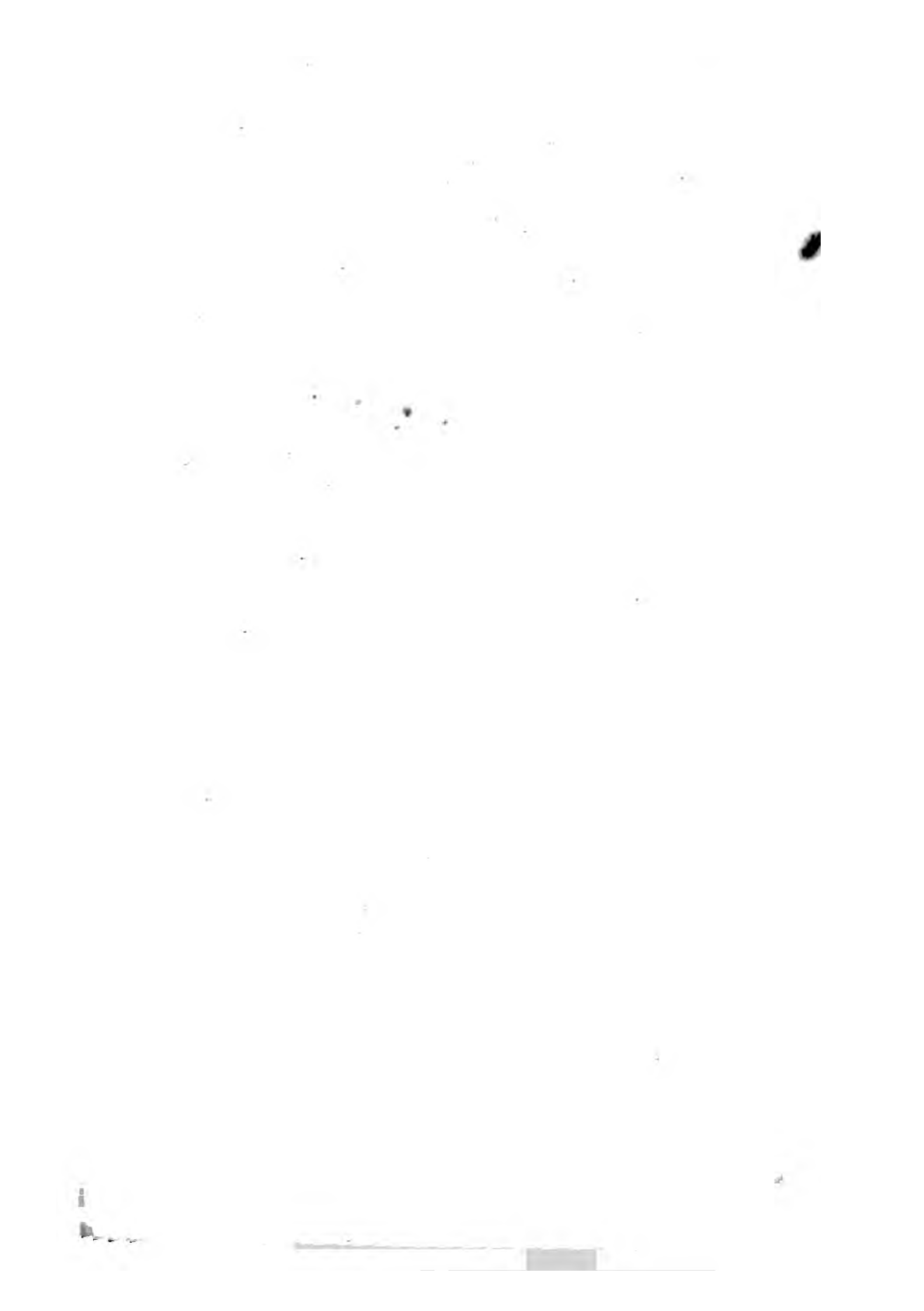
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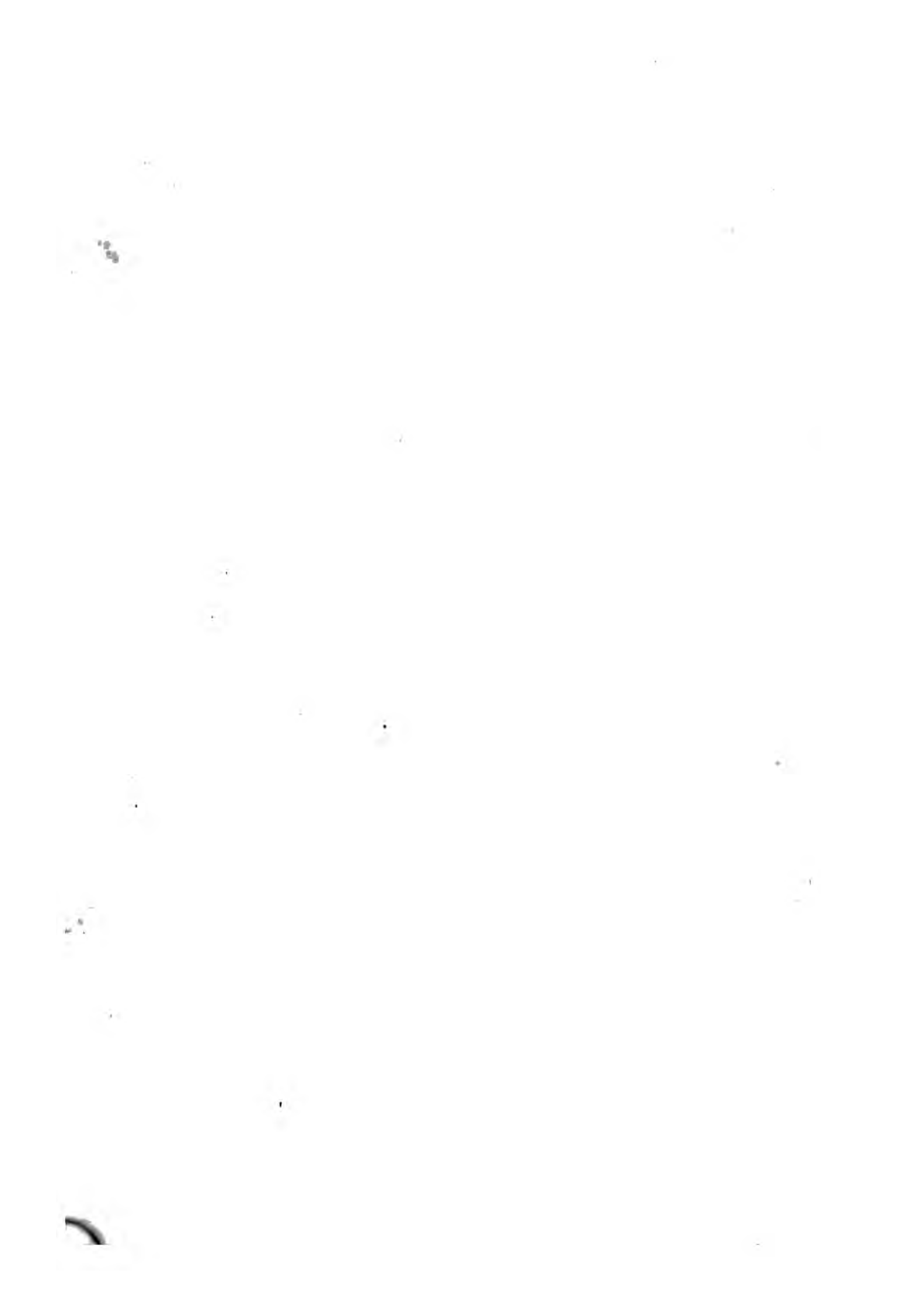
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OXFORD





DEATH-BED SCENES,
AND
PASTORAL CONVERSATIONS.



DEATH-BED SCENES,

AND

PASTORAL CONVERSATIONS.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

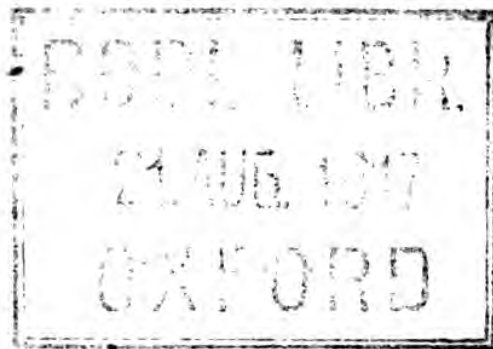
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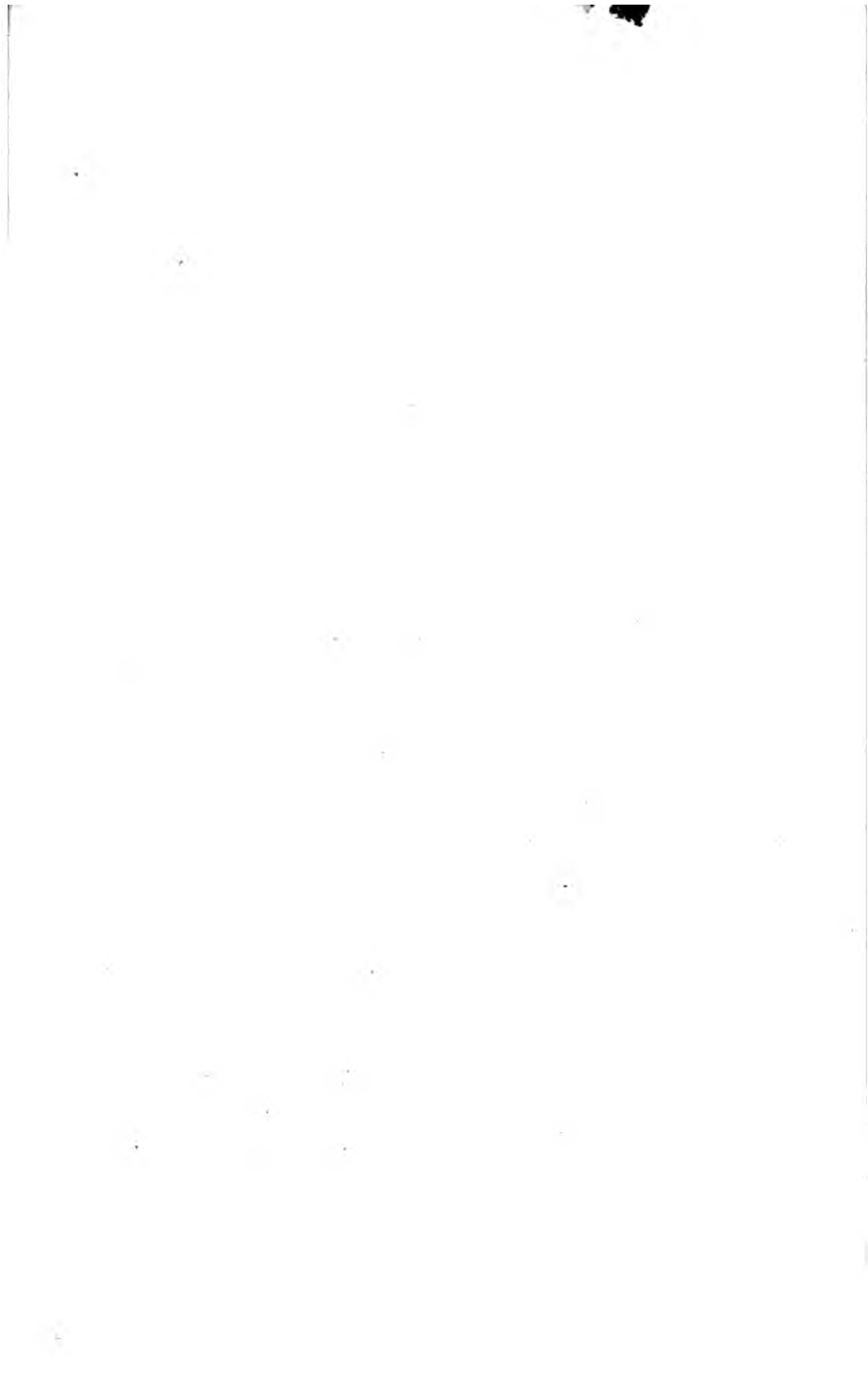
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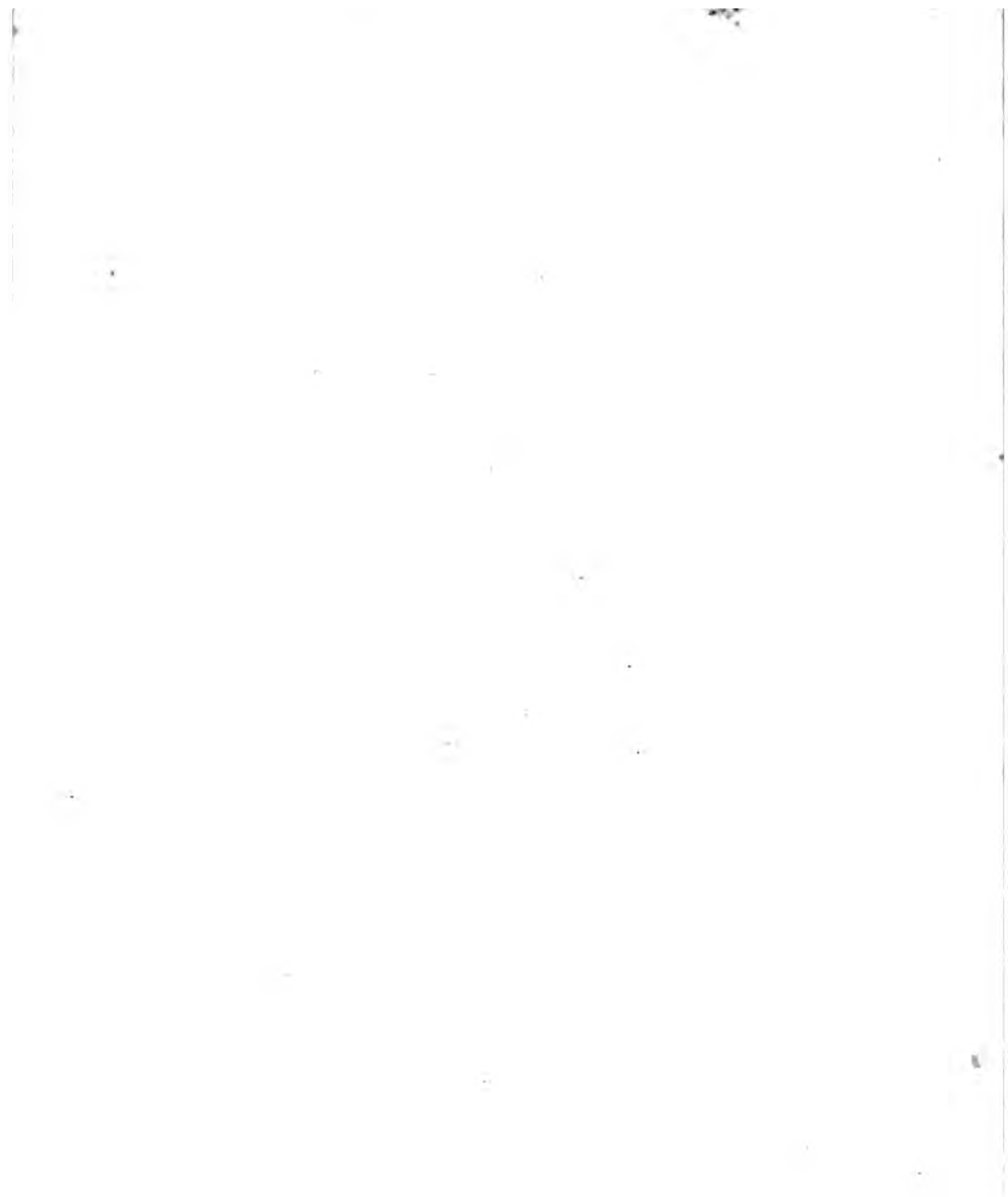
P R E F A C E

TO THE

FIRST EDITION OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

BY THE EDITORS.

THE First Volume of this Work having been much commended, not only by the Clergy, for whose use it was principally designed, but also by Laymen of various talents and professions, we gladly fulfil our promise of publishing a Second, which, we trust, will not be found inferior to the other in interest, or instruction.



DEATH-BED SCENES.

CHAPTER I.

MARTHA BILSON—IMPATIENCE.

§ 1. *Martha Bilson, Mrs. Clayton, &c.*

IN my walks through the parish I sometimes visited and chatted with an old woman of the name of Clayton, who kept a school for very small children. My first acquaintance with her was occasioned by attending upon her sick husband, who died under my ministrations. They were an aged couple, of equal primitive simplicity, and their hearts knew no guile. In the times of health they had been regular at church; but of late they had been quite crippled with rheumatism, and incapable of stirring abroad from their cottage; yet they never applied to the parish for relief, when disabled from earning anything by age and infirmity. They had seen their children, and their children's children, growing up under their eye, and treading in their own steps; and one son in particular, who lived close at hand, assisted his parents to the utmost of his power, although but a carter, with a large family.

The old patriarch having been gathered to his forefathers, the widow opened her school, with the view of deriving a maintenance from it. But it was just

at the period when the system of Dr. Bell began to be known and introduced, here and there, before the institution of the National Society for the Education of the Poor. Being myself acquainted with Dr. Bell, I had the opportunity of becoming acquainted also with his system, and I had established it at once in my own parish. The zeal and the munificence of the rich outstripped my wishes, and a large building soon sprung up to receive the youthful population. The schools of the poor old dames, and of the masters too, were many of them deserted in consequence, and Mrs. Clayton suffered with the rest of the same profession.

However, when myself and Mrs. Warton entered her cottage one day in the course of our rambles, we found her surrounded with a goodly circle of scholars. Some of them were too young to go to the National School, and others were of a race above it, being the children of small farmers and tradesmen. Having opened the door ourselves, and coasted along the side of a large skreen, which defended the dame and her infant fry from the cold blasts of wind, we came at length into the midst of the busy scene; and all the gabbling was hushed at once by this mighty potentate, upon the simple application of her forefinger to her mouth. She was seated in an arm-chair by the fire-side; her stature was short, and her whole person small; her face was wrinkled; her grey hairs peeped from under a neat white cap; her nose was bestridden by a pair of spectacles; her right hand wielded a long slender wand, with which she could reach at will the head of any luckless wight, even the most remote of the circle. On the mantel-piece lay a birchen rod, the terrific emblem of her authority, and the instrument of her severer punishments;

the children tingled, no doubt, whilst they eyed it askance.

Upon seeing us she began to be in a bustle. First, she took off her spectacles, and laid them on a Bible which was open before her; then she attempted to get hold of her crutches, that she might rise to welcome us; but Mrs. Warton was soon by her side, and, having resettled her in her position, she restored her without much difficulty to her wonted calm. We were then desired to sit down, and we did so, as soon as we had hunted out two chairs, and found two convenient places for them, which was by no means an easy matter. When all was arranged, expectation held us mute; but the good old lady was mute also, and seemed to wait to be informed what might be our pleasure.

I said, therefore, after some pause, "We have never been here before, Mrs. Clayton, when your little scholars happened to be with you; if you have no objection, I should like to hear what progress they have made in their learning." "You shall hear directly, Sir," she answered, replacing her spectacles upon her nose; and then she added, with a look of self-satisfaction and pride, "and I am sure, Sir, you will be pleased with them." "I dare say that I shall," I rejoined; "but do *you* examine them yourself, good Mrs. Clayton, for they have not been used to *me*, and may not understand me so well."

She embraced my proposal readily, with somewhat of the air of one who hoped to rival me in the art of examination, for she had heard how much was done in that way in our National School, and what numbers of persons had been to see it, as one of the earliest and therefore the more surprising; but she

was in no fear of comparisons. Her children, therefore, being now in order, and the inattentive warned by a gentle tap of the cane to listen to her questions, with a countenance betokening authority, gravity, and importance, she began and continued as follows, the children answering in succession, and without any hesitation or delay :—

“ Who was the first man ? Who was the oldest man ? Who was the meekest man upon earth ? Who was the patientest man ? Who was the man after God’s own heart ? Who was the wisest man ? Who was the strongest man ? Who was the hard-heartedest man ? ” And thus she went on till she had finished a much longer catalogue than that which I have here given ; and no fault or mistake having occurred, she looked round towards me and Mrs. Warton with looks which expected and demanded the tribute of a well-earned applause.

We bore it very well, and sat with a due composure, till she came to her question of the hard-heartedest man, when I began to tremble for the event, for I saw Mrs. Warton restraining herself from laughter with the very utmost difficulty, and my own risible muscles underwent a severe trial. Our curiosity, however, to hear the answer had some effect in keeping us quiet ; and it turned out to be Pharaoh, whose name one of the little urchins pronounced with as much contentment and certainty, as if she had been perfectly acquainted with his whole history.

“ Well, my good old friend,” I said, “ you must have taken a great deal of pains to teach these young children to answer so many questions, and so correctly too.” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ I have, indeed ; and I am glad that it meets with your appro-

bation. But what is a schoolmistress, Sir, that does not take pains, and is ignorant of her Bible? But you would like, Sir, I dare say, to hear them examined again; I have more questions as good as the last." "Very probably," I answered, "but the clock has struck twelve, and the children should now be dismissed to their dinners." "Oh! never mind, Sir," she said, "they have but a little way to go, and you may never have so good an opportunity again. Their dinners will not spoil."

Thus it seemed we were fairly set in for another specimen of Mrs. Clayton's method of examination; but it happened otherwise, for on the sudden, at this very instant, a loud cry burst upon us from the chamber above, and we soon distinguished the voice of a woman, exclaiming with mingled grief and anger, "Ah, the villain! ah, the wicked wretch! he will be the cause of my death! he has ruined and undone me!" We started up in amazement, and Mrs. Clayton beckoned away her scholars in a trice; and then she said, "It is my lodger, Sir, Martha Bilson: she has just miscarried, Madam, and her husband has run away from her, and when her dreadful pain comes on she cannot bear it, Madam, and she screams out in this manner."

Upon this Mrs. Warton hastened up stairs, leaving me below with the old lady until we knew more of the existing circumstances. The exclamations were not repeated during the interval of Mrs. Warton's absence, so that I was not diverted from listening to the account which Mrs. Clayton gave me of her unfortunate and unhappy lodger. Martha, she told me, was a young woman who had lived in good services, and was very decent in her appearance and

behaviour, and an honester or more modest creature there could not be ; but she was too hasty in marrying. A young man, of whom she knew nothing, an entire stranger to every body, came into the parish, and made love to her, and before he had been here six weeks, the banns were published. " Ah! Sir," she said, " he was a very canting, hypocritical, base fellow, and had deceived and married two or three young women in the same manner already. Poor Martha had saved a little money, Sir ; and when he had got it and spent it all, he told her without blushing, that he was married elsewhere, and away he went, leaving her with child, and in a worse situation besides than I can tell you, Sir : for he was a very wicked man, aye, very wicked, Sir, indeed. However, he is gone, Sir, and the grief of it, and her other bitter misfortunes, and the remembrance of what she was, have broken her down to the ground, and brought on an untimely birth ; and I fear, Sir, that if her disorders do not kill her, her sorrow will."

" But has she no comforts in her religion ?" I inquired. " Does she find nothing in her Bible to bear her up ? Her calamities are very heavy to be sure ; but they are only for a moment, you know, my good Mrs. Clayton, and then comes the better world above to last for ever." " Ay, Sir, indeed," she answered, " and so my poor old man and *me* used to comfort one another ; and I do not know what would have become of us (for we had many troubles of late) if we had not read our Bibles. But poor Martha, Sir," she said, lowering her tone from the fear of being overheard, " poor Martha never reads her Bible, although she has got a very nice one ; and so she wants meekness, Sir, and patience, and resignation."

At this moment Mrs. Warton called me, and I soon joined her in the sick chamber, whispering at the same time as I passed her, that I knew enough for my present direction. The poor woman was lying on her bed, as if languid and faint after a great exertion, and she had evidently been tearing her hair in the last paroxysm: it was once black, but sorrow had turned it grey. An old person, whom I discovered afterwards to be her mother, was on the farther side of the bed, holding one of her daughter's hands, and her countenance was still marked with terror and dismay. The appearance of Mrs. Warton and myself standing by them relieved them both; and in a short time poor Martha seemed to be so far recovered as to be able to talk with us: so I began thus:—

“ We are very sorry for you, Martha, for you are very ill, I fear, and very much disturbed in your mind.” “ I am, indeed, Sir,” she replied; “ I have been used barbarously, and I have done nothing to deserve it, and my troubles are greater than what I can bear.” “ Yes,” I said, “ I know that you have been used very barbarously, and I know also that you have always borne a good character. Your masters and mistresses, I am told, all speak well of you, in whatever service you have been; and even your husband, I should think, could not speak ill of you, if he spoke the truth. But this will not save you from troubles, Martha; troubles will come, be you what you may: they come upon the best sometimes, as well as upon the worst; and even the very best are not too good to be improved by them. Some virtues, indeed, you could never shew at all without troubles, and they are virtues which God values in a high degree, and will, therefore, highly reward hereafter. If you had been always well, Martha, and always pros-

perous, what opportunity would you have had for patience, and fortitude, and submission, and resignation to God's will? In all circumstances, therefore, we must thank *him* for enabling us to learn more and more how to please him, and to become better qualified for heaven. When you were in health and prosperity, you applied yourself to honest industry, instead of being idle and a burden upon your parents, and what money you earned you never spent foolishly, in buying tawdry bonnets and ribbons, or wickedly, in buying drink: so far you did right; and God, I am sure, was so far pleased with the manner in which you bore the trial of health and prosperity: and now he is trying you with adversity—with sickness, I mean, and poverty, that he may see how you will bear *them*. Or, more probably, he knows already that they will be good for you, and therefore he has sent them; so that it will be both your interest and your duty, my poor friend, to make all the use that may be made of your misfortunes, and more especially the use which God intends."

She was by no means disposed to admit this doctrine, which was, indeed, quite new to her; and again and again, as I went on, she was upon the point of interrupting me, had I not repressed her by the movement of my hand, and the earnestness of my look. When I stopped, she exclaimed in an instant, as if she had utterly forgotten all that I had said, whilst her thoughts dwelt painfully upon the impressions deepest in her mind, "Ah! Sir, in spite of what you tell me, is not God very cruel, to suffer me to be afflicted in this manner, when I have never done any thing to offend him?" She would have run on, no doubt, in the same strain of impiety and presumption,

but observing how shocked I was, and that my countenance became stern and severe, she checked herself, and said no more. I replied immediately, "Beware, Martha, beware, how you call God cruel, or think yourself free from offence: respectable as your conduct has always been, and much as you have been praised, with justice too, yet I do not doubt but that your offences against God are more in number than the very hairs of your head." She looked at me with astonishment when I charged her thus, and with great difficulty restrained her tongue; but I proceeded, "And as for God himself, he is always merciful, and most merciful, perhaps, when *you* think him most cruel." "I cannot understand this at all, Sir," she said impatiently, when I had done, "and I see no reason why he should bring these evils upon me; nor does my conscience accuse me of any harm that I have ever done to any body or to *him*." "You did not listen to me, Martha," I rejoined, "when I attempted to explain God's doings to you, and his manner of teaching us the difficult Christian graces. Your temper runs away with you; and I fear you will make yourself a great deal more miserable than you need be, for want of a little cool consideration, and good advice. If you would but calm yourself for a short time, and hear what I have to say, so as to understand me, I am confident that I could soon bring you to think very differently from what you seem to do now, both of yourself and of your condition. Will you undertake this, Martha; or must I go on speaking to the winds; or shall I leave you to your own fancies?"

This speech had a due effect; at least it put an end to her murmurs and petulance for the present;

and she begged that I would not leave her so hastily, but be kind enough to teach her better. "Consider, then," I said, "and tell me what you yourself should suppose that all your neighbours here would naturally think to be the first cause of your calamities; reasoning upon the matter as we generally do in such cases, and putting God quite out of the question." She was silent, and seemed extremely reluctant to answer me; for she saw, in a moment, that if she could not shift the blame upon God, she would be compelled to condemn herself, out of her own mouth, for the hastiness and imprudence of her marriage. A pause ensued, and then her mother interposed, and said, "Why, child, you know very well that your marriage was the first cause of all this; and why should you try to hide it from the Doctor? Do you think that he has never heard anything about it?" Martha was still silent; so I continued, "The marriage certainly appears to be one of the immediate causes of the poverty and sickness with which she is now afflicted. Was she not richer than most young women are, when she was living in Mrs. Bryan's service?" "Yes, that I was," she answered eagerly for herself, "and in good health too, and very happy besides; but that wretch came, Sir, and spoiled me of everything; and now you see what I am: he is the cause, Sir, he is the cause of all." "But were you forced to marry him?" I inquired. Here, again, she hesitated; but her mother exclaimed, "No, that she wasn't, Sir; poor thing, it was against her father's and mother's advice." "Such marriages seldom turn out happily," said Mrs. Warton. "Yes, Madam," replied poor Martha, "but what could I do? It was fit that I

should marry some time or other ; and this young man appeared to be so much above the rest of my equals, and promised so fair, that I was unwilling to lose such a match." " How long had you known him, Martha, before you consented to marry him ?" I asked again. Poor Martha was distressed, and her mother told the truth for her : " Ah ! Sir," she said, " *that* was a bad business indeed ; neither she nor anybody else here knew anything at all about him ; he came from nobody knew where, and nobody knows where he is gone. But she had no guile herself, Sir, and she did not suspect *him* of any ; so, poor thing ! she is ruined by her simpleness."

Here Martha began to shed tears, and Mrs. Warton gave me a sign not to press her any further ; but being fearful that I had not yet laid a sufficient foundation for my future reasonings, I asked again, addressing my question, however, to the mother, " What trade did this young man follow, whilst he remained in the parish, either before or since the marriage ?" " Ah ! Sir," answered the mother, " he was a seafaring man, and he could not settle his roving mind to any trade." " But how," I inquired, " did he intend to maintain your daughter and the family which she might bring, if she married him ?" " Oh, Sir," she said, " he talked of this, that, and the other, as if any thing would suit him ; and Mrs. Bryan, her good mistress, would have had her wait till he had fixed upon something, and had got things comfortable about him, but my poor daughter here would have her own way, and so this is the end of it." " I hope not," I replied ; " I hope, on the contrary, that God has something good in store for her yet, but she must learn to look up to *him*, and to kiss the

rod with which he corrects her ; and then all this will turn to her profit, and God will bring good out of evil. The evil, you plainly see, she has brought upon herself, by indiscretion and rashness, and too great a confidence in her own judgment. God, indeed, permitted it by his providence, but he warned her to be careful, by the voice of her mistress and her parents ; and when she slighted those warnings, he left her to herself, to walk in her own paths ; and you perceive where they have led her. But all this time, I have no doubt, he is thinking of mercy ; for now it is proved, by the fact, that poor Martha wants the virtues which I told you before were so precious in his sight, and nobody can be fit for heaven without them ; and how she could get them without adversity I do not understand. But I will read the exhortation to the sick, which we have in our prayer-books ; and then, perhaps, she will see this matter more clearly. Give me her prayer-book, good Mrs. Bilson."

The old lady now brought me Martha's Bible, all covered with dust, and when I told her that it was not what I wanted, she began to hunt about for a prayer-book ; but all in vain. Ah ! I thought to myself, there is no course of real religion in this family ; no regular exercise of prayer, private or public ; no devout supplications to heaven for strength to stand upright, or to bear the burdens of life, and to improve by them. This accounts for every thing that I see. At length the daughter herself desired her mother to look into an old chest, which stood in one corner of the room ; and whilst she was fumbling about to no purpose, as it seemed, amongst the heaps of things which the chest contained, I said to Martha, with a tone of sorrow, " Ah ! Martha, Martha, you are too like

your namesake in the gospel—you are troubled about many things, but the one thing most needful you sadly, I fear, neglect. God was not enough in your thoughts when you were well and happy; and you think of him as little now, when you are ill and miserable; or you think of him only as a cruel taskmaster. But, if you will believe *me*, you were more miserable then than you are now; for then there was no hope of saving your soul, good as you thought yourself; but now there is, if you will listen to *me*, and pray to God to help you.”

She was abashed by my rebuke, and wept, and said nothing; yet I fancied that she was not convinced of any deficiency in herself. Her mother was still fumbling: so at last she cried out rather petulantly to her, to take all the things out of the chest, and lay them on the floor, and that then she could not miss the prayer-book, which, she was sure, was there. This being done, however, very awkwardly, the book was not found, so Mrs. Warton hastened to the old lady's assistance, and, having better eyes, soon espied something in one corner, which, being brought to light, proved to be a New Testament, given to Martha by the Bible-Society, thus carefully laid up, and now become mouldy. She dived a second time into another corner, and out came the lurking, wished-for Liturgy, which was immediately recognised, and put into my hands; so I read both the exhortations to her with all the emphasis and solemnity that I could, and she seemed to be much more quiet and tranquil; but I feared that it was mere appearance, without any reality. I tried her, therefore, in the following manner, taking the exhortations for my guide, and beginning anew, to be more sure of my ground:—

“ Do you understand and believe, Martha, what you have just heard; that God has the supreme power over life and death, and that he can cut down in a moment the young, the strong, the healthy, as well as the old, the weak, the sick?” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ I know it too well, and it is a dreadful thing to think of.” “ And have not men,” I asked, “ in some respects the same sort of power? Cannot they, if they will, bring every sort of evil upon one another; and even kill one another?” “ To be sure they can, Sir,” she replied. “ But not without God’s leave, can they?” I asked. “ No, Sir, to be sure,” she answered, “ not without his leave.” “ And does not one person,” I asked again, “ often do something which is painful to another person, not for the sake of hurting him, but for the sake of doing him good?” She hesitated, as if she did not comprehend me; so I inquired if she had ever seen Mrs. Clayton whip any of her scholars. “ Yes, *that* I have,” she answered, “ and severely too; but they deserved it, Sir.” “ So then,” I said, “ she did it for their good, and not because she had any pleasure in hurting them?” “ Yes, Sir,” she replied, “ *that* was her reason, I have no doubt.” “ Very well,” I said; “ and now take a different case: have you not heard of wicked persons, such as robbers and murderers, being put to death by the executioner?” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ but I could never bear to see such a sight, no, not even if the wicked wretch who haunts me continually, and who deserves to die a hundred times, if it were possible—not even if he were to come to such a disgraceful end, as he ought to do, could I bear to see it; but I should be glad to hear of it though, and I should think, too, that God was just.”

She uttered this sentiment with a fierce tone of vengeance, and seemed to dwell upon it in her imagination with an extraordinary delight; her eye brightening up, and her cheek reddening with a tinge of fire. I was about to rebuke her again, but fearing to be led astray from the argument just commenced, and certain that I could do no good with her in other respects, till this was settled, I merely said, "Peace, Martha! we will talk of that hereafter; but now only tell me whether you cried out against Mrs. Clayton and the executioner, and accused and blamed them for what they did, when you saw or heard of their inflicting punishments?" "To be sure I did not, Sir," she answered at once. "Probably you did not," I said, "because you thought the punishments just, and inflicted with a good object, namely, to amend those who were punished, or to deter others from committing the same crimes, and thus to secure the public welfare and happiness." "*That* is it," she replied, "without doubt, Sir." "But, on the other hand," I said, "if a very strong man were to knock down all whom he met in the streets, and who never injured him, and break their limbs, and do them other mischiefs, would not you cry out loudly against him?" "Yes, indeed," she exclaimed, "for his conduct would be unjust." "Truly so," I said; "and it would be an arbitrary exercise of his superior strength; he knocks them down, not caring whether rightly or wrongly, but merely to shew that he has power to do so. It seems then, Martha, that you would cry out against all pain that was given unjustly, and not against that which is given justly?" "*That* is my feeling, Sir," she answered. "So, therefore," I continued, "if I saw you crying

out in that manner, my good Martha, I might be sure in my own mind, that you thought that either you yourself or somebody else had suffered pain unjustly ; might I not ?” “ You might, Sir,” she replied. “ And also,” I said, “ that the person causing the pain, or permitting it when able to hinder it, was an unjust person ?” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ and *that* too.” “ Well then,” I said, “ you have told me already, that you are aware of the great power of God ; and you seemed to acknowledge, both before and now, that no calamities can happen to any body without his permission, at the least, and the direction of his providence ; although others might be the immediate causes of them ; and in some degree, or rather chiefly, your own indiscretion is the cause in your own case : this you appear to know ; and on the other hand, I have heard myself, and all the people in this house have heard, again and again, how much you cry out, and murmur, and repine, under these calamities of yours : therefore I must conclude, I suppose, from your own reasoning, that you have a strong sense and feeling of God’s injustice, for having suffered, if not having actually caused, these evils to come upon you. Shall I be right in supposing such a thing of you ?”

Here Martha was reduced to a great strait, and knew not what to answer ; or at least she was very reluctant to say anything : so her mother endeavoured to shield her, by assuring me that her daughter was not so ignorant about God, and that her complaints were against the wicked man who had betrayed and ruined her. “ And then, Sir,” she added, “ her disorders are uncommon, and her pains are very great, and she has been hitherto unused to pain ; so I

hope you will forgive her, if she is not so easy under it as she might be." "Oh!" I said, "I forgive her very readily, and I pity her from my heart, and I have no doubt that her pain, both of body and mind, is difficult to bear, especially at present. But what I wish to guard her against is, not so much her wailing and lamenting on account of the pain, however troublesome and distressing it may be to herself and those who attend upon her, but all murmuring against God, and all feeling of malice or revenge towards any of her fellow-creatures; these are the bad things which must be utterly rooted out, or her soul will be ruined, as well as her body. And I must own I do not think that poor Martha sees very clearly yet, that it is quite impossible for God to be cruel or unjust. By her reasoning, you perceive, and by her conduct and speeches, she makes him to be very unjust, and she has even called him cruel. Do you know," I said, turning to the sick woman herself, "why men are cruel and unjust?"

"No, indeed, Sir," she answered; "I cannot tell exactly." "Why," I continued, "there are various reasons which we may easily imagine—the man, who knocked the people down in the streets at random, might have done it merely to shew his strength, and from some strange delight which he had in doing mischief, without wishing to get anything by it; might he not?" "He might, certainly," she replied; "and I do not see how he could get any good by it." "Very well," I said; "do you think that God ever does harm to anybody merely to shew his strength?" She seemed to be afraid to answer this question; so I continued—"In your case, Martha, at least, it is clear that God has not done anything to shew his strength;

indeed it is more likely that none of your neighbours consider God as having any concern in the matter at all; everything has happened so naturally. When God strikes down a man in the midst of health, youth, and vigour, and still more when he destroys a city, all at once, by the mighty shock of an earthquake, then people, in their astonishment and terror, see his hand clearly enough and adore it; and then he may be said to shew his strength, whether he act with that view, or not. We must look, therefore, for some other reason, in order to explain your own case; and if you consider, you will find that men are cruel and unjust, because they think to gain something by being so, or to gratify some evil passion. But you do not suppose, I presume, that God has any thing to gain by injustice or cruelty? Do you know of anything which God wants for any purpose whatever—anything eatable, or drinkable, or for show and finery?" "No, indeed, Sir," she answered; "I am not so foolish." "Oh! then," I said, "he hurts people, perhaps, in order to gratify some evil passion; is this your notion of him? Does he delight, do you think, in seeing the misery of mankind, and in knowing that he himself has caused it, and that he has caused it only to make them miserable?"

I twisted this question into various forms; but, partly from being unable to comprehend it, as I conjectured, and still more from a reluctancy, as I conjectured also, to give up the idea that she herself was unjustly and cruelly punished, she made me no answer; so I asked her if she had ever met with a *man* of that description.—"Yes, Sir," she answered immediately, "that I have; and many an one." "And what did you call them," I inquired, "bad men or

good men?" "Bad men, Sir," she replied at once, and in a decisive tone. "And what do you call God; a bad being or a good one?" She hesitated; so I inquired what sort of a being she considered the devil to be; good or bad. "Oh! bad, Sir," she exclaimed, eagerly; "as bad as bad can be." "Very well," I said; "and now tell me, whether you suppose God and the devil to be friends or foes to one another." "Foes," she answered; "there can be no doubt of *that*." "Then it is likely," I said, "is it not, that they are very different from one another, and that they pursue after different things?" "Yes," she replied; "it is so certainly." "And does not the devil," I said, "as far as we know anything about him, pursue always after mischief, for the sake of mischief; hurting men to please himself; and trying to bring us all into his own place of torment, that he may make us as miserable as possible, and lighten his own misery by having partners in it, and thereby also vex God Almighty himself, if he could by any means do so?" "That is what he wishes, I have no doubt, Sir," she answered. "Then God being a foe to the devil, and a different being," I said, "and pursuing different things, it is probably his object and wish to do all the good that is possible, both to please himself, and to counteract his wicked enemy, and to make men happy, and to bring them at last to heaven, to see and to share in his own happiness: is not this agreeable to reason, and is not this also what our Bibles tell us of him? and the Bible, Martha, is God's own word, you know."

To all this, when it had been placed before her under different aspects, she at length fully, though not cordially, assented; so I asked her, since it was now

agreed upon between us, that God was desirous of making us all happy, both in time and eternity, whether she thought that he could do it for us all, so various as we are, by the same means? "No," she answered; "I should suppose, Sir, that he must use different means with different people." "You are right," I said; "if there were a rich man, for instance, like Dives in the parable of our Lord, and he spent all his riches upon himself, showing himself abroad every day with his servants, his horses, his carriages, suffering his poor sick neighbours to starve and die for want of food, clothing, and medicine, whilst his own table was covered with the most costly fare, and his person guarded and adorned with the warmest and finest clothes, appropriate to every change of season, and the most skilful physicians are ready to fly to his aid upon the first symptom even of an imaginary disease, would you call this rich man happy?" "No, Sir," she replied; "*that* I wouldn't, whatever he might call himself." "Very true," I said; "for you would justly think that what will bring a man to hell-fire, as it did Dives, could never be properly called happiness; and that men living in that manner, and fancying it supreme happiness to do so, would find themselves to be woefully mistaken in the end." "I should, Sir, indeed," she answered. "Well, but," I said, "God wishes to make this wealthy, proud, thoughtless man happy hereafter at all events, and here too, if it were possible. How, then, is it to be done? For example, how shall he teach him to have pity and compassion upon those who are far beneath him and in distress—a Christian feeling, without which, whatever may become of him here, he will never get to heaven hereafter? Do you

know any more natural or certain way than by reducing him to poverty, that he may learn, by his own experience, what it is to be hungry without food, and naked without clothing, and sick without medicine, and so be brought by degrees to pity those who are in a similar condition?" "No, Sir," she replied; "I know of no surer or better way than this." "But he will be very much dissatisfied himself," I said, "will he not, with being hurled at once from riches to poverty?" "It is very likely, Sir, indeed," she answered. "And perhaps also," I said, "he will call God cruel and unjust, or think him so; will he not?"

Here she paused for a moment, and I expected that she would be deeply conscience-struck with this question; but soon she answered fearlessly, that the rich man might do so, but that he would be in the wrong. In fact, her circumstances were apparently so different, that probably she made no direct application at all to herself at present. So I continued, "Yes, indeed, he would be in the wrong undoubtedly; for instead of being cruel and unjust, God is precisely the very contrary: he is merciful, you see, in the highest degree; he might have cut off such a man at once, to punish the man himself, and to warn others by a terrible judgment; but he spares his life, and only chastises him with the rod of affliction in this world, that he may save his precious, immortal soul in the next. And what is this world to any man at the very longest; suppose him, if you will, to live to a hundred years?" "Why, Sir," she answered, "it will seem short enough, when it is gone." "Yes, indeed," I said, "very short, in comparison with the next, which will never end; so that what signify pain, or poverty, or any thing else of that sort, which foolish

men call misery, if they last so short a time, and train us up for that more important state which will last for ever? Do you know, Martha, that there will be different degrees of happiness in heaven?" "Yes, Sir," she replied; "I have heard so." "And also," I asked again, "that we shall be rewarded *there*, according to what we have done well, and suffered well, *here*?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "I have read *that* in my Bible." "Suppose, then," I said, "Martha, if you please, a whole life of suffering; and suppose the suffering person to gain in consequence of it a much higher place in heaven than he would otherwise have done, if he got to heaven at all; do you think he would complain?" "Not then, Sir, I dare say," she replied; "when the suffering is all over, and the joy is come." "Why, yes," I said, "he will then do nothing but rejoice, and bless God for sending the evil which had purchased for him so much greater good. Will not this be his feeling?" "Without doubt, Sir, it will," she answered. "True," I said; "and even whilst he is under the pain of the suffering, yet if he does what God commands, and has a perfect faith and trust in all God's promises, will he not be always looking forward to, and longing after, the happiness which is to come hereafter, and thinking and striving to get a larger share of it?" "He ought to do so, Sir," she replied. "Well," I said, "and will not this reflection bear up his mind under all his pain and trouble, and give him even a sort of joy in his very sufferings, and cause him to bless God for afflicting him, whilst he prays that he may become what God wishes him to be?"

Thus after a long and desultory conversation, I was now come round again to the point from which

I had set out, and this last question went home, I believe, to Martha's bosom, for she attempted no answer, but became on the sudden quite speechless. However, I pressed her still further, by asking her whether such a person would murmur and complain of God's dealings with him, and call God cruel and unjust; or, if he did, whether she thought that God would receive him into heaven at all. Here she began to tremble, and to shew other signs of great agitation; so Mrs. Warton interposed, and said, "I am sure, Dr. Warton, that poor Martha will think and act differently now from what she has done hitherto; but you must not talk with her any longer at present, for she is very weak, and should be kept quiet, I perceive. Will you pray for her, that she may have the gift of patience, and then leave her for a little while to me?" "By all means," I answered; so we knelt down, and I read the shortest prayer in the Visitation Service, inserting at the proper place a petition for the kindred graces of fortitude, of patience, and resignation. This being done, and the benediction pronounced, I rose and went down stairs; Mrs. Warton remaining after me to make a fuller inquiry into the sick woman's necessities.

Below, I found the good old lady upon the point of beginning her dinner, with one of her grandchildren in attendance upon her. I had before observed a pot smoking on the fire, and now it had produced a piece of bacon and some greens, which were set upon a small table by the side of the easy chair. "Shall I say grace for you, Mrs. Clayton?" I exclaimed, as I came in sight of her; and she answered immediately, "If you will do me such a favour, Sir, I shall be very proud of it." So I said

grace, and she apologized for not being able to stand, but she clasped her hands with devotion, and evidently shewed, that, in his gifts, she saw *Him* that was invisible. However, as she was rather in a bustle and trepidation, and did not seem to be able to dine comfortably while I was present with her, I took my leave, and paced up and down in the road in front of the cottage till Mrs. Warton rejoined me.

As we walked homewards together, she informed me about Martha's circumstances. Her father and mother, it appeared, were not parishioners of ours, though old inhabitants of the parish; but she herself had acquired a legal settlement amongst us by service, and her marriage, whether legal or illegal, had made no practical alteration. If the marriage was illegal, which she herself supposed, and therefore had resumed her maiden name, the case was clear that she belonged to *us*; if legal, yet the settlement of her husband was undiscoverable. On this ground, therefore, the officers of the parish had decided to allow her half-a-crown weekly during her sickness, and they left the rest to her parents, who had no other child, and to the friends whom Martha had gained for herself. Upon the whole, these resources being partly insufficient, and partly precarious, we felt ourselves called upon to interpose, both personally, and as the almoners of our rich and well-disposed neighbours. But poor Martha was as grateful to those who were kind to her, as she was bitter against those who injured her; so she became exceedingly attached to Mrs. Warton and myself, and the more inclined on that account to yield to our arguments and admonitions, and to believe the truth, and feel the importance of the doctrines which we inculcated upon her.

Before the next conversation, she had received some substantial favours from us, and the good effect was visible enough.

After I left her to Mrs. Warton at this first visit, she expressed a great fear lest she might have offended me by speaking her opinions too openly and unwarily. "No," replied Mrs. Warton, "you may set yourself quite at ease in that respect; Dr. Warton too often meets with persons who are not sufficiently resigned to the afflicting dispensations of Providence: it is, indeed, a very difficult lesson to learn, especially if there seem to be no wickedness in the sufferer to account at once for the afflictions. If people are wicked, Martha, you can understand, I suppose, that God may send afflictions upon them as a punishment, without being liable himself to the charge of cruelty or injustice?" "Yes, Madam," she answered, "I understand *that* very well." "And if God should send these afflictions," continued Mrs. Warton, "not merely to punish the wicked, but to reclaim them from their wickedness, and thus to save them, what would you think of it then?" "Why, Madam," she replied, "I should think that God was very gracious to them." "You would think rightly, without doubt," said Mrs. Warton. "Then your only difficulty, Martha, is about the sufferings which come upon those who appear to *you* to be good already—is that so?" "Yes, Madam, that *was* my difficulty," she answered, "but the Doctor has done it away in part." "I am glad to hear it," said Mrs. Warton, "and I hope he will be able to do it away altogether: I am sure he will try, were he ever so much offended with you; but he is not offended, and you may depend upon seeing him often." "He will be very

good to come to me," she replied ; and so Mrs. Warton took leave ; and when she related this short conversation to me, it gave me great hopes of ultimate success.

Before I saw Martha Bilson again, I received a lamentable account of her from two medical men, surgeons and apothecaries in the parish, whom I had requested to hold a consultation upon her case. They informed me, that her life might be saved, but that her health would be never, in all probability, restored ; and, amongst other things which this poor creature was likely to undergo, they apprehended the formation of a fistula—which eventually occurred, and was a source of constant distress to her. However, at my next visit, I found her apparently much better ; and Mrs. Clayton told me, as I passed through her room, that Martha had ceased to fret with the same violence as formerly, and was beginning to be able to keep her sorrows to herself. " She may make them known to God," I said, " in prayer for submission and thankfulness. Those are heavenly graces, Mrs. Clayton ; and when God has given them to her, she will be fit for heaven." " Yes, indeed !" said the good old lady, whilst she clasped her hands, and lifted her eyes upwards with devotion, as if she were asking for the same Christian virtues for herself. The sight arrested me for a moment ; it was pleasing and striking as a mere portrait, but it betokened a soul aspiring to be amongst the saints above.

" Well, my poor Martha," I said gently, when I was close to the sick-bed, " I hope that what I hear is true, both that your pain is lessened, and your fortitude and patience increased : so we shall have two things to be thankful for to God." " Yes, Sir," she

answered rather doubtingly, "my pain, perhaps, is lessened; but the doctors tell me a sad story." "It may be very wise of *them*," I said, "to let you know beforehand the worst which they fear may come, that you may be well prepared for it, and not be too much cast down by any thing sudden and unexpected. But what matters it, come what may, if your fortitude and patience increase so much as to enable you to bear it as a Christian should." "Ah! Sir," she replied, "pain is a very terrible thing; and I see nothing but poverty and a workhouse before my eyes continually; and yet if I have been rash, I have never been a wicked woman, Sir." "No, indeed, Martha," I said, "I believe not; but we will not talk of *that* now; you will understand it better some time hence. We will talk of your sickness and your poverty, which, at all events, may make you, and are intended to make you, a far better woman than you could ever have been without them. But you are terrified with the thought of the pain which your disorders will occasion you, and of the difficulties and troubles which will spring from poverty. Suppose, however, if you will, that your pain should increase ever so much, but that God, being entreated for you, should increase in the same degree your ability to bear it: and suppose also that God should raise you up friends to keep you from the workhouse, and lighten the distress of poverty, what would you think then? Would not a great deal of pain and a great deal of trouble, with a full power to bear them, be much better than a little pain and a little trouble without any such power?"

This was no axiom to poor Martha; and after a while, when she had turned the question about in her thoughts, she said, "If I might be so bold, Sir, I

should think that the little pain and trouble was better than the great deal." "Well, but," I rejoined, "suppose that you were to gain a thousand pounds by the great deal, and nothing by the little, what would you say then?" "*That* alters the case very much indeed, Sir," she replied. "So that, in such a case," I said, "you would choose the great deal; would you not?" "Yes, Sir, *that* I would," she answered, with eagerness enough. "And which is best," I asked, "a thousand pounds, or heaven?" She was struck, but still she hesitated what to say; at length, however, she allowed that heaven must certainly be better than a thousand pounds. "Yes," I continued, "better than all the treasures of gold and silver which all the kings and rich men in the world ever heaped up together. But put the gain out of your thoughts for a moment, and tell me, whether you ever saw a person crying, and sobbing, and storming, and raging, and beating her breast, and tearing her hair, and all for a very little matter?" "I have, to be sure, Sir," she replied; "but I hope you do not mean *me*, Sir; mine is no small matter." "No, I do not mean *you*, Martha," I said: "you have suffered greatly. However, tell me again, whether you have ever seen a person who has suffered greatly, bearing it greatly too; that is, without any such passionate signs of utter sorrow and despair?" With infinite reluctance she confessed that she had, and seemed to be beginning to be ashamed of her own weakness. "And which person did you admire most," I inquired; "her that was passionate, or her that was resigned?" "I wondered at *her* that was so resigned, Sir," she answered; "but I did not admire the other at all." "And which," I inquired

again, "do you think was the more miserable and wretched of the two?" "The passionate one," she replied, "And yet the passionate one," I said, "had but little to grieve for, whilst the calm and resigned woman had much." "It is very true," she answered. "Then," I said, "our being wretched and miserable, or not, depends chiefly upon our being able to bear, or not, the calamities which come upon us; does it not?" She hesitated, but she allowed it. "So then, after all," I said, "we come at last to the same question as before, and which now you will be very well prepared to answer; namely, whether a great deal of pain and trouble, with an equal degree of fortitude and patience to bear it, be not a better thing than a little pain and trouble with none?" "Why, Sir," she replied, "I understand you very well now, and what you say is very true; and I wish I had more fortitude and patience myself; but it is very hard to get them. Besides, Sir, when a person suffers, as I do, and am likely to do, without having been wicked, it requires greater fortitude and greater patience to bear it without complaining. A wicked person has no right to complain on account of afflictions; he deserves them."

Poor Martha was always harping upon this string, her fancied goodness, and the consequent hardship of being punished; for all affliction in her view was punishment. I did not consider her as yet ripe for any discussion of her merits, and therefore I waived that subject as before, and reminded her now of the gain, the thousand pounds that we had talked of, the higher place in heaven which was to be got by the patient endurance and the proper improvement of her afflictions. "This hope," I said, "is the support of all

the good. A bad man can only expect by suffering in this world to escape the more terrible sufferings of the next; but a good one is encouraged to expect an abundant and exceeding measure of reward, heaped up and running over. He thinks, therefore, if this reward, and his afflictions become light; and he knows that hereafter, when he looks back upon the time during which he was afflicted in this world, it will appear to be no more than a pin's point; it will almost vanish out of his sight, and be forgotten; or if remembered, it will be remembered only with joy, as having been the cause of a greater happiness."

Here I stopped, to see what effect my reasoning had produced; and as she gave me no answer, I concluded that she was too much buried in present sensible things, and rendered incapable thereby of elevating her mind to things future and spiritual. Her faith, I thought, must be of the very lowest description, without any life or vigour. At length it occurred to me to question her in the following manner:—

"Were you ever troubled with the tooth-ache, Martha?" "Yes, indeed, Sir," she answered, "when I was very young, I had it bad enough; and I verily feared that I should have gone distracted with it." "Did you know what it proceeded from?" I inquired. "Oh, yes, Sir," she replied: "it was caused by a rotten tooth." "Then, I suppose, you had the tooth drawn at once," I said; "had you not?" "To be sure I had, Sir," she answered. "Well, Martha," I said, "but did you not tremble at the thought of the very sharp pain which would be occasioned by the drawing of the tooth?" "Why, Sir," she replied, "I own I did not like the thought of it; but then I knew very well that the pain would only be for a mo-

ment, and that I might never have the tooth-ache again : so I went to the dentist courageously (I forget his name, Sir), and I did not flinch much when he pulled out the tooth, because I was determined to bear it." "Very well," I said ; "and what has been the consequence?" "I have never had the tooth-ache since," she answered. "And how long is that?" I asked. She considered for an instant, and then told me that it was about ten years. "So that," I said, "the pain of drawing the tooth was only the business of a moment or two ; but the ease procured by it has lasted for ten years." "Just so, Sir," she replied. "Well then, Martha," I said, "now tell me, what is a moment in comparison with ten years?" "Nothing, Sir," she answered ; "it is not worth considering at all." "But you still remember, I suppose, do you not, the sharpness of the pain?" I inquired. "Oh, yes, Sir," she replied, "I remember it very well ; it hurt me terribly." "Then, perhaps," I said, "whenever you think of it, even now at this distance of time, you cry out against the poor dentist, and murmur at him for it?" "No, indeed," she answered, with animation, "I am not so foolish as that comes to ; I never cried out against him at all, neither since, nor even then : he meant me no harm ; he meant me good, but he could not give me the good without some pain first ; so I thanked him at the time, and have been thankful to him ever since."

Well, thought I to myself, this is very strange, if she sees this reasoning about the tooth so clearly and perfectly, and yet does not apply it to her present circumstances and her future prospects. I paused, therefore, to give her time to reflect ; but as she seemed quite vacant, I asked her if the dentist loved

her? "Oh! no, Sir," she replied quickly, "not *he*, he never saw me or heard of me before in his life." "But," I said, "he took care, I suppose, to give you as little pain as possible, for the sake of his own reputation, that you might spread his name abroad, and get him more business?" "It is very likely, Sir," she answered. "But what," I said, "if he had loved you into the bargain, as your good mother there, for instance, loves her daughter, would he not have been ten times as careful, if possible, to give you no more pain than what might be absolutely unavoidable, in order to procure you the ease and comfort of being free from tooth-ache?" "I suppose he would, Sir," she replied.

Here again, thought I, she is upon the verge of what she wants, and yet she does not appear to see it. So I asked her successively, whether God was not the father of us all? Whether it was not natural that fathers should love their children? Whether the wisest and best of fathers did not love their children in the highest degree? Whether God was not the wisest and the best of beings; wiser and better than all the wisest and best men in the world; so wise as to know perfectly both what is most profitable for his creatures, and how to bring it about in the most profitable manner; and so good besides, as to be always disposed to do for them what he knows will be profitable, and also to do it with the least possible pain? To all these questions she answered affirmatively, and without hesitation, except to the last. When I had advanced so far, she seemed to perceive distinctly that the whole argument was aimed against herself, and she could not reconcile her own circumstances with it; however, at length, but with a dubious counte-

nance, she allowed it. She would have said, perhaps, if she had known how to do so, "Your theory is right, but it is overthrown by facts;" but then her facts were merely assumptions, and not founded in truth; and her faith not being strong enough to be any evidence to her of things unseen and future, these future, unseen things, that might come she knew not when, or even not at all, had but a weak effect upon her heart and affections. Still, as she had in words at least granted every thing, I now recalled to her recollection what she had said about the dentist; namely, that she had not only submitted to the pain which he gave her without a single murmur, but that she had submitted also with thankfulness; "And yet the dentist," I continued, "had no love for you whatever, nor were you sure that he was one of the wisest or most skilful of his profession. How much more then ought you to submit cheerfully and with thanksgiving, according to the exhortation which I read to you yesterday, to your heavenly Father's hand, whensoever, by any manner of adversity, it shall please him to visit you? For you allowed that he was the wisest and best of beings; and I am sure that every page of Scripture, and the whole world around us, prove, beyond the possibility of doubt, that he loves us all with unutterable love; and that, like as a father pitieth his own children, even so does *He* pity *us* in our fallen state, and desire to raise us up from it, and exalt us to heaven."

I paused here for her answer, and she seemed to be revolving in her mind what to say, as on former occasions when she was hard pushed; but, before she had determined, her mother, who was not biassed by the same prejudice, or disturbed by the same passion,

was rather disposed to upbraid her for appearing to make difficulties, and so she cried out with a little mixture of anger, "Why, child, it is as plain as a pike-staff, what the good Doctor says to you. These troubles have taken away her senses, Sir," she continued, turning her face towards me; "she had not used to be so dull." Then turning again towards her daughter, she said, "God is wise above all others; God is good above all others; God loves you too; ay, indeed, he loves you more than I do, who am your own mother. Whatever he sends, therefore, you must be content with—no, no, *that* is too little, you must thank him for it." This was excellent for a person whom I had considered before to be very ignorant; so I commended her highly, and added, "You are quite right; you understand the thing perfectly; and I dare say, you see besides that, when we murmur, it is not only the same as charging God with cruelty and injustice, but it is to set up our own wisdom against the wisdom of God: to pretend that we are wiser than he is, and that we know what is good for us better than he does. But surely this would be very foolish, and very wicked too."

"Yes, indeed," said the old lady, "and I hope my poor child here will leave it off altogether. She is very much improved in one day, Sir; and now the thing is explained to *me*, I can talk to her about it when your honour is away." "Do so," I rejoined, "and consider this also, that, let your daughter do whatever she may, God will have his own will done after all, and not hers, unless she is stronger than *him*. Shall we ask her this question, whether she thinks herself stronger than God?" Here Martha herself was roused a little, and cried out, "No, dear

Sir ; do not ask me such a question as *that*. I have read about God's power, and I know that it is almighty, and that it is useless to strive against it." " Yes," I said, " all striving against God's power, and murmuring at what he does, or permits others to do, is useless, as you are able yourself to see ; but I wonder that you do not see also how unwise and dangerous it is. If God were like a man, what do you think he would do to those who resisted him, or murmured at him ?" She trembled exceedingly, and replied with a faltering voice, " Why, perhaps, Sir, he would punish them the worse for it." " Yes, indeed," I said, " but God is what the Scriptures call 'long-suffering ;' that is, he bears with our sins and follies, and spares us even when we deserve punishment, until, in his great mercy, he has tried every method of kindness towards us ; and when this kindness has failed to reclaim us, and we continue to provoke him more and more, and repine at his dispensations, then indeed it may be expected that he will arise to take vengeance upon us : yet even then the blow which he inflicts, considered as a punishment, will be no heavier than the correction of a father, and it will have a father's object in view, namely, the improvement of the child. Is not so gracious a being, then, to be loved and adored by us with every faculty that we have ? And are not all his doings towards us to be received with thankfulness ? For thus the object being attained, it is likely that he will see fit to withdraw his hand, and remove the burden which oppresses us, or adapt our strength to the bearing of it ; so that we may become, like Job, examples of patience to our neighbours whilst we live here, and

be rewarded beyond all conception, before men and angels, hereafter."

"Ah! well, Sir," said Martha in reply, "I wish heartily that I was convinced of all this, and then, perhaps, I should be as patient and thankful as another; but I will do my best, Sir, to be what you desire me to be, because I know that you will give me good advice, and because I see that it may be dangerous to be otherwise." "Certainly, Martha," I said, "the advice which I give you is good; and it is a commendable thing to follow good advice, and to avoid dangers. But I would have you to be what I desire, not simply because I desire it, or because you fear God's anger, but from a still better principle. You pray to God, Martha, do you not?" "To be sure I do, Sir," she answered immediately, with a look of surprise at my question. "And when you pray," I inquired, "do you sometimes repeat the Lord's Prayer?" "Yes, very often, Sir," she replied. "Well, then," I said, "one of the petitions in the Lord's Prayer is, that God's will may be done in earth as it is in heaven; when you uttered it, did you always think attentively and particularly what it meant?"

Here she began to muse, and to try, as it seemed, for the first time, to understand with her mind what she had so often repeated with her lips; I helped her, therefore, in this manner:—"There are angels, Martha, in heaven, are there not?" I asked. "Yes, Sir," she answered, "so we are told." "And they are very good, and very happy, are they not?" I asked again. "Yes, Sir," she replied, "there is no doubt of it." "Now, tell me then," I said, "whe-

ther you think that these blessed spirits could be good or happy, if they disobeyed the will of God?" "No, indeed," she answered, "and I should think, too, that if they were bad, he would not suffer them to live with him any longer; and then you know, Sir, they *must* be unhappy." "Yes," I said, "if they were not punished in any other way, the very memory of what they had lost would be enough to torment them for ever." "Ay, ay, Sir," she exclaimed with great feeling, "it is a bitter thing to remember pleasures that are gone by, and which we know that we can never have again." I took no notice of this evident allusion to herself, but said, "Well, Martha, and what makes the angels so good and so happy? Is it not because they always do the will of God, and never disobey him in any thing? We call them good, do we not, because they do God's will? and their doing it makes them happy, or rather it is itself the main part of their happiness. Do you understand this?" "I understand it very well," she answered, "and I believe it too."

"Now, then," I said, "let us see what beings there are on this earth to do God's will." "Why, Sir, there are men, and no others," she interposed with quickness. "Yes," I said, "there is the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the clouds, and the winds, and the waves; and you forget what numbers of animals there are besides men. Do not all these obey God, and execute his will without the slightest failure?" "It is very true, Sir," she replied; "I did not think of those things. But then you know, Sir, they cannot do otherwise than they do, if they wished it ever so much." "You are right," I said; "some of them have no life, and none of them have reason, as

a man has ; so they have no power of choosing, like men, what is good, or what is bad ; they obey from necessity. Still their obedience brings glory to God without bringing any credit to themselves ; because it is always glorious to a workman, (and God is the greatest and most wonderful workman that ever was,) when his works proceed without failure precisely as he has ordained and appointed. But it would be more glorious to him, would it not, if men obeyed him ?” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ because they may disobey him, if they like.” “ True,” I said, “ their obedience and their disobedience are both from choice, and not from necessity. If men obeyed God by necessity, he would be more pleased with it than he is with the obedience of the sun or moon ; but when they choose to obey him, having at the same time the power to disobey him, or, in other words, when they follow *his* will, and not their own, then it is very glorious both for *him* and for themselves too, is it not ?” “ To be sure it is, Sir,” she replied. “ But it is difficult sometimes, Martha,” I said, “ is it not, to give up our own will, and to do the will of God only ?” “ I dare say it must be, Sir,” she answered. “ Does not God require of us always to speak the truth ?” I asked. “ Yes, Sir,” she said ; “ and I have always been careful to do it.” “ I am glad of it,” I continued : “ but a man may sometimes get a great deal of money by telling a lie, or escape some severe punishment ; may he not ?” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ he may, indeed.” “ Suppose, then,” I said, “ that he tells the truth, and scorns the money, or the punishment, will not God be very much pleased, and glorified too ?” “ Without doubt, Sir,” she replied. “ The man’s own will,” I said, “ might be

to get the money, to save him from poverty, or to escape the punishment, to save him from pain ; but then this cannot be done without telling a lie : so God's will and his own will are at variance with each other ; and the man chooses God's will, although apparent evil goes with it, (namely, pain or poverty,) rather than his own will, although it would have been attended with seeming profit or pleasure. Is not this excellent, and will it not procure God's especial favour ?" " We may be sure of it," she replied. " So then," I said, " the man may think with himself—I am very poor in this world for speaking the truth, but I know where I am the richer for it ; I have laid up a treasure in heaven ; I am rich with God. And, if he were fully persuaded of this, would he not be far happier in his poverty than if he had all the wealth under the sun ?" " He would indeed," she answered. " Yet," I said, " he knows nothing of any reward that he is to get from God, except by his faith ; does he ? The evil is here immediate, and present to him every day ; but except a good conscience, and the inward comfort and support of the Holy Spirit, all other reward is future and distant, perhaps, and to take place in a world of which he has no experience ; so he must believe that there is such a world, and that it will be full of rewards and happiness, must he not, and his faith must make up for his want of sight?"

She gave me no answer to this, and I observed that she seemed not quite to understand me ; so I said, " The angels, Martha, know that there is such a happy place as heaven, because they see it, and live in it, and enjoy it, every moment ; do we know the same fact in the same manner ?" " No, indeed," she

replied ; “ we shall not know it in that manner till we get there.” “ But how then do we know it now ? ” I asked. She was manifestly casting about for an answer ; so I said, “ Did not Jesus Christ tell us all about it in the Gospel ? ” “ Oh ! yes, Sir,” she replied, hastily, “ *that* is it ; I had forgotten *that*.” “ And whatever Jesus Christ told us,” I said, “ should we not believe it ? ” “ To be sure we ought,” was her answer. “ Well then, Martha,” I said, “ when we do this, we have faith ; so the angels, you find, have sight to direct them, but men have faith only ; and this explains what I mentioned before, that a man’s faith must make up for his want of sight.” “ Yes, Sir,” she replied ; “ I understand you now thoroughly.” “ So much the better,” I said ; “ but the misfortune is, Martha, that the faith of men in general is very weak, and therefore they have not the same certainty about heaven as if they saw it with their eyes ; and so they too often fall into sin, choosing their own will instead of God’s. However, there are, I hope, and, I am sure, there have been, many men whose faith was as strong as their sight would have been. We talked just now about escaping punishment ; do you know of any earthly punishment, generally speaking, worse than death ? ” “ No, Sir, I know of none,” she answered ; “ it is the finishing stroke. But a few days ago, Sir, so far was I from dreading it, that I thought it would have been the only relief to me from my sufferings, and I longed for it much more than for life. Once indeed, (I shudder whilst I tell you, Sir,) it came across me, (do not you mention it, mother) that I might as well hasten it with my own hand.” Here she turned quite pale, and for a moment was deprived of the power of

utterance ; “ And,” at length she continued, “ if I had not seen you, Sir, God only knows what I might have been rash enough to do. Ah ! Sir, death is a terrible thing ; and I see now that it must be left to God.”

The poor old mother stood aghast at this sad confession of her daughter’s ; and after a while she said, “ I hope, child, I shall be deep in the ground before you do such a deed as *that*. Blessed be the Lord that it has not happened yet !” As for myself, when I was somewhat recovered from the chill of horror which darted over me, I cried out, “ Ay, indeed ; you may well bless God ; for where would her poor soul have been now ?” “ Yes, yes, Sir,” exclaimed Martha herself ; “ it was wrong, very wrong in me ; but my sufferings were greater than I could bear.” “ Very likely,” I said, “ without God’s help ; but with it you might bear anything, and turn it to your profit too. You should have prayed to God, instead of thinking of rushing into his presence.” “ I did pray to him, Sir,” she said. “ To do what ?” I asked rapidly. “ To take me, Sir,” she answered, but with a tone of doubt, as if her prayer could hardly be justified. “ Ah, Martha, Martha, you were very impatient, and very inconsiderate ; but I will not blame you, as you seem disposed to blame yourself. See, however, according to what we have been talking about—see how you set up your own will against God’s, and your own wisdom against *his* ; whilst the only true wisdom is to have no will and no ends of your own, but to strive always to be what God has declared in Scripture that he wishes you to be, and to desire to have nothing but what he appoints for you. In truth, what he appoints for you must needs

be always the best. You cannot be mistaken in this, unless it be a mistake to think him the wisest and best of beings."

I stopped, and fancied that my poor patient was more deeply impressed with the argument than she had ever before appeared to be. She was evidently revolving it in her thoughts, and trying to make her faculties bow to the mighty force of truth. At length she exclaimed, in a sort of despair, "Oh! Sir, I want faith, I want faith—I am aware of it now. Without faith, Sir, as you have told me, to make up for want of sight, I can do nothing. The angels are always beholding the goodness and wisdom of God, and so they are sure that what he does is for the best; and this I suppose causes them to love him beyond everything else; and when they do *that*, then there is no wonder that they should be obedient and happy. Such, Sir, are my poor thoughts about this matter."

"Very well, Martha," I said; "you are right about the angels; and it is a great step towards the improvement of yourself to know your own defects; and, when you do know them, if you will pray constantly and heartily to God to remedy those defects, he will certainly do it. One great defect, which you acknowledge yourself, is a weak and inefficient faith in the perfections and promises of God; but he will strengthen it in you, if you ask him to do so, and if you study day by day his holy Scriptures, and partake of his holy ordinances. A true and firm faith will enable you to endure every trial, and the very last extremity; yes, even to give your body to be burned with fire. I was going to tell you about these wonderful effects of faith, when our conversation took an-

other turn ; but you, perhaps, know something about it already." " Do you speak of the martyrs, Sir ?" she asked. I nodded assent. She continued—" One of my mistresses had a great book, Sir, about the sufferings of the martyrs, and the burning of men and women for their religion, which I used to read sometimes ; and it made me wonder very much how they could bear up, as they did, when the fire blazed all around them ; but now I see it was by their faith they did it : I fear that mine will never be anything like to theirs."

" Do not despair, my good Martha," I said ; " even to-day, I hope, you have made some advances towards it. Do you not think that you can now offer up, not only with understanding, but also with sincerity, *that* petition of which I spoke in the Lord's Prayer—" Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven ?" " Yes, Sir," she answered ; " I shall always understand the meaning of it when I repeat it in future ; and I trust to be able to repeat it with sincerity, and from my heart ; but it is a hard thing to desire God's will to be done, when it falls so heavy upon one's self." " A hard thing, Martha !" I said ; " a hard thing ! when you know that God's will is the best thing which can happen to you ?" " Ah ! Sir," she replied mournfully, " we always come back to the same point—I want faith ; I want faith ! But pray for me, Sir, if you please." " By all means," I said ; " *that* is the way to get faith." So I knelt down, and occupied myself for a few minutes with the Psalms most appropriate to her case, and then left her in peace.

At my next visit she was so much recovered as to be sitting up by the fire. Her father and mother were

both present ; and a chair being placed for me, I sat down on the side opposite to her, and immediately began to congratulate her on her apparent amendment. " Ah! Sir," she said, sorrowfully, " I shall never be well again, I fear." " Then you must consider, my good Martha," I replied, " how you may best serve and please God in sickness. Do you think anything is better than to serve and please God?" " No, Sir," she answered ; " *that* is the best thing, without doubt." " Then," I said, " in whatever situation any person may be, as they cannot do anything better than what is best, they must endeavour to serve and please God ; and, I suppose, it may be done in all situations, whether we are rich or poor, young or old, healthy or sick. Are there not different duties for all these different conditions?"

She hesitated a little ; so I inquired whether she thought that any persons in the world were under no necessity of trying to serve and please God. " No," she said ; " it must be equally necessary for all." " And how is God served and pleased?" I asked ; " is it not by the performance of duties?" She answered, that she knew of no other way of doing it. " Then," I said, " there must be duties for all of all conditions." She allowed it. " A wise person, then," I continued, " that is, one who wishes to do what is best—namely, to serve and please God,—will not think so much about the condition in which he may happen to be, as about the duties which he may have to perform in that condition." This she allowed also. " And," I proceeded, " if the condition be a good one, the thinking about the duties of it, and the wishing to perform them, will be very likely to keep a man out of harm's way, will it not? The rich

man, for instance, if he thinks of his duties, and wishes to perform them, is not likely to be a miser or a spendthrift; is he?" "No," she answered; "he will do all the good that he can with his riches." "Very true," I said; "and if the condition be a bad one, as worldly people would call it, what will be the effect, in that case, of thinking of the duties, and wishing to perform them? Will it not be to lessen the troubles of the condition, or to make us feel them less?"

She hesitated again; so I asked her whether Mrs. Clayton was not very old, and very poor, and quite a cripple, and at times very much afflicted with pain? It was true, she answered. "But instead of giving way to these infirmities and afflictions, she has found something to do which is suitable to her condition; has she not?" I inquired. "Yes, Sir," she replied; "she has set up a school, which brings her in something to pay her rent; and so all that her lodgers pay to her is clear money. Besides, she knits out of school-hours, by which she gets a penny now and then; and her children, and other friends, help her at times." "But all these things," I said, "are very precarious and uncertain; are they not? Scholars may fall off; lodgers may run away in debt; the rheumatism may cramp her fingers; friends may forget her; or they, and her children, may be poor themselves." "It is too true," she answered. "Then," I said, "you always hear her, I suppose, complaining bitterly of such things when they happen, or tormenting herself beforehand with the fear of them?" "No, indeed," she replied; "I should speak falsely if I told you any such thing of her." "Yes, *that* you would," cried out her father and mother, both at

once ; and the father added, that the good old lady never complained of anything, but of her eyesight preventing her from reading her Bible ; of being kept from her church by lameness ; and of being forced to trouble her children, who had heavy families to support, and were sometimes put to their shifts how to do it.

I was delighted with this testimony to the excellent character of my aged friend below, who was indeed a model of contentment and resignation. It was to the credit of her poor lodgers too, that they were eager to speak in her praise. For there is an extraordinary jealousy of one another amongst people of that condition ; so that it seldom happens that any good can be done to one poor family in distress, without stirring up the ill-will of the neighbourhood against them, and bringing all their faults to light. I got a great deal of information in this way which was useful to me, though not always creditable to those who gave it ; and when I told them so, they excused themselves by saying, that it was a pity I should be imposed upon, as they supposed I frequently was ; but they did not seem to be aware that I had many reasons, and good ones too, for conferring favours upon persons who did not deserve them.

These reflections having occupied but a moment, I resumed the thread of our discourse, and said, “ If this be so, then, the good old Mrs. Clayton is an admirable proof of what I mentioned—that evils are lightened, or less felt, when the afflicted person thinks continually, or chiefly, of the duties which are capable of being performed, and of which, therefore, God will require the performance. Her evils, indeed, seem to affect her, not as they regard herself, but

as they regard others ; namely, her sons, whom she is sorry to load with an additional burden ; and God, whom she regrets that she cannot enough serve, by reading his holy word, or by worshiping him in his own holy temple. As to herself personally, you tell me, and I know it very well, she never complains, either in expectation of suffering, or under the pressure of it. I do not mean that she never sheds a tear, or fetches a sigh, or utters a groan, when her pains are extreme, as I have often seen them. She does this, perhaps, though very rarely, but always without any appearance even of murmuring ; and all the time her constant language is, ‘ God’s will, not mine, be done ;’ and if you pity her, she says, ‘ Affliction does not spring from the dust, nor trouble from the ground ; it is God who sends it, and God is merciful as well as wise ; what he sends, therefore, must be for my good.’ And a few fine sentences of St. Paul, St. James, and St. Peter, are often in her mouth, namely, ‘ Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Take the Prophets for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. For a season, if need be, we are in heaviness, that the trial of our faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, when we shall receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.’ With these, and such like passages of Scripture, does the good

old lady comfort herself every day ; and she remembers Job, and David, and above all, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who was made perfect by sufferings, and of whom I read to you, Martha, in the exhortation, that he went not up to joy, but first he suffered pain, and that he entered not into his glory before he was crucified."

" It is very true, Sir," replied Martha, " what you say of Mrs. Clayton ; and I have wondered ever since I knew her, how she could make herself half so patient as she is ; and I have often heard her talk of those things out of the Bible which you have just mentioned to us, Sir ; ay, and a great many more of the same sort ; but I do not understand them, or feel them, Sir, as she seems to do. A short time ago, when my troubles began, and before I was confined up here, (since which I have never seen her, for the poor creature cannot get up these stairs, or I am sure she would,) she shewed me, Sir, one of those very sentences in the Bible, and I was ashamed to tell her that I did not know what it meant, or to ask her to explain it to me ; I might have profited by it now."

" You might, indeed," I said ; " but what is it that makes the difference between you and Mrs. Clayton in this respect ? You have probably been taught in your youth quite as much as she was : but she has been a constant reader of her Bible ever since, and in the constant habit of going to church. By doing so she has heard a vast number of passages explained ; and by comparing passage with passage, in the course of her own reading, she has been able to explain many passages for herself. You, my poor Martha, have neglected, I fear, both your

Bible and your church; and now we all of us see, and you yourself feel, the lamentable consequences of it. Tribulation, instead of working patience, as the apostle tells us that it should do, and as God himself intends, and as the good Mrs. Clayton finds in herself, works in *you*, or rather I should say, (for you seem to be much improved,) *did* work, immoderate, unavailing sorrow, nay, clamorous discontent, and rash murmuring against Providence. Your conduct was such as if you said to God, My will, not thine, be done; God's ways are unequal, mine are equal."

I was going on to place her behaviour in a still stronger light, and to affect her as deeply as I could, now that it was possible to do so without danger to her health, but she was deeply affected already, and interposed with tears in her eyes, and cried out, "Oh! Sir, I beseech you do not lay those things to my charge any more, I shall never be guilty of them again: I thought myself very wise, but I was a poor ignorant creature after all. However, I will now begin to study my Bible, as Mrs. Clayton has done; and if ever I should have strength enough to go to church, I will do it. I will think, too, whether I cannot do something for my maintenance, even in this pitiful state that I am in, and likely to be. When I was a girl, I was taught to work lace, and, perhaps, if I set about it, I may succeed in that way yet; it will require nothing but my fingers, you know, Sir; and the doctors tell me, that I shall never be able to move about much, or be fit for hard work again. If God should bless this endeavour, Sir, perhaps I may be as patient and contented as Mrs. Clayton at last."

The picture which poor Martha drew of her own probable future circumstances cheered her spirits wonderfully, and her countenance brightened up with the very imagination of what might come. I encouraged this right disposition, and commended her as much as seemed fit, and then I added, "God will certainly bless such an endeavour, either by causing it to prosper in the way that you yourself may wish, or at all events by looking upon you with his favour. So never mind, Martha, even if your endeavour should fail in procuring you a maintenance; it will not fail, depend upon it, in procuring you the favour of God, and I hope that you will now understand and believe this. Everybody seems to understand and believe that God blesses them when their works prosper; but very few, I fear, understand and believe that God may still be blessing them when their works fail; their faith is not sufficient for it. This is the difficult thing; and this is what you must try to bring yourself to under the heaviest disappointments. You must always be ready to say from your heart, 'My hope hath been in thee, O Lord; I have said thou art my God.' Nothing should shake such a trust and confidence. Remember how Job behaved when he was in the lowest depths of misery; bereaved of all his children, riches, and glory; from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot covered and tormented with painful and loathsome sores; lying prostrate on the hearth, and his venerable hoary hair and beard defiled with ashes. Could anything be worse than this, Martha?"

"Nothing, Sir," she answered decisively; "my misfortunes are a trifle to *his*; I see it now, and I am ashamed to have troubled my old parents, and

disgraced myself, and distrusted God, as I have done." An energy, new and unknown to her before, seemed now to actuate her whole mind and frame; and, for an instant or two, whilst in her fancy she was following its impulse, she forgot the subject of our conversation, and was silent. I too remained silent, observing her emotion, and considering how to take advantage of it: at length, recollecting herself, she said, "But what did Job do, Sir? you did not tell me *that*." "No," I replied; "but I will tell you now. First he said, 'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord!' And afterwards, whilst he was sitting in the ashes, and (so great and astonishing was his misery!) scraping himself with a potsherd, his wife advised him to curse God, and die." "Oh, the wicked woman," cried Martha, not able to restrain herself, and interrupting the story to express her indignation; "she was not worthy of her husband, Sir; and, I am sure, he would not listen to her in the least." "No, indeed," I said; "his answer to her was, 'thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?'" "Very true, Sir," said Martha; "and how did she know but that this evil might be good too?"

This question delighted me exceedingly; it proved that my poor patient was advancing with great and rapid steps towards the virtues, of which a little while ago she seemed so totally destitute. My answer was, that if Job's wife could have persuaded herself of this certain truth, that all which comes from God is good, she would have acted otherwise, and her name would not have been so detested

throughout all ages as it has been. "However, Job went further than what I have yet told you ; for when he appeared to be in the very lowest extremity of affliction, he said to his friends who were reasoning with him about the dealings of God, 'though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'" "To be sure, Sir," exclaimed Martha, "*that* was going to the very utmost ; but he knew, I suppose, that there would be another world after this : for else his trust would have been but a broken reed after all. If death made an end of him, Sir, what mattered it whether he trusted in God, or not ? His trust might bear him up the better whilst he lived, but he would be the more woefully disappointed afterwards, if he had a single moment given him to know the disappointment."

"Very well, Martha," I said, "there is a great deal of sense in what you mention ; but suppose Job not to have known positively whether there would be another world, or not ; suppose him to know no more than what he could make out by his own reasonings about it ; what will you think then of his faith and trust in God ? *We* know, by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that there will certainly be another world after this ; and we know, moreover, that all God's dispensations in this world, good or evil as we may call them, are intended to fit us for that other ; our faith and trust therefore seem to be scarcely worth any thing at all, whilst his seem to be most wonderful, and almost unaccountable. But he was advanced as far as this persuasion, which was fixed and rivetted in his mind, that, whatever come, God must do right." "It is wonderful indeed," said Martha, with a tone of disappointment, for she had begun, I believe, to aspire to the rivalry of Job himself, but now thought

the contest hopeless: "it is very wonderful, Sir, and none of *us* can do any thing like it now." "No," I continued, "we cannot be in the same circumstances. However, it is very likely that Job had reasoned himself upon the whole into the belief of another world to come, in which God would exercise perfect justice, and make up for all the deficiencies and inequalities in this. For amongst many other extraordinary things which he spoke, this was one: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.'" "Why, *that* is very clear, Sir," she said. "It seems so, indeed," I rejoined. "And what might the more incline Job to think so, might be the consciousness that all his life he had endeavoured with sincerity to serve and please God; a consciousness which did not deceive him, for God himself bore the same testimony to his uprightness and piety, and declared that there were none like him in the earth. But I will read you the first two chapters of his history out of this pretty Bible of yours, and then you will understand the thing better."

"If you please, Sir," she said: so I read them, and commented upon them as I went along; and afterwards I came back again to the fifth verse of the first chapter, which was most to my present purpose, describing, as it does, so strikingly and so beautifully, Job's tender affection for his children, and pious fear of God. "Now, then," I said, when I had done commenting, "could any man try to serve and please God more than this man did?" "No, indeed," she answered. "Yet he suffered," I said, "heavier afflictions than ever befel mortal man before or since."

Afflictions therefore are no proof of God's anger, nor are they always necessary to purge away sins and follies. They may be sent to try a man's patience, for the example of others; to bring to light shining virtues which must otherwise have been for ever hidden and lost in darkness; and as the means of exalting the man himself hereafter to a higher state of bliss and glory. At all events, this last will be the result to those who endure their afflictions patiently to the end. According to Mrs. Clayton's text, which you did not understand when she showed it to you, the order of proceeding will be this: tribulation, patience, experience, hope, possession; experience, that is, of your own growing powers of sufferance, of the grace of God supporting you, and of his approbation attending upon your success. Then follows hope, and such a hope as maketh not ashamed by terminating in a disappointment of your reward, but being founded upon a rock is fulfilled in heaven. Do you understand this now?"

"I think I do, Sir," she replied; "and I am sure of one thing, that I can suffer now better than I could. May I please myself, therefore, with supposing, that the grace of God supports me, and that his approbation rests upon me?" "You may, undoubtedly," I said: "and when this is securely established, you may go on from thence to hope; to a hope that will not deceive you: and indeed God well deserves your thanks for putting you into this train of causes, which begins with tribulation, and ends with unspeakable glory. If you had any hope before, Martha, it was such an one as was most likely to make you ashamed, for it was founded on a false notion of your own goodness; on the notion that you had never

injured your fellow-creatures, or offended God. Alas! alas! Martha, we are all sinners. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' This is no opinion of mine, it is the unerring judgment of an inspired apostle. I told you at once, that I had no doubt your offences were more in number than the hairs of your head; and I used that language, because I knew the declarations of Scripture, and the general frailty of human nature. I knew nothing myself of your particular failings, which God might wish to correct by affliction, at the same time that he wished to try your patience, as he did the patience of Job. But some of your failings have now become evident; you are aware of them yourself, and you have determined to amend them; I mean your neglect of public worship, and of the study of the holy Scriptures. I hope you will discover every other failing, and by the divine help amend them likewise; and then affliction will do its proper work. You have not been a wicked woman, perhaps, as you say; but it would have been better not to have said it, and rather to have humbled yourself under God's mighty hand. If he should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who could abide it? Not I, Martha; no, nor *you*. We have done much amiss—we have done much that should have been left undone—and it is very certain that we have left undone still more which we ought to have done. But I have had a great advantage over *you*, Martha: I knew that I was sick, and that I wanted the help of the heavenly Physician of souls, and so I fled to him to obtain that help. You fancied yourself sound and whole, and therefore you thought not of him; but God has graciously roused you

from your slumber of false security by adversity, trouble, and sickness ; his providence has conducted *me* to you, without any summons from yourself ; and I am happy in thinking that what I have said to you has already been blessed to your soul's health. I shall have much more to say, and I trust you will gladly listen to it."

Poor Martha was bathed in tears, and could make no answer to this grave address ; but both her parents assured me, that she would be most ready to fulfil all my wishes. At this moment Mrs. Warton came in very opportunely, and told me that I was wanted at a neighbouring cottage, where I had left her on my road to Martha's ; so I hurried away, just recommending to her to talk over some plan for lace-working, or any other sedentary occupation, which might suit the circumstances of the sick woman. She did so, and the sequel was, that Martha, although she never became a skilful workwoman, yet by Mrs. Warton's means was so generally encouraged, that she soon maintained herself and assisted her parents, and released the parish from the burden which she had brought upon it. And this she continued to do for many years, except in times of peculiar difficulty, when provisions were very dear, or when Mrs. Warton could find no purchasers for her lace, or when she herself was helpless with disease.

But at present, and for some time, she was too ill to do any thing ; and I found her in bed more often than sitting up. This was the case at my next visit ; she was in bed, and very low and depressed in spirits—her mother only was with her. Thinking that she was now in a proper temper for prayer, and that she might be raised and cheered a little by it, I proposed

it at once ; and I went through several of the psalms, according to my usual method, selecting such as were adapted to a person in distress, and of a desponding mind. Then I read one of the prayers in the visitation-service, the Lord's Prayer, and the benediction at the end. This being finished, I rose from my knees, and sat down by the bed-side, observing that she looked much more comfortable, and that possibly she would now be able to talk with me. As yet she had said nothing, except to tell me how ill she was.

I began, therefore, with asking her if she understood the beautiful passages which I had read to her, and whether she felt them as being suited to her own case. "Yes, Sir," she answered, "I understood them very well, and they seemed to be made on purpose for me." I asked her next, whether she remarked, and applied to herself as a pattern, the great warmth and earnestness with which David, in the 86th Psalm more especially, puts up his prayers to his God. "I did, Sir," she replied ; "but it is all too high for *me*." "Why," I said, "you may truly consider yourself as being poor and in misery, like David ; may you not ?" "Yes, indeed, Sir," she answered, "*that* I may, if it be poor to have been robbed of every thing ; and if it be misery, to be afflicted with such diseases as I have." "Undoubtedly it is," I said ; "but why then are you not as desirous as David was, to be released from these evils, and in the same way ; namely, to ask help incessantly and fervently of *Him* who alone is able to give it effectually?" She was silent ; so I continued, "Hear again how pressing and importunate David is, as if he would take no denial of his petitions. 'Bow down thine ear, O Lord, and hear me ; preserve thou my soul ; my

God, save thy servant ; be merciful unto me, O Lord ; comfort the soul of thy servant ; give ear, Lord, unto my prayer, and ponder the voice of my humble desires ; O turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me ; give thy strength unto thy servant, and shew some token upon me for good.' All this is in one single psalm, and it is very instructive to *us*. But observe also what a thorough conviction he has of God's mercy, and what a thorough trust and confidence he reposes in it : 'Thou, Lord, art good and gracious, and of great mercy unto all them that call upon thee ; thou, O Lord God, art full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, plenteous in goodness and truth ; in thee do I put my trust ; to thee do I lift up my soul : I will call daily upon thee ; I will thank thee, O Lord, my God, with all my heart ; I will praise thy name for evermore.' Then again observe, what is perhaps most beautiful and most affecting of all, how he seems to imply that distress alone is a sufficient claim upon the gracious Being to whom he addresses himself in prayer ; for he says, 'Hear me, O Lord ; for I am poor and in misery ; in the time of my trouble I will call upon thee.' He does indeed, in the second verse, call himself holy ; but it is not in the common sense of the word, as if he were free from all sin, and holy as God is holy, and as we Christians are commanded to strive to be ; although God might have had wise reasons for afflicting him, even if he had been holy in that sense ; but he means that he is a man in covenant with God, and consecrated to his service, and acknowledging *Him* alone to be the true God in opposition to all the false gods of the heathens ; in the same manner as every Christian may be considered to be something holy, because he is dedicated to God

in his baptism, and adopted into his family through Jesus Christ. In the other sense it would have been very presumptuous and arrogant in him to have said, 'I am holy,' and on such a ground to challenge God's mercy; and far be it from any of *us* to do so. But we may say very properly, and with true piety and humility, 'Hear us, and be merciful unto us, O Lord, for we are thy servants, and reconciled to thee by thy Son; and thou hast promised to help all who see and feel their own misery, whether spiritual or temporal, and who look to thee alone for succour.' This would be right language; but then it should always be accompanied, in the case of temporal afflictions, with our Saviour's entire submission—'Thy will, not mine, be done;' and at all events the effect of the affliction should be to make us join with David in praying, as in the eleventh verse, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord; O knit my heart unto thee, that I may fear thy name, and walk in thy truth.' This is an excellent psalm for you to study by yourself; Martha, when I am gone; and when you come to the thirteenth verse, let it bring to your mind, that God has delivered *your* soul, as well as David's, from the nethermost hell. Had you any expectation of being alive now?" "No, indeed, Sir," she answered; "I thought myself a dead woman; and I thought, besides, that it would be a happy release for me." "Ah! Martha, Martha!" I said solemnly, "and where would have been your soul, if you had gone into God's presence with impatient speeches upon your lips, and resistance to his will in your heart? where would have been your soul?" She shuddered and was speechless; and presently I saw a tear stealing out of her eye, which her mother also watched,

and soon afterwards wiped away. I continued : “ Cry out then with David, ‘ I will thank thee, O Lord, my God, with my whole heart ; I will praise thy name for evermore ; for great is thy mercy towards me ; and thou hast delivered my soul from the nethermost hell.’ Next ask yourself why God has thus delivered you ; and when you have found the reason, cry out again, ‘ O knit my heart unto thee, and teach my thy way, O Lord ; and I will fear thy name, and walk in thy truth.’ ”

Here I paused, to see whether she would say any thing to indicate her feelings ; and at length she did, to my sorrow, and proved that as to the great question of unworthiness, the battle was yet to be fought. “ This is very good advice, Sir, which you give me,” was her observation ; “ but I hope you do not put me on the same level with David, who, you know, Sir, was a great sinner.” Ah ! I thought with myself, here is the old leaven still at work, and leavening the whole mass ! The pride of self-righteousness corrupts not the philosopher alone, but even the unlearned peasant ; to every rank the gospel is foolishness ! Poor Martha had imbibed new notions with respect to God, and her own sufferings. God was wise and good ; so the sufferings might be sent to try her—to call forth dormant excellencies—to procure her a greater reward hereafter. So far she was now willing to admit ; but she could not yet admit that these sufferings were deserved corrections, for her improvement in righteousness.

“ No, Martha,” I answered, “ I do not put you on the same level with David ; but I *do* put you on a level with sinners ; as I told you in our last conversation, we are all sinners. You have been a mo-

dest and chaste young woman; and therefore you were not like David, who, although a man after God's own heart, yet, in a moment of great temptation, broke the seventh commandment, and then being plunged into wickedness, he went deeper and deeper, and broke the sixth also. But do you think that such sinners alone need correction, and to be brought by it to fear God's name, to learn his ways, and to walk in his truth? Who fears God's name enough? Who has learnt enough of God's ways? Who walks enough, daily and hourly, in God's truth? Scripture says, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, and with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; but who does this? Certainly not any one who neglects to worship him, and to study his holy word, and who murmurs at his dispensations.' Thus I reprov'd her with somewhat of severity; but suddenly relenting a little, I retracted the last accusation, and said more mildly, "But you have wisely and piously ceased to murmur, my poor Martha; and therefore you have so far become what God wishes you to be. Yet true wisdom and piety require still more of you."

At first she was sinking under my anger, as she perhaps interpreted my tone and manner; but this little addition of praise soon raised her again, and she said with a good deal of confidence, "Yes, Sir, and I have promised and determined to read my Bible, now that I have leisure to do it, and to go to church when I am able. When I lived with Mrs. Bryan, I could not do either; and so my not doing them was no sin, Sir." "But tell me, Martha," I inquired, "did God force you to live with Mrs. Bryan?" "I cannot say *that*, Sir," she answered reluctantly.

“ Why did you go to live with that lady ?” I inquired again. “ Because,” she replied, “ the place was more respectable, and I got greater wages.” Once more I inquired, “ Had you more time to yourself in your former place ?” “ Yes,” she answered, “ a great deal.” “ So that *then* perhaps you read your Bible at home,” I said, “ and went to church now and then besides ?” “ Yes, Sir,” she replied, “ I went to church very often ; for it was a rule that all the servants should go once on Sundays, and some twice, in their turns ; and my then mistress would have no company on the Sabbath, Sir, nor anything but the plainest dinner in the world, that her servants might have as little to do as possible ; and so we found time for reading the Bible, Sir.” “ Well, Martha,” I said, “ these were great advantages ; but how did she manage about her coachman ? for I think you must be speaking of the good Mrs. Bolton, who kept a carriage, I recollect ?” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ *that* was my former lady ; and she never used her carriage on a Sunday except to go to church, and she always contrived to go early, Sir, that the coachman might have time to put up his horses, and go to church too, without being late.” “ *That* was very considerate, and very kind of her,” I said ; “ and I will tell you, Martha, what this good lady once mentioned to me about her carriage, that the first use of it was to take her to church ; and the second, to do acts of charity and neighbourly kindness. And very often has she carried me in it to visit the sick, and sent me home in it, after dining with her.” “ Yes, Sir,” replied Martha ; “ that was just like her.” “ But did not she sometimes comes to church,” I asked, “ in a chair, Martha ?” “ Yes, Sir,” she

answered, "when the horses had had extraordinary work the day before; or when they might have required cleaning on account of the roads, after taking her to church, so as to make it difficult, or impossible, for the coachman to be there; then she always used a sedan. She kept one on purpose, as you know very well, Sir." "I do indeed," I said; "and I believe I shall be right in supposing that she had family prayers very often." "You would, Sir," she replied, "they were seldom missed, and she read them herself, and very well too." "And what situation had you in Mrs. Bolton's household, Martha?" I asked. "I was under-housemaid, Sir," she answered. "And what situation had you with Mrs. Bryan?" I asked again; and she replied, that she was upper-housemaid. "So then," I said, "you got a higher place, and better wages?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "that was the only reason for my changing." "But do not you recollect, Martha," I said, "whilst you lived in the service of the late Mrs. Bolton, having read sometimes in your own Bible (which I dare say she gave you), and having heard sometimes at church, such a sentence as this: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all these things shall be added unto you;' all the necessaries of life, and all the conveniences too, the higher places and the better wages, if God see fit?" "Why, yes, Sir," replied Martha, a little conscience-struck, "it is very true; I remember that verse as well as any other." "But you did not understand it then, I suppose, or perhaps," I said, "you did not believe it? For you sought the higher place and the better wages, instead of the kingdom and the righteousness of God; and you gave up

these for the others, doing thus the very contrary to that which Jesus Christ himself warned you to do." Poor Martha was now sore beset, and became quite dumb; but her mother interposed, as on former occasions, and said, "Yes, Sir, it was very unlucky; but my daughter did not know that Mrs. Bryan would keep her from church, till she went to live with her." "Who first heard of the place being vacant?" I inquired. "It was *me*, Sir," said the mother. "And did you ask any body," I inquired again, "about the habits of the family?" By her silence she confessed that she had not. "But you knew yourself, I suppose, did you not, that they kept very late hours?" "I cannot deny it," she answered; "all the parish knew it." "But when people keep late hours," I said, "is it likely that they, or their servants, will be able to go at all to the morning-church, if to the other?" The old woman being now dumb in her turn, Martha resumed her part, and said, "No, Sir, and so I found it to my cost; for mid-day was always gone by, before I had put my mistress's room in order, after she quitted it to go down to breakfast. Then the lateness of our dinner, Sir, made it quite impossible for the servants to attend church in the afternoon; and so we went on, Sir, to the end of the chapter, without being able to help ourselves at all." "Yes," I said, "so you went on without a God in the world; but whether you were able to help yourselves, or not, will appear presently. Was your mistress, do you think, the only person to blame for this heathenish, irreligious life?" "We laid it all upon *her*, Sir," she answered; "for servants, you know, Sir, have no right to contradict their superiors, and I have always made it a point to obey mine."

“ But, Martha,” I said, “ if servants should not contradict or disobey their superiors, they may leave them, I suppose; may they not?” “ Yes, Sir,” she replied, “ *that* is true, no doubt.” “ And ought they not to leave them,” I inquired, “ when obedience is sinful?” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered; “ but you forget how hard it is for poor servants to get places, and Mrs. Bryan was a very indulgent mistress, and never scolded any of us, and we had plenty to eat and drink. Such places are not to be got every day, Sir.” “ So then,” I said, “ it never once came into your head, Martha, that it was your duty to look out for another place, in which it might be possible for you to serve and worship God?” She hesitated; so I pressed her to tell me the truth for her own sake, as, in fact, it concerned herself only, and *me* not at all. Being thus urged, she was compelled to allow, that she had never thought of leaving Mrs. Bryan, come what might; and beginning now, I suppose, to see that she was not so blameless as she fancied herself to be, she burst into tears, and wept aloud.

To comfort her, and at the same time to strengthen the other principles, which I hoped that I had infused into her in my former conversations, I said tenderly, but solemnly, “ Ah! my poor Martha, God loved your soul better than you loved it yourself. If you ever thought of God at all, you thought to reconcile the love of God and the love of the world together, which cannot be. You were going on fast in the high broad way to destruction; but he graciously interfered to save you. I see his hand now as clearly as if I had seen it with my eyes. No doubt he might have rescued you from your danger by a hundred

other ways; but he chose this, which I am sure therefore was the wisest and the best; and what is remarkable about it is, that he made your own imprudence the very instrument of conveying his mercy to you; so that all the misery might appear to be of your own making, and all the mercy *his*. What is the result then, but that, with the Psalmist, you should praise him for evermore, and exclaim, 'O knit my heart unto thee, that I may learn thy ways, and walk in thy truth.'"

Martha still continued to weep; but I doubted whether her tears sprung from the sense of her own unworthiness, or from the disappointment which she felt in being brought down from the high towers of goodness which she wished to appear to occupy. They looked too much like the latter; and I was struck with the uncommon difficulty of producing the former, and might have been tempted to end the conversation here: but I was induced, partly by curiosity, and partly by the hope of making further advances, to ask her, how her acquaintance began with the man who had so basely betrayed her; "For as to *his* conduct," I said, "there can be no doubt, Martha, that it has been base in the extreme, however useful it may be to *you* in the end."

She replied immediately, that she should be glad to tell me all about it; and she wiped off her tears, and seemed to be preparing for a long story. "And you must know, Sir," she said, "that I was not so content without public worship, as you may suppose me to have been; and I talked about it sometimes to another young woman, who felt as I did. So we determined to go one Sunday evening to Sion Chapel, which you know, Sir, is but just beyond the parish,

after my mistress was gone out to dinner a great way off, and I had time to put her room to rights before the service began. I had heard too, Sir, that there was to be a great preacher there that evening; so I was the more eager to take the opportunity." "Ay," I said, "you had itching ears, Martha; but God loves the doers, and not the hearers. But did you tell Mrs. Bryan that you intended to go to a Meeting-house?" "No, Sir," she answered, "I did not; for I knew that my mistress would not be offended; for she had often told us, that we might go to worship where we liked best, and that she thought it an improper thing to meddle with any person's persuasions in religion." "It was being very tender to weak consciences," I said; "but go on with your history." "Upon this, Sir, we went," continued Martha; "and all was very fine, and very good; but, ah! Sir, there I met that base man for the first time; and, oh! what a wicked hypocrite he was, to go to a place of worship, where they pretended to greater strictness in all their doings; and to pass himself off for the best of them all; listening, Sir, and praying, and singing psalms, in such a manner as to deceive everybody." "But how came you to observe this so particularly?" I inquired. "Why, Sir," she answered, "he sat next to me; and we had made the first steps to an acquaintance already, by his helping me in through the crowd, and placing me and my friend in comfortable sittings near the minister. But the business might have ended here, Sir, if he had not attended upon us home, and made me promise to meet him at the same place on the following Sunday. At church, Sir, this could never have happened to me." "Why not, Martha?" I asked. "Because,"

she said, " I should not have been bold enough to have walked home with a strange man by daylight. And so, Sir, the second night he had fresh opportunities of talking to me, and I was deceived worse than before, and thought him quite a miracle of goodness. He was a little rough, Sir, outwardly ; but his heart seemed the tenderest and gentlest that could be desired, and he had deceived many besides *me* by the same pretences. He attended upon me home again, and afterwards he came to visit me, which was a very easy matter in such a family as ours. So I married him, too hastily, God knows ; and, suspecting nothing, I put all my savings into his hands. Then his true character soon showed itself in idleness, and drunkenness, and other worse things ; and when I pressed him to take up some business, he rated at me, and sometimes beat me ; and at last he fairly confessed that he had another wife living, and so he deserted me thus, Sir. Am I wrong in calling him a villain—a base, treacherous villain?"

Her countenance was lit up again with a revengeful feeling against the author of so many injuries ; but suddenly, thinking herself, I suppose, liable to a rebuke, she caught hold of her mother's distinction, and added, in a different tone, " Remember, Sir, I complain only of *him* ; I do not murmur against God." " But you must be careful, very careful, Martha," I said, " how you indulge in these violent complaints against *him* ; for such complaints, and murmurs against God, border too nearly upon each other. Did you ever hear anybody in cold, rainy weather, exclaim that it was odious and execrable?" " Yes, I have, Sir," she replied, " very often ; I

have heard my mistress do so; and I thought that she spoke too strongly, and that it was not proper language." "You thought very rightly, Martha," I said; "but tell me why you thought so." "Because, Sir, you know," she answered, "it is God who makes the weather to be what it is; and I wondered my mistress did not see that calling the weather by those ugly names was very like calling God so." "It is very true, Martha," I said; "and you have only to apply this to your own case, and it will soon soften down both your language and your feelings too, when you are forced to speak or think of your betrayer. It is impossible not to believe him to be all that you call him; but still, bad as he may be, he was an instrument in God's hands for your correction and trial; and therefore you must be the more cautious, lest anything which you might say immediately against *him*, should reach ultimately to God. No; he is gone: and happy it is for you that he has left you. Think about him no longer; or if you do, pray to God, in the true Christian spirit, to forgive him, and do *you* forgive him yourself." "I cannot do it," she exclaimed instantly, and with great agitation; "no, Sir, I cannot do it: I must be a stock or a stone not to hate the wretch. You do not know all, Sir, or you would enter more into my feelings." "This is a very important subject, Martha," I said; "of the very utmost consequence to you, both here and hereafter; but neither have I the time, nor are you well enough, after so much other conversation, to begin a new one now; we must, therefore, put it off to a future opportunity. One thing, however, I will leave you to reflect upon; you ask God, in the Lord's prayer, to forgive *you your* trespasses

against himself, only on the condition that *you* forgive others *their* trespasses against *you*; and Jesus Christ said to us all, 'when ye pray, forgive, that ye may be forgiven.' Either, therefore, we must be sure that there is nothing about us which requires forgiveness, or we condemn ourselves, if we do not forgive others. Think of this, my good Martha, till I see you again." Thus I left her.

School being over, I made a short visit, as I passed through the chamber, to old Mrs. Clayton within her screen. She was quite alone, but by no means well, and she complained particularly of her head. "Ay," I said, "my good old lady, there is nothing but labour and sorrow at your great age: so we find it by experience, so Scripture tells us that it is, so God has ordained it for wise and merciful reasons." "Yes, Sir," she replied; "if it were not so, we might love this world too much, instead of being weaned from it, when we must leave it so soon." "You are very right," I said; "and, as for yourself, you are quite prepared, I think, to live or die, as God may please to dispose of you." "That is it, Sir," she answered; "as God may please to dispose of me. Nothing can be better than *that*. Whether he take me to-morrow, I trust in Christ for his favour; or whether it be his will that my pilgrimage should last another year, I am content. In that case I shall have much suffering, I know; but I can bear it by *his* strength, if not by my own." "With *your* sentiments, you may indeed," I said; "and remember this, that crowns are won by sufferings; not earthly crowns, but crowns that never perish or fade; and more glorious crowns, the longer and the more patiently we endure those sufferings."

“ Yes, Sir,” she replied ; “ *that* is the joy which is set before me, and my eyes are always fixed upon it : it shines in my weary path, and is a bright lantern to my feet, and keeps me from stumbling with age and pain. I seek a better country, Sir, with humility, but with hope ; and, because *he* has promised who is able to perform ; *he* whose promises are all yea and amen in his son Jesus, I rest assured that my hope will not end in shame.”

Thus did this aged Christian express her firm faith and pious thoughts ; and worthy are those thoughts to be recorded in letters of gold, or rather in some imperishable material, for a pattern to generations. I was myself both affected and edified by them ; and for a minute or two I was lost in the meditation which they occasioned, whilst she was expecting me to speak. But I could speak nothing more to the purpose ; she had said everything in a brief compass. At length, however, being aware of her allusion to her favourite text in the end of her sentence, by the association of ideas I recollected poor Martha ; and immediately I inquired of Mrs. Clayton, if she herself had ever received any great injury, in the course of her long life, from one of her fellow-creatures. “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ from more than one ; and very great injuries, indeed.” “ And what is your wish,” I inquired again, “ at this present moment, with respect to those your enemies ?” “ That I may meet them in heaven, Sir, to be sure,” she exclaimed, and with as much animation as if she had all the spirit and fervour of youth about her ; “ what else would you have me wish, Sir ?” “ You could not wish them any thing better,” I said, “ than that they may go where you go ; but did they deserve such a

wish at your hands?" "Alack-a-day, Sir," she replied, "we be all sinners together, and can never stand before God, unless he forgive us first; must we not do therefore as we would be done by ourselves? And what have *we*, Sir, to forgive one another but the debt of a few paltry pence; whilst we are lost for ever if God do not forgive *us* many thousands of precious talents? Oh, Sir, I have lived this many a year in peace with all my enemies, and now I would die in peace with my God."

These were melodious sounds to my ears, and she that chanted them was like the poet's swan; they were her own, her last dirge; but, still fresh and instructive, they will ever live in my memory. I seized her withered, tremulous hand with a convulsive grasp, and collecting all my nerves, shaken, as they were, by a scene of such uncommon interest and beauty, I had just strength and presence of mind to exclaim, "You *are* in peace with him;" and then, loosing her hand, and pointing with my forefinger upwards, I exclaimed again, "and you shall hear him say to you, 'well done, thou good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!'" Before she could speak, I was gone; and I never heard her speak more.

On the following day, being on the road which led to her cottage with Mrs. Warton, I saw one of her grand-children running with all his speed; and he would hardly stop to tell me, as he passed, that he was sent to fetch the doctor to the good old lady; but long before the doctor's arrival, God had taken her to himself. We hastened as fast as we could, in the hope of being useful. On entering, we found the chamber crowded with sons, and daughters, and grand-children, and neighbours, who immediately

made way for us ; some were weeping, and every countenance betokened concern. Even poor Martha Bilson had crawled down stairs to see how a Christian could die ; and the tears were running over her cheeks, whilst on her knees (for she was unable to stand) she assisted in supporting the dying saint. For by this time I saw old Mrs. Clayton herself, and her face was truly saintlike. Was it imagination only, or a sweet reality ? Every age or care worn furrow seemed to be smoothed ; and many a complacent smile, in quick succession, played about her mouth, and illumined her whole countenance ; as if she were saying, “ Now I rest from my labours, and my Saviour welcomes my approach.”

So thought Mrs. Warton and myself, as we stood fixed for a minute or two in silent contemplation of the figure before us. She was sitting in her easy-chair, just as usual, and more like one asleep than dying : her eyes were closed ; her breath was gentle and soft, and perfectly free. Close to her was her small table, and upon it her Bible and Prayer-book. The Bible was open, and kept so by her spectacles. You would think that she had been reading a chapter which interested her deeply ; that she had taken off her spectacles to mark the page, with the intention of resuming her sacred study ; and that she had quietly sunk back in her chair to meditate upon the passage in still abstraction. And perhaps it was so ; but the meditation was short here ; death silently interposed, and cut her slender thread in twain without disturbing her ; and up flew her soul to finish it in heaven. Whilst our attention was arrested by the sight of so much serenity and peace, a breath, some-

what harder and louder than before, announced the very instant of its flight.

I should have read the commendatory prayer, but Mrs. Clayton was dead, before it once occurred to me. When I came to myself, I raised my hat to my eyes; to shew my respect for *her* that was gone; to reverence the Almighty, who was thus working beside me; and to put up a short petition for Mrs. Warton and myself, that we might be equally prepared to meet him, when he should work the same work upon *us*. The rest had fallen upon their knees; but they soon rose again, one after the other, when they observed that I had uncovered my face. If anything were to be said, this was the time for saying it, when every eye was turned towards me, in expectation of what I should do. Thus at least it seemed; so after a short pause I began—

“ You, all of you, I dare say, fear death more or less, because you think that it will be a painful act; and too many have too good reason to fear it, because they know not whither it may take them; they know not, when all shall be over, whether they may repose, like Lazarus, in Abraham’s bosom; or, like Dives, lift up their eyes in hell. Look at the corpse of this aged lady; at the moment of her departure, her features were not distorted or disfigured by the agonies of pain or the consciousness of guilt. Death came upon her without violence; nay, with all the gentleness of a lamb. It was more like falling into a sweet and placid slumber; or like the gathering of ripe fruit, which follows the hand, and requires no force to separate the stalk from the stem. Death may be then without any bodily pain, if God so will;

and it is likely that He may so will, if you have passed your days in temperance : and if at the last no guilt, unrepented of, and therefore unforgiven, harass your souls. Keep innocency, therefore, if you can ; and *that* will bring you peace at the last ; or, if you have broken God's laws, (and which of you has not ?) repent, and return to him betimes, trusting in the merits of his son, who died to reconcile him to you. Behold her who now sleeps in the Lord Jesus ; she was a true believer in him, and a faithful servant ; and so she is gone without a struggle, in peace with God, with herself, and with all mankind. Copy her faith and life ; and by the blessing of God, may you copy her death !”

A voice or two answered “ Amen ;” and then the same word was re-echoed by all. Upon this I quitted the cottage in an instant ; and Mrs. Warton, having staid behind me for a few minutes, to give some directions about the corpse to one of Mrs. Clayton's daughters-in-law, she soon rejoined me, and we proceeded together to fulfil the primary objects of our walk. She left them all, as she told me, in tears ; my little speech, it seems, having added something to the mournful solemnity of the scene.

§ 2.—*Martha Bilson, her Mother, &c.*

ON the morrow we returned ; and when we opened the door, deep silence met us. No shrill voices of infant scholars repeating their tasks ; no graver tones of the aged mistress correcting their faults, now greeted our ears. The screen was removed ; no blast, but of the archangel's trumpet, could reach the

good old dame any more. The forms were vacant ; she had finished the last lesson, and shut her books for ever. The great easy chair was untenanted, though still by the fire-side ; she had exchanged it for a coffin and a shroud.

Whilst we were looking about, and feeding our thoughts with empty, unsubstantial recollections, the same daughter-in-law came to us from the back-chamber, in which she had been watching over the corpse. She stepped gently, and spoke not a word, as if she had feared to wake it ; but she beckoned to us with her finger to follow her. We did so ; and when she had turned down the end of the sheet, the well-known face presented itself to our view ; but all its devout expression was gone with the soul to heaven, its proper abode.

As our chief business was with the living, and not with the dead, we soon quitted this apartment as silently as we entered it, and mounted the staircase to Martha Bilson's. For the first time we found her at her new employment, and entirely alone. She would have stood up, but we prevented her, and seated ourselves at once ; and Mrs. Warton inquired if she had caught any cold by going down the day before. "No, Madam," she answered, "none at all ; and it was a comfortable sight, Madam, to see such a calm and easy death. I have since been often thinking what a different death mine would have been, if I had died in the midst of one of my dreadful fits of pain, when I almost lost my reason, and all power over myself. It would have been terrible to hear my screams, and as terrible to look at me when all was over. But, perhaps, you do not know, Sir," she continued, turning towards *me*, "how short the whole

matter was ?” “No,” I said, “I have yet had no opportunity of asking.” “I will tell you then, Sir,” she replied. “My father was going to the shop for a loaf of bread ; and as he passed by he saw the old lady at her book, as usual ; so nothing was the matter with her then. Well, Sir, the shop, you know, is not more than fifty yards from our door, and my father was served immediately ; but upon his return she was fallen back in her chair. He gave an alarm, and the chamber was soon full of the neighbours, as you found it, Sir ; but I was one of the first to be upon the spot, in spite of my infirmities. However, there was nothing to be done, but to see her die.” “And also,” I said, “how short and easy a thing dying may be to those, whom it may please God to bless in their last moments. *That* was a comfortable sight, as you have justly mentioned ; and it should suggest a useful reflection to us all, and should teach us to be always prepared ; that we may not stand in need of a lingering and painful disease to warn and prepare us to make ready for death. Did *you* make this reflection, Martha ?”

She hesitated a little, and at length she confessed, that she feared she had not reflected upon it as she ought. “Now,” I said, “it must needs have struck every one present, unless they were of very dull intellect indeed, that their own death might be as sudden as Mrs. Clayton’s ; and then, if they reasoned at all, it would strike them next to consider whether they were prepared for such an end ; and if their conscience decided the question against them, the true wisdom would be to set about the preparation without delay. Mrs. Clayton was well prepared, as I myself can testify, having seen and talked with her but the even-

ing before ; and therefore it was a gracious mercy on God's part to spare her all the terrors of death's near approach, and to make the time of it so short, and the pain none. With respect to those who are unprepared, the mercy is, though foolish men may call it severity, the real mercy is, to scourge them with the rod of correction ; to afflict them, that is, with bodily diseases, and other calamities, until they are quite prepared ; and, in fact, to withdraw the pains and troubles before the preparation is complete, which the same foolish men perhaps would call mercy, *that* is the real severity ; except we go deeper into God's dealings, and believe that he ceases to correct, when he foreknows that correction will be useless. He said indeed himself of the wicked Jews, ' Why should I afflict them any more ? They will rebel more and more.' When God foresees this, what can he do ? Why, he may either leave those sinners to themselves, using them only as instruments to correct others ; or cut them off at once by a sudden stroke ; which might seem to *us* to be the more merciful judgment of the two ; because, the shorter their life, the less will be the number of their sins.

" I have said all this, Martha, to open your mind upon the subject of God's dealings with yourself. If you understand me, you will see, that the continuance of your afflictions is a proof that God has not yet done with you ; that he has not cast *you* off, as he does those whom he suddenly destroys, or others, whom he permits to appear to be prosperous. It should, rather, therefore, be matter for joy to you, that you continue to be thus afflicted ; because you will prepare yourself for death better and better, as God intends and expects ; and because thereby you will obtain a nobler reward."

Here poor Martha burst into tears, as she had often done before, and laid down her work ; and exclaimed, with sobs intermingled with her words, " Ah ! Sir ; but then you make me to be a wicked woman ! Surely, I am not a wicked woman, Sir ; I cannot bear that you should think me a wicked woman. Nor am I, Sir." She would probably have said a great deal more of the same kind, if her tears and sobs had not denied her all further utterance. In this state Mrs. Warton went to her, and took her by the hand, and endeavoured to soothe her, and said tenderly, " You mistake Dr. Warton's reasoning, my good Martha ; he does not suppose you wicked in the same sense that you abhor the thought of being so ; that is, as if you had been guilty of the greatest crimes ; he does not think so of you ; no—by no means. But still, my dear Martha, he would not conceal from you, to your great harm, that he thinks you unprepared to die. It is not necessary to be guilty of great crimes, Martha, to be unprepared to die. There are many smaller sins, and faults, and failings, that might make us very unfit to die, before we have repented of them, and amended them. Yes, Martha, a person may even be supposed to be free from any of these, and yet want a rightness of thinking and feeling, with respect to his Creator and Redeemer, to such a degree, as to make it very dangerous for him to die in that condition. Perhaps it is this of which Dr. Warton wishes you to be aware ; and, as it is of infinite consequence to you to be sensible of it, cheer up, my good Martha, and listen to him, whilst he explains his doctrine to you. Indeed, I wish that I were better prepared for death myself."

This discreet way of talking to her produced the

desired effect. Martha wiped her eyes, and composed herself, and thanked Mrs. Warton for her kindness in taking so much trouble to instruct her; and she added, that she was very far from supposing herself perfect, and that she would willingly be improved. Then she looked at *me*, and said, "If you have time now, Sir, to go on speaking to me, you will do me a favour. It is all for my good, I know very well; you will have nothing but the trouble of it, Sir." "And the pleasing satisfaction besides, Martha," I interposed, "if by any thing that I can say I might prepare you better for death." "Well, Sir," said Martha, "it is very good of you, I am sure, to consider it in that manner, and I will therefore try to give you all the satisfaction which I can, whilst the real profit will be mine. I am quite ready, Sir, to hear you."

Thus we were about to begin again, as it appeared, under the best auspices; but I was not too sanguine, because sad experience had already taught me, that what I considered to be an advance had sometimes turned out otherwise, and that even tears, and sobs, and seeming contrition had terminated in no practical good. It struck me now, that it might possibly be advantageous to tell her the last conversation which had passed between Mrs. Clayton and myself; and immediately I did so, and it affected her deeply. But here, as on former occasions, her conduct was ambiguous, and liable to a double interpretation; and I more than suspected, that the tears which she now shed again were not occasioned by the conviction of any sinfulness in herself, in still persisting to cherish a revengeful spirit, but by the vexatious certainty that I should require her to sacrifice it. She saw plainly,

that she could not stand well in my favour, or appear to *me* to be fit to die, unless she both renounced that spirit, and repented that she had ever indulged it. But she could not yet bring herself to this ; and hence her distress.

When I had given her a short time to collect herself, I said, " Pray, Martha, tell me whether Mrs. Clayton was considered to be a wicked woman." " No, indeed, Sir," she answered, " the very contrary ; she was considered to be a good woman." " But," I said, " you observed, did you not, in what I told you of her, that she called herself a sinner?" " I did, Sir," she replied ; " it was being very humble to do so." " And is not humble-mindedness," I said, " a truly Christian virtue ; most lovely in itself, most forcibly enjoined in Scripture, and most acceptable to God ? Was not Jesus Christ himself a most beautiful and perfect pattern of humility ? Take one little story of him, which, no doubt, you well remember. A person called him good ; but he said, ' Why callest thou me, good ? There is none good but one ; that is, God.' Did not he blame and condemn all pride, presumption, and arrogance, and all claims and pretences of self-righteousness ? You have surely not forgotten his parable of the Pharisee and the Publican ; and how he summed it up by telling us, ' that he who exalteth himself shall be abased ; but that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted.' His divine sermon on the mount he began with a blessing on the poor in spirit—on the humble and lowly—those who thought little of any virtues which they might possess, and much of their failings. This, therefore, you perceive, Martha, is the true Christian character ; and our aged friend, who rests below, having acquired that charac-

ter, she was so far a true Christian, and a pattern for us to copy after. But do you think that she called herself a sinner out of mere humble-mindedness, without believing herself to be indeed a sinner? Would not that have been a miserable affectation, which God would see through at once, and reject for vanity, instead of accepting for humility? No, no, Martha; she knew herself to be a sinner, and spoke and acted always as a sinner should do; that is, with a meek and humble spirit."

Here I paused to ascertain, if possible, whether what I had said came home to her understanding and feelings. Her only observation was, that she had never known Mrs. Clayton to commit any sin. I was in despair; but I asked her, whether she thought Mrs. Clayton would tell a falsehood. "No," she replied, "*that* she would not, I am sure, if she knew the thing to be false." "Then," I said, "as she called herself a sinner, it is plain that she believed she *was* so." This Martha could not deny; so I continued; "But *you*, Martha, did not believe her to be a sinner. Now, how is this? From whence comes this difference between you? Do you think that you knew Mrs. Clayton better than she knew herself?" "No," she answered, "*that* could not be." "And there is another thing," I said; "perhaps she meant something different by being a sinner from what you mean by it." "Yes, Sir," she replied, "that would account for our difference very well." "Let us see then," I said; "is it not a sin to break one of God's commandments?" She allowed it. "And they are sinners who do so, are they not?" She granted it. "And are not all God's commandments to be met with in the Bible?" This she allowed also. "And

was not Mrs. Clayton in the constant habit of hearing the Bible both read and explained at church, and of reading and studying it at home besides?" She assented. "Then such a person," I said, "must be most likely to know all God's commandments, and consequently whether she had broken any commandment, or not; that is, whether she were a sinner, or not. Is it not so?" She could not deny it. "But a person," I continued, "who was less acquainted with the Bible, not hearing it so often at church, nor studying it so regularly at home, might be ignorant of many of God's commandments; might she not?"

Here Martha was silent. "And what is worse," I said, "she might think herself and others not to be sinners, when they *were* such; ay, and greater sinners, too; might she not?" Martha was still silent, and now began to be visibly affected; so I determined to push the argument home, before the tears and sobs might again prevent me. "Take," I said, "for instance, this commandment; 'Love your enemies.' Now the loving our enemies is a thing so contrary to our nature, that we should never find out by ourselves that it is one of God's commandments. A person, therefore, not reading it in the Bible might never know it; and the same person might hate her enemies, and so be a sinner without being aware of it. However, it was not in this respect that Mrs. Clayton knew or believed herself to be a sinner, for she gave the best proofs that she possibly could give of loving her enemies; she both forgave them herself, and wished that God might forgive them, and bless them too with his greatest blessing, that is, receive them into heaven. Now search your own heart, Martha, and see clearly how you stand in this re-

spect. There is a man who has injured you, and whom, therefore, you consider to be your enemy ; in our last conversation you told me decidedly that you could neither forgive him yourself, nor ask God to forgive him ; at that time, therefore, you were a breaker of one of God's commandments, that is, a sinner, and consequently unprepared to die, and therefore needing correction to prepare you for death, if God intended to save your soul. Such you were two days ago, Martha ; I ask, what are you now ?”

Poor Martha could bear me no longer. The clouds had for some time been gathering, and now at length, when she was called upon so pointedly to answer for her present state, the torrent burst forth and overwhelmed everything. But Mrs. Warton's good offices being exercised as before, after a moderate time, tranquillity was again restored. “Poor Martha,” she said, “I pity you much ; and I know very well what a pang it must cost you to forgive a man who has injured you so deeply ; it is, perhaps, the most difficult thing to do of all things in the world ; and, therefore, you must not expect, nor does Dr. Warton expect, that you should be able to do it at once, and in a moment. But do not despair, my good Martha ; you have conquered other wrong feelings, and in the end you may conquer this, hard as it is to conquer. I dare say, Martha, you are now convinced that all violent enmity towards anybody must be a very wrong feeling ; and if so, *that* will be one step to the getting rid of it. But I hope you are able to go another step ; that is, to be aware that whilst you give way to this wrong feeling you are a sinner against God ; and your particular sin being the want of the spirit of forgiveness, you cannot with

any reason ask God to do *that* for *you* which *you* refuse to do for a fellow-creature. Now, my poor friend, you may see plainly how the case is, and if you can but take those two first steps, which I hope and trust you can, that is, if you are aware of your error, and confess yourself in consequence to be a sinner, I am sure that God will bless you and help you to do the rest. The conviction and acknowledgment of sin will soon make you humble, like *her* who has left us ; and, as Dr. Warton has just told you, God loves humility, and in due time will exalt it."

Thus did Mrs. Warton, following the natural impulse of her temper, and very opportunely under the present circumstances, act the part of a Barnabas, infusing the balm of consolation and hope ; after I myself (if I might presume to use such a similitude) had tried with the thunder of the Boanerges to alarm and wound her. Martha Bilson stood in need of both, and even both might fail without a superior aid. But at this moment the aspect of things looked fair and encouraging ; for, as soon as she recovered the use of her speech, she said mournfully, but decidedly, "I *must* be in the wrong, dear Madam, if *you* and the Doctor think so ; you would not tell me so only to vex and plague me ; besides, the Bible is against me, I fear, and makes no difference between one injury and another, so as to allow me to forgive *this*, and not to forgive *that*." "It is very true, Martha," I interposed, "all injuries of every kind and degree must be forgiven ; we must bear no ill-will to anybody ; on the contrary, we must feel benevolently towards all men ; for we are all the children of the same parent, and all depend upon the same Saviour and Redeemer. Should not brethren love as bre-

thren, and more especially when they are all bending forwards together towards the same high prize of their Christian calling?" "Ah! Sir," she said, "if all did this, the world would be a delightful place to live in." "Yes," I rejoined, "it would be like heaven itself, where there is no envy, anger, spite, malice, or revenge; nothing but love, peace, and joy for ever. But the love, the peace, and the joy must begin in this world, Martha; the seeds must be sown, and you must feel them growing up in your own breast whilst you are here, and then God will enable you to reap the rich harvest in full perfection hereafter. But where the spirit of hatred and revenge dwells and governs, *there* love, and peace, and holy joy can never enter. There is one revenge, however, a truly sweet and noble one, which you may indulge to the utmost, Martha." "And what is *that*, Sir, pray?" she exclaimed with eagerness. "It is attended with victory, too," I said; "victory over your enemy, as well as over yourself." She was wound up to a high pitch with expectation, and then I continued, "Why, Martha, you may conquer injuries, and melt your enemies, by forgiving them; and still more, by a return of kind actions for evil ones, by blessings for curses, by prayers for imprecations, you may heap coals of fire upon their heads. This would be a glorious revengē, indeed; this the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us; this is what God himself, and all the good angels, will approve and applaud."

Upon hearing this, Martha discovered a little disappointment, and her eyes fell to the ground; but she was pleased, it seemed, with the picture which I drew, and soon raised them again, and said, "Ah! Sir, it is too true; I must be very different from what

I am, if I am to be like this!" And then she added, trembling, "Indeed, I am not so good, I fear, as I wished to think myself; and, perhaps, when I understand my Bible better, I shall find myself worse and worse." "It may be so, Martha," I said; "and it is as well to be prepared for it. But, at all events, you will know what Mrs. Clayton meant, when she called herself a sinner; you will see that God's law is so strict, yet so just, and good, and holy, that you ought to conform to it, whilst you do not; and then your own conscience will pronounce you a sinner. But then the same gospel which brings you to this conviction will show the remedy—namely, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

Upon saying this, which I thought would be the best conclusion of the whole conversation, I rose before she could answer; and Mrs. Warton following my example, we bade her adieu, and, having descended the stairs, we hastened away through the solitary room below.

The funeral of Mrs. Clayton was now over—I had performed it myself, which gave great satisfaction to the whole family. Her daughter-in-law, who lived nearest to her, and with whom I was best acquainted, when she next met me, informed me how glad they were to see me at the church-gates to receive the corpse, and thanked me in all their names. It was a mark of respect which I thought they all deserved; but it is a good thing, as a general practice, that the clergyman who has prepared the sick for death should also bury them: the sick, I believe, wish this themselves universally, if the clergyman has been diligent in his attendance; and their relations and friends are always gratified with it. But where there are many

funerals, and much other business to be done, it is impossible to lay down a general rule of this kind with any hope of being able to adhere to it. The performance of the funeral ceremony, therefore, by the Rector in person, even when he had attended the sick, especially if they were poor people, was considered in this parish to be a mark of distinction to the dead, and was usually acknowledged as such by their surviving family. So it happened in the present case.

Meanwhile I had seen Martha two or three times, and had particularly recommended to her, amongst other parts of the New Testament, to read again and again, the sermon on the mount, which I had mentioned in my last conversation with her. This having been done, I began, on a subsequent occasion, to talk to her about the concluding paragraph of St. Matthew's fifth chapter; and after many other things had been said, she asked me whether the persons who made the Psalms were not pious and holy men? To which question, when I had answered in the affirmative, she told me that she had often observed in the Psalms very strong expressions against the wicked, and every kind of bad wish against enemies; "And why, Sir," she said, "should we of these days pretend to be wiser or better persons than those men were, by wishing good wishes for our enemies in return for their curses, and doing good actions to the wicked in return for their injuries? Besides, Sir, would not this sort of behaviour do a great deal of mischief in the world, and encourage a great many bad practices? And there is another thing, Sir, which puzzles me: if it was God who put these notions into *their* heads who wrote the Psalms, the notions must be right; and yet they are very different from those we are now talking

about, and which were preached by Jesus Christ : which of them, therefore, must I attend to, Sir ? I cannot do both."

This was a matter which had often puzzled wiser heads than Martha's ; but it was seldom, perhaps, that any person had applied it in the way that she did. Some used it as an argument to prove that the Old Testament, which abounds with such passages, could not have a divine origin, and so went on to overthrow all revelation ; and others, who were disposed to be good Christians, admiring and imitating the humanity and charity of the gospel, were shocked and scandalized at this apparent contradiction between the two parts of the Bible.

"Well, Martha," I said, after a little consideration, "supposing all these passages in the Psalms, and any where else in the Old Testament, to have the meaning which you give to them, yet the very name of the New Testament shows, does it not, that it is later than the Old, and that it is a fresh declaration of God's will?" "It does, to be sure, Sir," she answered. "Which then," I said, "should you think required our obedience, if we could not obey both, the earlier or the later declaration of God's will?" She saw, no doubt, that the later one was *that* which was to be principally attended to ; but she could not bring herself, in a moment, to overturn her own position ; so she was extremely reluctant to say anything. So I asked her if she had ever heard of a man making two wills ; and she replied that she had. "And by which of the two," I asked again, "do you suppose, that the man intended his executors to act?" "By the second, Sir, of course," she answered ; "for otherwise there would have been no use in making it." "Very

well, then, Martha," I said, "as a testament means a will, you may consider the Old and the New Testaments as two wills; and then you will see clearly, that it would be very ridiculous to pretend that you had the liberty of choosing which of the two you would obey; and, in point of fact, to choose the older one, and neglect the newer one. For all practical purposes, therefore, you have yourself laid down the right rule—namely, that as there would be no use in making the newer one, unless it were to be obeyed in preference to the older one, the newer one accordingly is the will, or Testament, by which we must regulate our conduct."

Martha did not appear by any means to be satisfied with so hasty an arrival at this unwelcome conclusion; so I asked her if she knew why men sometimes made a second will. "Yes, Sir," she answered; "it is because they don't like the first; but I cannot think that God would act as a man; and it is this which puzzles me, if I may be so bold as to say it, Sir." "You are much in the right, Martha," I replied, "to entertain honourable ideas of God; but consider, why is it that men sometimes do not like their first wills, and so make a second? Is it not because they change their minds?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "but then God is not so weak as to change his mind like a man." "Then," I said, "you do not think, Martha, that men ever change their minds wisely?" She was staggered a little at this question, and was silent; so I continued: "Men change their minds very often capriciously, and without good reason; and it is impossible for God to be like them in that respect, because he is always both wise and just, which they are not. Again, men change their minds with good reason,

because circumstances change. A will, made at one time, and very fit for that time, might be very unfit for another time ; might it not, Martha ?” “ It may indeed, Sir,” she replied. “ So,” I said, “ it might be very wise, and even necessary, for a man to alter his first will, or make a new one, as often as circumstances should alter ; might it not ?” “ It might,” she answered. “ If a man had six children,” I said, “ and ordered by his will that all his property should be divided amongst them, and the same man had afterwards another child, would not this change of circumstances require a change of his will ?” “ It would, to be sure, Sir,” she replied. “ Or,” I said, “ if his children remained the same in number, but their situations and circumstances, with respect to their father and one another, were entirely changed in the course of time, would not a change of the will be a wise measure ?” She granted that it would.

“ Very well, then,” I said ; “ now tell me whether the circumstances of the world are not very different at different times ?” She supposed it must be so. “ Then it is likely,” I said, “ that the same mode of governing mankind might not always be equally wise. Sometimes they might require one set of rules, sometimes another. Sometimes stricter rules might be proper, sometimes milder. And one nation again might not be capable of being governed by the same rules as another. Accordingly we find, in point of fact, that different nations are governed by different rules. God has left some still to worship stocks and stones, because they have not yet sense and understanding enough to be capable of any thing better. Others are far advanced beyond these, but not so far as to be capable of being made Christians, which is the high-

est and most perfect state of all. We hope and trust, however, that all the world will be improved sufficiently by degrees, and so become Christian at last ; and then all the rules, by which they are now governed, will be laid aside, and the last will of God, delivered by Jesus Christ, will be the only will received and obeyed everywhere. Do you understand this ?”

“ Pretty well, Sir,” she answered. “ Then,” I said, “ you might readily understand also, that the law given to the Jews, being an earlier one, would probably be very inferior to the Christian law, which is the last ; and that there would be many things in it adapted only to such a people under such circumstances. Indeed God himself tells us, that he gave them statutes which were not good ; that is, not good in themselves, although they might be proper for God’s purposes ; and that he allowed them some things, not strictly right as he would have had them for a more improved nation, on account of the hardness of their hearts ; but that at a future period, when men were ripe for it, he would put an end to all these defective laws, and give them one perfect law for ever. In this sermon upon the mount the superior perfection of the Christian law is pointed out to you. It was said by them of old time, ‘ Thou shalt not kill ;’ but what does our blessed Lord say ? ‘ Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment : and whosoever calls his brother a fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.’ Again, it was said by them of old time, ‘ Thou shalt not commit adultery ;’ but what does he say in this case ? Why that a man has already committed adultery in his heart, who has looked upon a woman to lust after her. Again, ‘ Ye

have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; and thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.' But what does Jesus Christ say to all this? Why, 'Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.' Now, then, Martha, tell me this: is it not a finer and a nobler thing, and does it not show a more godlike temper, to do good to enemies rather than to do them harm?" She granted it. "But which," I asked, "is more agreeable to the corrupt, imperfect nature of men in general?" She shook her head, and said, "The latter." "Then," I asked again, "must not men be much improved, before they could see the propriety and the excellency of such a law, whether they were able to obey it or not?" She allowed that they must. "You have heard," I said, "without doubt, of the savage nations?" She assented. "Well," I said, "the great law of those nations is, to hate their enemies and to take vengeance upon them to the utmost; what do you think, then, that they would say to the Christian law, which bids them love, and bless, and do good to their enemies?" "Why, Sir," she answered, "I should think they would call it very foolish, and would not be persuaded to receive it." "You are very right," I said, "they are not sufficiently cultivated and improved for so pure and holy a law; it would be, as you say, foolishness to them. But then, do you not see, Martha, that we ourselves, if we are unwilling to embrace this law, degrade ourselves to a level with these savages; and this too, when, on the other hand, by embracing it and obeying it, we should resemble our great heavenly Father, who makes his bright sun to shine, and his

fruitful showers to descend, upon the unthankful and the evil, as well as upon the thankful and the good?"

The argument seemed to touch her, but she was silent; so I resumed immediately. "Nay, Martha," I said, "I cannot understand in what we should differ from the brute beasts themselves, with respect to our quarrels with one another, if we were to prosecute those quarrels in every case to the utmost. Do the brutes ever appear to *you* to forgive anything?" "No, Sir," she answered, "there is no appearance of it whatever." "Upon receiving any harm," I said, "they immediately return all the mischief which they can; do they not?" She allowed it. "This state of hostility and vengeance is quite natural to them; it is not?" I enquired. She granted that it was. "And," I said, "you have probably seen some beast in its fury bite a stick that was thrust at it, when it was not able to reach the person who thrust the stick; or a stone that was thrown; or what not?"

"I have often seen such a thing," she replied. "But did not such an act," I said, "betoken a total want of all common sense and reason, as well as a great, ungovernable fury of passion?" "To be sure it did, Sir," she answered. "However," I said, "these poor brutes do not seem to remember an injury long, do they, speaking of them generally?" "No, Sir," she replied, "except now and then. I have often been surprised to see how soon they are friends again after their quarrels." "Why then, Martha," I said, "in this respect they are superior to revengeful men; they forget, if they do not forgive; and so their forgetfulness restores them to peace with one another, and prevents their utter destruction. But revengeful men find it very difficult

to forget, do they not, if they ever forget at all?" "It is too true, Sir," she answered. "So they brood over their injuries," I said, "by day and by night; or, if they sleep, the same injuries haunt them in dreams, and deny them all peace and comfort; there is a cloud for ever on their brows, and rancour in their hearts. Is this a condition to be coveted, Martha? The condition of a savage, of a brute? Nay, a worse condition, as we have proved, than the condition of a brute; because a brute forgets, and the man, the rational being, remembers as long as he lives. But what say you, Martha, to such a use of reason as this? Do you like this better than to feel the delicious satisfaction of doing such things as God himself does; of being at peace with all mankind, and even with your bitterest enemies; and of having a constant sunshine upon your face, and in your breast? In which of these two states, tell me, Martha, would you most wish to be called out of this world, to meet your Judge, and to reckon with him?"

She was now touched to the quick, and her tears began to flow, and at length she exclaimed, "Oh! Sir, it was very wicked of me, indeed, to give way, as I did, to my passion. I hope God will forgive me for it, and that I shall be able to overget it." This acknowledgment of error, followed by a supplication for pardon, looked well; and she had now applied an epithet to herself, which a little while ago she had deprecated with abhorrence: so to confirm her in her present sentiments, and to quicken her endeavours after a forgiving temper, I reminded her again of God's forbearance and long-suffering; what impieties and blasphemies were committed against him every

day, and yet the sinners themselves were not cut down in his wrath, but pitied and spared, that they might come to repentance. "And, no doubt, Martha, you remember," I said, "how your blessed Saviour rebuked his hasty disciples, for wishing to call down fire from heaven, to consume a city which had injured them; and, what is still more striking, how he prayed for those who murdered him; and how he was afterwards imitated in this noble act by St. Stephen the first martyr. These are patterns for *us*; these, the highest, the holiest, the most perfect of beings; not the brutes, the savages, the rudest, and most cruel, and uncultivated nations, who are little better than brutes. But I had almost forgotten what we set out with: it is time now to tell you, that the passages in the Psalms, which you considered as justifying you in the indulgence of such an unholy and unheavenly spirit, and which we have talked of as if they were to be understood in the plain simple sense, are, after all, not to be so understood, but with a great many limits and qualifications, which will give them a quite different meaning from what *you* suppose. It would be very strange indeed, if this were not so; when the Old Testament no more commands us, or permits us, to hate and persecute our enemies, in general, than the New Testament does. When our Lord mentions, that it was said by *them* of old time, 'Hate your enemies,' he does not mean that it was said in Scripture, for there is no such command in any part of Scripture; but he means, that the wicked Jews explained some passages in Scripture in this manner. No, no, Martha, the same spirit of universal charity is recommended in both the Testaments; and when the great apostle St. Paul in the New was speaking of

charity, he could not express his thoughts upon it better, than by taking a passage from the Old. I will show it you, Martha ; where is your Bible ?”

“ It is here, Sir,” she answered, “ in the drawer of my table, and I should like to know the passage very much.” So she reached the Bible to me, and I was pleased with observing, that it was not dusty as heretofore, but appeared to be in full use. I then resumed, and said, as I turned over the leaves, “ The passage which I am looking for is in the book of Proverbs. Yes, here it is in the twenty-fifth chapter, at the 21st and 22nd verses. ‘ If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat ; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink ; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.’ I will put a mark in the place, that you may find it again, when you are by yourself ; and now I will turn to the passage of St. Paul, which is in the twelfth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Here it is at the 20th verse, and I will mark this place for you also ; but I will read from the 14th verse to the end of the chapter, for it contains much to our purpose.” Upon this I began to read, and, as I went along, I commented upon the striking sentiments and especially on that which says, ‘ avenge not yourselves ; vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord.’ “ You see, Martha,” I continued, “ God does not consider us to be fit creatures to take vengeance into our own hands. With so many bad passions about us, and with such an undue self-love, we should be too apt to overrate the injury, and to pursue the punishment too far ; and then our enemy would be disposed to retaliate upon the same principle, and there would be quarrels, and strifes, and fightings, and

wars without end, till this earth was like a den of wild beasts. You know very well, therefore, that if we have been injured ever so much, we are not permitted to take the law into our own hands. Not only does God forbid it, but all civilized nations forbid it too ; and so they have courts of justice, and men of great wisdom, authority, and integrity, to decide all disputes between man and man. But I will repay, saith the Lord ; if human judges should deny you justice, there is one who will not ; and to *Him* you may always look with confidence. If, in obedience to his command, you patiently suffer yourself to be trampled upon in this world, he will exalt you so much the higher in the next. ‘ Say not thou, therefore,’ as the same book of Proverbs tells you, in another place, ‘ say not thou, I will recompense evil ; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.’ ”

Here Martha interrupted me, by desiring me to be so kind as to find the text, and mark it for her, as I had done the others. This I did, after a short search ; it was the 22d verse of the twentieth chapter ; and I told her, how glad I was to see her take such an interest in these beautiful texts. “ But,” I said, “ as you seemed, my good Martha, to admire the character of Job so highly, I will mark you a passage also, in which that excellent man declares his sentiments on this subject. It is at the 29th and 30th verses of his thirty-first chapter. He is speaking of the various circumstances under which he might well deserve the anger of God, and he puts this as one ; ‘ if I rejoiced at the destruction of *him* that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him ; but I have not done so, neither have I suffered my mouth to sin, by wishing a curse to his soul.’ Such a man was Job ; and now,

in his great afflictions, the remembrance of his benevolent feelings towards an enemy supported his spirits." Poor Martha looked as if she had deprived herself of this consolation; but I proceeded without noticing her uneasiness. "One passage more, perhaps the most beautiful of all, I will mark for you out of the law of Moses. It is here, at the 4th and 5th verses of the twenty-third chapter of Exodus: 'If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again; and if thou see the ass of *him* that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.' What do you think now, Martha? Do not these several passages from Solomon, from Job, from Moses, show you very clearly that the same divine charity is the duty of both the Testaments?"

"Yes, Sir, indeed," she answered, "it seems very clear, as you say; but if I may be so bold, Sir, (I hope no offence,) I will show you what it was which misled me. Since you have been so kind as to visit me, Sir, I have read the Psalm which is in the service for the sick, very often; and I looked for it amongst the other Psalms, to see if there was anything else in it to comfort me; and so I found, Sir, at the 11th verse, (here it is) that the maker of the Psalm prays for the destruction of his enemies. Is not this so, Sir?"

Thus she questioned me, whilst she put her prayer-book into my hands, opened at the proper place. "Yes, Martha," I answered, "it seems so, certainly; but shall I tell you what the learned men say of this passage, and of a great many more of the same sort?" "If you will take the trouble, Sir," she replied, "it will be doing me the highest favour." "You know,"

I said, "very well, I presume, that these Psalms were written at the first in another language, and that they were translated, as it is called, into *our* language?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "I understand *that*." "Very well then," I said, "you will of course understand also that we must depend entirely upon those learned men for all our knowledge of the meaning of these passages." "It is very true, Sir," she replied. "What they say then, Martha," I continued, "is this; namely, that instead of, 'let them be so or so,' which is a wish, or a curse, it might have been, 'they shall be so or so,' which is merely to say, or to foretel, that God will certainly punish the wicked doers. And the next verse to the 11th, in the seventy-first Psalm, makes it almost certain that this must have been the real meaning here. 'As for me,' the Psalmist says, 'I will patiently abide alway;' why? 'not because I *wish* for shame and destruction upon mine enemies; but because I *know* that God will certainly punish all the workers of wickedness, and deliver all those who trust in him.' This, you see, Martha, is a very different thing from the bad wish and the cruel curse; and it is more of a piece with the rest of Scripture. Besides, you must take this into the account which I will shew you in another Psalm, as soon as I can find it. Here it is at the end of the eighty-third. The Psalm appears to be full of imprecations; but what is the purport of them? Why, that the wicked may seek the name of God, and know that the great Jehovah is the highest over all the earth. If you saw a man going on from one wickedness to another, would it not be a charitable deed in you, to pray to God to save his soul by inflicting judgments upon him, which may stop him in his course, and compel

him to reflect upon his condition, and so bring him to repentance?" "It would indeed, Sir," she answered. "In our own mode of praying," I said, "we use, generally, the mildest form of expression. In the Litany, for example, our petition is, that it may please God to forgive our enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and to turn their hearts; but how are their hearts to be turned? Probably, in many cases, not without severe afflictions. For these afflictions therefore we pray in reality, although not in words; so that there is no wide or material difference, in this respect, between the Psalmist and ourselves. But, in another respect, the difference between us is very wide and material. They were inspired men, David especially, and knew many things beforehand; and probably they were well aware when God would reclaim sinners by punishments and when not; as also when it might be possible to reclaim them by punishments, and when not; and therefore they prayed accordingly, and desired him in so many words, without softening the matter down, to execute in his own way his own great will and pleasure; and even to cut off the guilty at once, thereby shortening their crimes, and lessening their misery both here and hereafter. But we are ignorant of everything future, and consequently in what way it may be fit for God to act; and therefore we very wisely and calmly pray only for the happy event; namely, that the hearts of our enemies may be changed. Do you comprehend this, Martha?"

"A great deal of it, Sir," she replied; "and I hope I shall be able in future to explain some of these texts for myself, without any danger of mistaking them." "I hope so too," I said; "and therefore I will mention one more circumstance to you, which

occurs to me in looking at this 83d Psalm, which is now open before me. In the second verse it is said, 'thine enemies make a murmuring, and they that hate thee have lifted up their head:' the enemies, then, of whom he speaks, are not his own personal enemies, but God's enemies. This is very much to be attended to, and this is very frequently the case; and there is no doubt but that the very best Christian, who would pray in the gentlest and most moderate words about his own enemies, would pray much more strongly and vehemently against the enemies of God. God had determined to root out the nations of Canaan on account of their amazing idolatry and wickedness; he would not bear with them any longer; and, to execute vengeance on these his enemies, for several reasons, he employed the Jews as his instruments, with strict orders not spare through a false pity, but to destroy utterly, as God would have it done. But, on account of the sins of the Jews themselves, God would not always help them even to execute his own will; so that far from being victorious over those impious and profligate nations, they themselves were often defeated in battle with great slaughter, and in danger of being entirely cut off. In this situation, therefore, they humbled themselves before their offended God, and besought him to forgive them their sins, and to restore them to his favour, and to assist them, as before, in doing what he had commanded them to do; namely, to destroy those whom he had devoted to destruction. Do you not think, Martha, that this circumstance would make their prayers very different from what our's need be, when we are praying about our personal enemies? Must not their prayers, in such a case, be more like bad wishes, and even curses and

imprecations?" "It is very likely, Sir, indeed," she replied. "Then this," I said, "will explain a great deal to you, which might otherwise mislead you; and I think it very probable that the corrupt Jews applied to their own enemies what they should have applied only to the enemies of God; and that this is what was meant by its being said of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. The enemies of God they were absolutely forced to pursue with a deadly hatred, but their own personal enemies they were to treat according to those texts which I have marked for you; that is, with all lenity and brotherly-kindness. Such a false interpretation of Scripture, therefore, and so bad a spirit, resulting from it, Christ intended to correct, when he told them to love their enemies."

This was what passed between us at that time; and in subsequent conversations both the same subject, and all the others upon which we had talked before, were continually resumed, until she seemed to understand them thoroughly, and also to be thoroughly convinced, that the light in which I placed them was the true one. Meanwhile we had often joined together in prayer, and indubitable signs of a great improvement in her temper were shewing themselves daily. Her pains were often very severe, but she bore them with a wonderful patience, and submitted herself entirely to her Maker's will. She no longer cursed her enemy, but prayed to God to spare him for repentance. Her high opinion of herself also was completely laid low; and at length she was ready enough to acknowledge, that even at the best she had never been more than an unprofitable servant.

But during this interval the great evil which the

surgeons had apprehended had put on a more alarming aspect, and I was advised to send her to an hospital, in order that she might undergo a surgical operation. Accordingly I proposed it to her, and she made no difficulty about it whatever. The operation succeeded perfectly; and, after the absence of a month, she returned to us much improved in her health in every way, and now being able to walk to church, she was constantly there on Sundays; and, when the Sacrament was administered, she was always to be seen at the altar of her Lord. Her lace-work maintained her, and thus, with many bodily infirmities which were never likely to be cured, she was still contented and happy.

In this state of things, old Mrs. Bilson fell sick: she had been infirm from the beginning of my acquaintance with her, and quite incapable of acting upon the new principles which had been infused into the family; but she and her husband were both of them much improved, and the husband was a pretty regular attendant on public worship in the parish church. During her mother's sickness, which was long and painful, Martha was a splendid example of filial piety: she nursed her by day and by night—she read the Bible to her—she prayed with her continually—and all her little savings were expended in procuring her the extraordinary comforts which her declining health required. Not a single symptom of impatience was to be seen in this affectionate daughter; she depended upon her lace, but her lace was laid aside, without hesitation, when any kind action could be done for her mother; her own diseases required indulgence, but many a night did she watch over the sick bed, without closing her eyelids, or lying down

to rest : every glimmering of amendment in her patient was hailed with joy and gratitude ; every reverse would have filled her with sorrow and dismay, if she had not been resigned to the dispensations of Providence. She entreated me to pray for her mother in the church, and to visit her as often at home as my other engagements would allow ; in short, she neglected nothing to smooth the bed of sickness, and to illumine the shadowy path of death with a cheering light from another world.

One day when I called, her mother being asleep, she took me into the back chamber which was appropriated to herself ; and a chair being presented to me, with a request that I would sit down, she said to me in a plaintive voice, “ Ah, Sir, I remember very well what you told me about the mercy of a lingering disease to prepare us for death. My poor mother was always too full of the cares of this life, and gave herself no time to think of the care of her soul. But what could she do, Sir ! She was living from hand to mouth ; she never knew whether the next day would bring her bread. Her own health was bad, and my father’s not good, so they were never beforehand in the world ; and if my father was out of work, they were in distress at once. But they have always been honest, Sir, and *that* was my comfort ; and now my father goes to church, and my poor mother here, on her sick bed, has learnt how God will save sinners by Jesus Christ. I am sure, Sir, we have great reason for thankfulness.”

“ It is very true, Martha,” I replied ; “ and I am glad that you see the matter in that light. There are thousands in this parish who are in the situation which you so well describe ; living by the sweat of their

brows, which they must needs do if they would live at all; but living, apparently, as if they had no knowledge of a God, or Saviour. The difficulty of maintaining themselves being always uppermost in their mind, will hardly suffer them to think of anything else. It is a piteous case; and God, who is a God of pity and compassion, will, I trust, be merciful to them. Certainly indeed he will, if there be any possibility of it consistently with his other perfections. God, you know, Martha, must act according to all his perfections, and not according to one. Some men are merciful, and not just; others are just, and not merciful; and nobody who knows what men are is surprised at it. But in every act of God's every perfection is equally consulted; every act of his is equally wise, and just, and good, although *we* may fancy that we behold in some of his acts more of one perfection than another. He cuts down the wicked; we cry out that it is just. Yes, so it is; but it is wise and merciful too; they might have heaped up on themselves a greater damnation. He spares another for repentance; we praise his mercy. We are right; but he is wise, and just too, in the same act: the person spared, although living in a total neglect of *him*, yet lived perhaps up to the best light which he had. And herein is one of the greatest comforts imaginable to those who reflect deeply on the subject, and are sometimes disquieted with the lot of great multitudes of mankind; namely that God will most assuredly help all who use aright the talents which they have; that he will give them further and further means of improvement, according to the progress which they make in goodness; and that thus he will afford to every man the opportunity of being saved, and even

of obtaining a higher place in his kingdom above. We are sure that God will do this, because we do not doubt that it is consistent with all his perfections to do so ; but much more, because we see clearly the traces of such a dispensation in the gospel of his Son. Do you comprehend what I have been saying, Martha ?”

“ Every word, Sir,” she answered ; “ and I hope you have not finished yet. I could hear you all day, Sir.” There was a touching simplicity in this little speech which went to my heart ; and it afforded so convincing a proof of her present edification, and of her further thirst after divine knowledge, that I was not only encouraged to go on, but also secretly blessed the Author of all good, who had crowned my endeavours with such signal success. But there are too many, I thought with myself, who feel very differently from poor humble Martha ; too many, who are wise in their own conceit, and therefore destitute of that poverty of spirit, which alone would fit them for the reception of the Christian doctrines ; too many, so engrossed and absorbed in their earthly pursuits, whether of ambition, business, or pleasure, that the voice of the Preacher, urging them to burst their bonds asunder, and to look upwards to their native skies, is entirely dissonant from all their notions. They hear him, indeed, for example’s sake, or rather they seem to hear him, whilst neither admonition rouses them, nor persuasion wins them, nor entreaty bends them : they applaud brevity, and a quiet, languid tone, in the matter and the manner of their priest, when he speaks to them from the pulpit ; because, perchance, they think that accumulated argument, and manly energy and sacred zeal might leave them without excuse : they fear eloquence, lest

it pour forth a light which might confound them ; they deprecate vehemence, lest it might shake them with the terrors of another world.

So it is ; but whilst these ideas flashed across my mind, I had forgotten Martha, and their cause. She still “ stood fixed to hear,” and seemed to wonder why I paused so long. At length resuming the thread of my argument, I said, “ Your parents have been honest, you tell me ; and honesty is a very great virtue in persons of their rank. Every moment, it is likely, they have been tempted to violate it by their actual poverty, or by the fear of probable want ; but they have preserved it through every difficulty, and every distress ; and it is gone up, no doubt, for a memorial before God. They followed the light which they had ; and now, therefore, God has given them a greater, by which they seem disposed to profit also ; so that still higher blessings may be expected from so bountiful a master. I need not repeat to you now, that whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth ; but the chastisement and the scourging may be ineffectual, the same as any more mild dispensation : they may provoke impatience and murmurs, instead of producing self-abasement and self-examination. The consolation to you, therefore, Martha, should be this : that your mother is advanced by her sufferings in the ways of Christian holiness ; it is a proof not only that God is working upon her, but that he is working effectually. You have reason indeed for thankfulness.”

At this assurance of mine, Martha was unable to restrain her tears ; and the conversation went no farther, because her mother had waked, and wanted her. Having returned into the sick chamber, I prayed with them, and so departed.

On another occasion, when the younger Mrs. Clayton was present, who sometimes stepped in to help Martha, being herself a very kind-hearted woman, I happened to ask Mrs. Bilson, whether she had every thing about her to comfort her in her distressed situation, and whether her pains permitted her to pray to God continually. Her answer was, that when she was awake she did nothing else, and that "her death was all her study; and God," she said, "had raised her up so many good friends, that she wanted for nothing." "Yes," interposed Martha, "our neighbours are always ready to do us every little service in their power; and good Mrs. Warton, and others to whom *she* has recommended us, send us wine, and broth, and sago, and arrow-root; so that there is no difference now between the rich and ourselves." "Then you do not think, Martha," I said, "that a fine room to be sick in, and a handsome bed to be restless upon, and plenty of servants to turn the sick person from side to side, and to bring the medicines and the cordials, will lessen the pain or the restlessness, or promote sleep, or assist the study of death?" "No, indeed, Sir," she replied, "*that* is all use and custom. Rich people suppose so, no doubt; and it might make them very unhappy to think of being as my poor mother is; but it is all thought, Sir, and nothing else; and when we are gone, what signifies it?" "Aye, aye," said her mother with great feeling, "and I had rather have my daughter there to wait upon me than all the servants in the world."

Upon this I turned towards Martha, and was not surprised to see that the tears had started forth from her eyes; so I left her to herself for a little while to

enjoy this praise, which came from the heart ; and I said to Mrs. Bilson, " Do you think that your daughter would have gone away with Mrs. Bryan, when she quitted the parish and went abroad ?" " To be sure she would, Sir," was her answer ; " for Mrs. Bryan wished to keep her, and she could not have got better wages in any other place." " Then," I said, " she would not have been with you now." " Why *that* is very true, Sir," she replied ; " I never thought of that before." " How wonderful," I said, " are God's dealings with us all ! How gracious is he very often when we think him most severe !" " Oh ! yes, Sir," exclaimed Martha herself ; " I see it now : let God choose for me in future ; I will never more have any will of my own. What would my poor mother have done without me in this long sickness ? And how should I have fretted if I had heard of it, without being able to return ; and still more, if she had died without seeing my face again !" " It seems, then," I said, " that you are not sorry to have suffered as you have done, since it has brought you this great satisfaction of showing how much you honour and love your parent." " No, indeed, Sir," she answered, " it was a mercy, and so I shall always call it. And it is not in this one thing only, Sir, that it has turned out to be a mercy ; but in many things besides. I am a different woman now."

" Very well, Martha," I said, " you were convinced long ago, that God had been good to you, although you did not know how ; but by degrees, and day after day, as you became a different woman, you saw clearly what God's goodness was : and now we have discovered another thing, of another kind, which marks his goodness also. But I do not think that

this will end in the mere delight of smoothing your poor mother's sick pillow: I am sure, indeed, that whilst you are exercising the duties of a pious daughter, which God will reward, you will be learning fresh virtues, and strengthening the old ones, and thus will qualify yourself for a still greater reward in heaven." "Aye, aye," exclaimed the mother with energy for one so sick, "God will bless her, Sir, *that* he will; he loves dutiful children."

Here again Martha was overpowered by her mother's blessings; so I reverted to what the old woman had said before, thinking it might be useful to draw it out a little, and to show them the different bearings of it. "Servants are paid for what they do; are they not?" I asked. "Yes, Sir," she answered, "they have their yearly wages." "And if they did not perform their duties, they would lose their place, and their wages; would they not?" I asked again. "To be sure they would, Sir," she replied. "Then," I said, "it is very likely, is it not, that all the services which they perform will partake of this character—will show, I mean, that they are the services of persons who are paid for them, and who would lose their wages if they did not perform them properly?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "*that* is the case, without doubt." "Tell me, then," I said, "do you pay anything to good Mrs. Clayton here, for coming so often as she does to assist in little household matters, and in moving you from your bed, whilst it is put in order for you, that you may lie more comfortably?" "Oh! dear Sir," cried out Mrs. Clayton herself, "I should be ashamed to take any thing for what I do for Mrs. Bilson, if it were ten times as much. She was always ready to do what she could for my mother-in-law; and besides,

such near neighbours ought to help one another." "You are in the right, Mrs. Clayton," I said, "but if *you* get nothing, and expect nothing for your services, it is still more likely, I presume, that Martha will not get any thing." "Bless you! Sir," interposed Mrs. Bilson, "how should she get any thing, when I have nothing to give? But, perhaps, after all, I have something to give which Martha will like—my prayers to God for her, Sir, which, indeed, I have given already very often, and which I will give with my last breath. I will pray for Mrs. Clayton too; and for you, Sir, if you will let me." And upon saying this, she clasped her hands to do it.

I was touched with the conclusion of her sentence relating to myself, and with the gesture that followed it, which betokened at once piety, gratitude, and humility; but soon I replied, "Thank you! thank you! good Mrs. Bilson; I shall be very glad of your prayers. A hearty, fervent prayer prevails much with God; he stoops from heaven to hear it, and he makes haste to bless it. But as to what we were talking about, you seem to think that the services of those who are paid nothing, and who expect nothing, are of a different kind from hired services, and to be prized at a higher rate; and you think justly: for such services being entirely of free will are more likely to be perfect in every respect, in sincerity, in constancy, in real kindness, and affection." "Yes, Sir, *that* is it," Mrs. Bilson answered, "and I will say it of my daughter before her face, that she is never tired of waiting upon me, and finding out hourly fresh methods of giving me ease; and as for my infirmities she bears them all, without a single impatient word or look. Mrs. Clayton, too, is a very

friendly neighbour." " You have good reason, then," I said, " to be thankful, Mrs. Bilson, as indeed you appear to be ; for some sick people have neither kind neighbours, nor dutiful children, nor hired servants to attend upon them ; no, nor the common necessaries of life." Then, turning to Martha, I asked her if she now understood the text which I had formerly mentioned to her, that God would give all these things to those who strive to serve him, without any constant and painful anxiety on their parts to get them ; in the same manner as he feeds the sparrows which are not worth a farthing a piece, whilst human beings have souls to be saved, and are therefore of countless value to themselves, and to God their Saviour. She answered immediately, that she understood it now, both in her mind and by her own experience ; " But I will confess to you, Sir," she said, " that in the beginning of my mother's sickness I longed for the money which I had saved in service, and which had been squandered away so soon in wickedness. I thought very often how much good I might do with it, if I had it, and what a number of little comforts I might procure for my poor mother here ; but they are all come in, Sir, just the same as if I had bought them myself, and without asking for them too. *That* might have been painful and anxious, but God has graciously spared me all pain and all anxiety of that sort. Yet, Sir, with that money I might have saved our good friends all the expense which we cost them." " Yes, Martha," I said, " but then you would have deprived them of the delight which they have in their charitable deed, and of the increase of reward which may follow it ; and, what is of consequence to yourself, you would not

have acquired the same firm trust in Providence which you now have." "Yes, indeed," she replied, "so it is, Sir; and we always come to the same end, that God knows best, and does every thing for the best. I will trust in him for ever."

Thus did Martha devoutly express her pious feelings, and, as I did not wish to prolong this conversation, I proposed that we should all kneel down and pray. I chose a Psalm suitable to the present temper of our minds; and then, the Lord's Prayer and the benediction being added, I rose and left them.

Many more facts and insulated sayings might be adduced to describe and illustrate Martha's character in this period of her history; but, as they did not lead to any regular conversation, or require any particular remark from *me* in the discharge of my ministerial office, for the sake of brevity I omit them all. Her mother died; a bad winter followed; her father was out of work, and went to his own parish; Martha was left here alone.

§ 3.—*Martha Bilson, her Father, Mrs. Warton, &c.*

ONE Sunday, after the administration of the sacrament, which Martha never missed when her infirmities allowed her to come to church, being detained in the church-yard by an unusual number of funerals, on hastening homeward I espied her sitting on a tomb-stone, and with her two old people, husband and wife, of the names of James and Sarah West, who came from the same quarter of the parish, at the distance of a mile and a half. "Heyday," I ex-

claimed, going up to them and shortening my step, "where did you get your dinners to-day? Have you been to the hamlet and back again already, weak and lame as you all are?" "We have had our dinners upon this stone, Sir," answered Martha, for herself and the rest. Well, thought I, and the worms that are under it will soon dine upon you all three. "But how is this?" I inquired; and Martha replied, that the hamlet was too distant for them on sacrament Sundays, and they could not get back in time for afternoon church; so they brought a bit of bread and cheese just to stay upon their stomachs, and prevent sickness, which might happen if they waited for dinner so long beyond their common hour. Well, thought I to myself again, we are not without our Annas and our Simeons, even in these degenerate days; and James West, except in the want of a prophetic spirit, was just what Simeon might be supposed to have been, an aged, reverend man, with white hair, and fine, large, noble features, full of solemnity and devotion, and supporting his tall, but now bending, body with a patriarchal staff; aye, and worshipping too, like Jacob, whilst he leaned upon the top of it. In his mind he was, like the old Claytons, simple and without guile; but he had not attended, like *them*, God's public worship since his earlier days, when he was regular enough. The consequence of this was that I never knew him, till one day passing by his cottage, I saw through the window, a corner of the linen blind being tucked up to let in more light, his venerable figure poring over a book in profound attention and study. I was struck, and stopped to gaze at him; but neither the sound of my steps before, nor the intercepting of the light now, aroused him from

his close pondering. At length I knocked at the door, which was opened by his wife, and I and the old man were very soon friends. His book was a fine ancient copy of the Liturgy, with cuts; and from this time, when we first became acquainted, it was his constant companion to church.

“ Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus,
“ Singula dum capti circumvectamur amore.”

To return,—I left this interesting party upon the gravestone, and I cried out, as I went away, in reply to Martha, “ No more satchels, my good people! God shall feed you, as he does the ravens, without any care of your own.”

On my arrival within doors I communicated this beautiful story to Mrs. Warton, who was as much charmed as myself with the excellent spirit of piety which shone in their behaviour, and immediately we directed the servants to carry them out some cold meat, and some bread and beer, to enable them to finish their dinners; so they did not faint by the way, although they came from far.

This was soon established into a good custom, and for some time the same party might have been seen on sacrament Sundays at dinner amongst the tombs; but one day a violent storm assailed them, and the servants without any order from *me* or Mrs. Warton, invited them into the house. We approved of this when we discovered it, and so it continues with those who survive to this day, but Martha rests in the Lord Jesus. The younger one has anticipated the elder by many years.

But I will not lay down my pen until I have shown how Martha Bilson played her part in the last act of

this tragic drama. As soon as her sickness had increased upon her to such a degree as to keep her from church, she sent for *me* by old James, who came on week-days as well as on Sundays. I obeyed the summons at the first opportunity. She was in the same cottage as before, but on the ground-floor, and she was now, what old Mrs. Clayton had been, tenant-in-chief of the whole cottage; and it was crowded with lodgers from top to bottom in such a manner, that she occupied only one apartment, the ancient school-room, herself. The skreen was replaced by coverlets and blankets, and I know not what else, hanging on a line from one side of the room to the other, and leaving a passage to the back chamber and the staircase, for the lodgers to go to their several apartments without interfering with Martha's. She had once occupied the garret, as being the cheapest, but she soon found it best to be at the bottom, both on account of her health, and for the better management of the whole concern.

It was a cold stormy day, and the front of the cottage was much exposed, with a western aspect, from which quarter the wind was then blowing. I knocked but nobody answered, so I opened the door myself, and in rushed the blast: and the curtain of blankets and coverlets began to flap about, and to whistle like the sails of some unfortunate ship caught in a hurricane. I closed the door again with what speed I could, but it demanded all my strength to do it. Then I considered how to penetrate the barrier, and soon espying where a coverlet and a blanket met, and were fastened together with a large pin, after taking out the pin I held them asunder with my two hands, and stooping under the line from which they were suspended, I was at once in the presence of poor

Martha, who was lying upon her bed in the farthest corner of the room. Not a creature was with her, but she had a fire, and by her bedside a small table with an orange or two upon it, and a jug full of toast and water. Instantly the conversation which I once had with her in the time of her mother's sickness flashed across my mind; and alas! I thought, she has no tongue of dear friend or relation to soothe her; no countenance to rest upon with delight, as she turns her eyes around this desolate apartment; no hand such as she might wish to spread the pillow under her aching head. Her treacherous husband has ruined and abandoned her; she is sinking prematurely under *his* crimes. Her mother is gone to her long home, from whence there is no return thither to help those who tarry behind. Her father is in a distant poor-house, which she had once dreaded so much for herself, without the means, if he had the strength, to travel so far to close her eyes, and lay her in her grave.

Whilst I was making these mournful reflections I had advanced close to the bed, but I did not attempt to speak; my heart was too full for utterance. She relieved me a little by beginning herself, and, although with a faint voice, yet in a much more cheerful tone than I had ventured to expect. "God bless you, Sir!" she said, "a thousand times, for coming so soon to see me: I am in no great pain, Sir; but this sickness is for death, I am sure of it." "If God's will be so, Martha," I replied, "you will submit to it, I am confident, with a pious, humble resignation; you will not falsify in a few moments the conviction and the preparation of years. God has visited you with many sorrows and heavy afflictions, and when you knew him you said, Thy will, O God, be done! When he

comes to visit you again to release you from your labours, and to wipe the tears from your eyes, your speech will not be different. On the contrary, enlivened by the Christian's hope, and encouraged by your Redeemer's promises, and leaning upon his merits, you may well exclaim with joy, 'It is the bridegroom who cometh, let me go forth to meet him; I am ready.'"

As I spoke in this manner the tears coursed each other down her cheeks; but at length she answered, "If I am not ready, Sir—if I cannot cry out with joy, Come, Lord Jesus—it is not because I would dispute God's will; no, good Sir, I am not now so ignorant, or mad; I bow to it; I adore it. But the painful remembrance of what I once was—a murmurer against that will, and an accuser of my God—with a spirit full of hatred and vengeance against a wretched fellow-creature—a poor worm like myself—the remembrance of these things (Oh, painful, painful, painful!) checks my desire of leaving this world, because it abates my hopes in the next. But you are the Minister of consolation, Sir; and you will console *me*, if you can do it, and yet speak the words of truth." "I can do it," I said, "with truth and justice, my poor friend. By the gracious terms of the Gospel, God considers what you are, not what you have been. He considers what he himself has made you, by the workings of his Holy Spirit, and by the discipline of his Providence; not what you were, when you lived in ignorance of *him* and of his laws; and, oh! merciful and good, he will reward his own deed; he will exalt you to that station for which he has qualified you by his own power. You might have been lost indeed, if you had been

left to yourself; but by a wonderful train of providences, he rescued you from your perilous condition; he tried you, as gold is tried, in the sharp fire of adversity; he purged away the dross; he refined you; he brought you out of the furnace pure and bright; he has fitted you to shine as the stars for ever. It is natural enough, when death, as you suppose, draws nigh, and the great mortal change is about to happen, that you should look back with sorrow upon the offences which you once committed against God; and although you yourself have repented of them and forsaken them, and your Redeemer has washed them away with his precious blood; although the Holy Ghost has implanted in you new principles and new desires, from whence have sprung new actions, and a new life—it is natural enough, that, like St. Paul, reflecting upon what you did, even in ignorance, a shade of trouble and uneasiness should darken a little the prospect which is before you, and which otherwise might have been too bright to bear: when you are going to meet God, it is natural enough that you should grieve that you ever grieved him; that you ever despised, or neglected, or abused infinite goodness and mercy; but when you come into his presence, you will see no cloud resting upon his countenance to dim the glorious light of it; the very sight will infuse into you at once unutterable joy; and you will be conscious in an instant that all is pardoned, all forgotten, all swallowed up and lost in the mighty rivers of bliss which will flow for ever.”

Here I stopped; for I was overpowered by my own picture, and could not proceed: and it would be difficult to say which was affected most, Martha, or

myself; but I was the first to recover. Her's were tears of joy, which needed not to be indulged; mine were from some other source, not easily defined; but they were to be repressed, because they drowned the exertions of duty. I *did* repress them, and then continued thus:—

“Your lowliness of mind, my poor Martha, will be dear and acceptable to God. Do you remember how he speaks of himself? ‘Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with *him* also, who is of a humble and contrite spirit.’ This, you perceive, is the temper which God will bless, and sanctify with his presence. You are right, therefore, in abasing yourself before *him*, as we all who are but dust and ashes might well do; we who have nothing of our own whereof to glory. Whatever we are, it is of God's grace alone, and not of ourselves. Where then is there any room for boasting, for presumption, or pride? It must all be utterly cast down: God abhors it; the meek and the lowly, and the trembling alone shall be lifted up, and stand before him at the last day with joy. You are one of these, Martha, and their lot shall be yours.”

By this time my poor patient was able to speak; but I cannot put what she said, without destroying its force, into a coherent sentence. It was a mixture of thanks to myself, of ejaculations to heaven, of confessions of unworthiness, of faith and trust in her Saviour, of prayer for the assistance and comfort of the Spirit, of earnest longings, and devout aspirations after immortality. My pen cannot worthily record it; but it was heard, no doubt, and written, and recorded above. Nothing could properly follow it on

my part but prayer ; so reaching her prayer-book from her pillow, and kneeling down by the bedside, I began almost involuntarily the service for the burial of the dead. In a common case, this would have been strikingly ill-timed ; but here, the two first, at least, of the introductory sentences suited me admirably, and with them I stopped. The sentiments themselves, so consolatory to one whose days had been passed here in sorrow ; so descriptive of a lively unshaken faith in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, from the dust and destruction of the grave, to a more glorious state in another and a better world ; these sentiments, and the tone with which I pronounced them—the first passage with the tone of authority, the second of exultation—confirmed her in her principles, and still more elevated her thoughts. The Psalm, upon which I fell next, the 91st, did the same ; but many parts required considerable alteration to adapt it to the purpose. I then read the collect in the communion of the sick, with alterations ; also the Lord's Prayer, and the benediction at the end of the visitation-service. This being done, I rose, and sat down on a chair.

After a while, all being tranquil as when I first entered, I inquired of the sick woman, whom she had got to attend upon her. "A very nice person, indeed, Sir," she answered, "it is Mrs. Parkes, one of my lodgers ; the same, whose mother you visited last year, in the chamber above, till she died. Aye, it was in *that* chamber that my own mother died too." As she said this, she was beginning to weep ; but I interposed immediately ; "No more of *that*, my good Martha ; you will meet her again, to part no more ; and in a place, from which all sorrow and sighing

will flee far away. But I am glad that you have got Mrs. Parkes, whom I remember very well, and of whom I have a good opinion. I should fear, however, that, as she has two small children, she would not be able to be much with you." "Why, *that* is true, Sir," she replied, "the infant in the cradle cried a little time ago, and she was forced to leave me in order to quiet him; so you found me quite alone, Sir; and, I dare say, your kind heart made you think me very forlorn, and deserted-like; but I have only to rap against the wall, Sir, and she will be here in a moment, if I want her; for she lodges but in the back chamber."

If I understood this rightly, it was a pleasing specimen of a person, conscious of her melancholy circumstances, but perfectly prepared to conform to them, and unwilling to give pain to another, by seeming to notice, or feel them. So I interpreted what she said, and it raised her in my admiration. "But where is Mrs. Clayton?" I asked. "She lives close by, and she used to be very friendly to you. I expected to have seen her here, and I wished to see her." "Ah, Sir," she replied, "we never meet now. Since that unfortunate business of the funeral, she accuses *me*, Sir, of being the cause of your displeasure towards her; and so she will have nothing to do with me. You know very well, Sir, that I was not the cause, as she supposes wrongly, but I cannot convince her of it. Perhaps, however, she will believe a dying woman, so I have sent to ask her to hear me again, and to forgive me, before I go; that I may die in peace with every human creature. She herself, too, might be sorry afterwards, when it is too late to do any good."

There appeared to me to be a beautiful simplicity and genuine goodness in this little speech, which merited not to be lost ; but it compels me, for the sake of explaining it, to tell a story which will lower some of my characters in the estimation of the reader of these dialogues. As yet, I presume, the Claytons stand high in his opinion ; but the old lady shortly before her death used to complain that they were not so regular at church as they had been accustomed to be ; and she once said to me, “ I cannot think, Sir, what is come to them all of late ; there is a strange backwardness about their church, which I cannot account for. I hope they do not listen to the wicked things which ungodly men say about the Bible.” Thus she expressed her fears ; and, after her death, matters became worse, till they were ripe for what I am now about to relate.

It is customary in this parish, and, I believe in all others which are populous, and in the neighbourhood of populous towns, where burying-grounds cannot be enlarged but at a great price, to exact a considerable fee for the burial of all persons not being parishioners, and not dying within the boundaries. The Claytons had a relation under those circumstances, whom they wished to bury here, and yet to avoid the fee ; which could not, however, be done without a direct breach of truth ; but it seemed incredible, that a family hitherto so respectable, and rewarded as they had been with every favour which I and Mrs. Warton could lavish upon them, should carry their disregard for truth to such an extreme as they eventually did. They brought the corpse clandestinely by night into the parish, and assured the sexton that the death had occurred here. But a rumour having reached me, when

I was about to commence the service in the church, that the fact was not so, I desired that the question might be put categorically to Mrs. Clayton herself, on whom I depended most, before she quitted the pew in which she was seated; and that she should be reminded, also, in whose sacred temple and presence she was. Still, unawed by the sanctity of the place, and the solemnity of the occasion, she did not hesitate to concur with the rest in the same falsehood. The thing, however, soon becoming notorious, every reward for good behaviour was withdrawn; shame overtook her, and she could no longer hold up her head.

It would have shown better taste, perhaps, to have kept this grievous fall of the Claytons entirely out of sight; but I mention it for the reason which I have stated above, and to do homage to truth; and I wish also to point it out as a case, in which it might have been well to have considered beforehand, how far a severe punishment was likely to be advantageous or mischievous. The occasion seemed to call for an example, and I made it without regarding consequences. But it turned out ill with respect to the Claytons themselves, whatever it might do with respect to others. They were evidently the worse for it; and amongst other signs of deterioration, they threw themselves upon the poor's-rate, and they abandoned public worship altogether. Upon the whole, therefore, under similar circumstances, I should pursue gentler methods; and I recommend such methods to my brethren. By reducing a man to despair you lose all influence over him; and, by consequence, all means of being useful to him in his spiritual concerns. To regain him is next to impossible.

But to come back to poor Martha. "You are very right," I said, "in sending for Mrs. Clayton, and giving her an opportunity to retract her unjust suspicions of you, and to put an end to her quarrel with you; and if she has anything good yet remaining about her, she will be here without delay." "Yes, Sir," she answered; "but poor Mrs. Clayton may not be able to do as she would wish, and so we must not judge her harshly, if she should not come. The loss of the winter charities, and of the assistance which Mrs. Warton gave her in her confinements, and many other things, all occasioned by your discovery about the funeral, have vexed the whole family, and they may dissuade her from doing what she herself might think to be right." "Well, Martha," I said, "you will see; but at all events, it is kind of you to find excuses for her in this manner, and you will have done everything which lies in your power; the rest you must leave to God. But, my poor Martha, Mrs. Warton will not be satisfied, when I tell her, that you have nobody to attend upon you, except Mrs. Parkes, who can spare so little time from her own children."

At this instant came in Mrs. Parkes herself, in a great hurry, pushing through the curtain, and stooping under the line with some difficulty, as she had a child in each arm, and both of them were crying bitterly. Upon seeing me, she dropped a low curtsy, and said, she was afraid Mrs. Bilson might want her; for she had been obliged to go out to the baker's, and had been absent longer than usual. "It is very good of you," I replied, "to be so careful of her; but I always observed that you were a kind young woman; and I have no doubt that God will bless you for it,

and raise you up friends to nurse you when you are sick and in distress yourself." The tears came into her eyes, but she answered immediately, smiling through her tears, "Oh, Sir, Mrs. Bilson is so ready to do what she can for every body, and she did so much for *me* when my own mother was ill, that it is a pleasure to help her now in her turn; but if she does not want me this minute, I will step into my own room; for these babes will trouble her, and you too, Sir, with their crying. I believe they are hungry, poor things." "Go then," I said, "and Martha will knock for you, when I have left her."

I was much pleased with this trait of modesty in Mrs. Parkes. The generality of women of the same rank, being entirely destitute of such a feeling, and without any sense of common decency, would have made no scruple of uncovering their bosoms before me; but she was as chaste and guarded in her conduct as she was pure in her thoughts; and she was pretty withal in her features, and cleanly in her person, and neat in her dress; and I found afterwards, that she possessed the entire affections of her husband, who never deserted her for the alehouse. When she was gone, I began to praise her to Martha, and I promised to mention her name and character to Mrs. Warton. "Ah, Sir," she said, "if I could but see the good Madam Warton once more before I die, it would rejoice my eyes; and then there would be nothing left for me to desire, but—but—but—" Here her sobs drowned her voice, and the sentence was broken off unfinished; but I guessed her meaning, and said, "You wish to see your poor old father, Martha; I am sure you do; and if he happens to be well, he may soon be here; and, what between

walking and riding in the waggons, the journey will cost but a trifle; and, if he chooses to stay for a week or so, he may get a little job, amongst some of his old masters, who will be glad to employ him again, when they know upon what an errand he is come." "Ah, God bless you, Sir," she cried out, with mingled sobs; "difficulties are no difficulties to *you*; to *me* it seemed impossible, but to *you* it is nothing. The poor old man will be here, Sir; I know it, now; and he will close my eyes yet."

Sad office, thought I, for a father; and, when he has done it, he will have no kindred hand to close his own!

Martha and myself might now have wept till the setting sun had warned me of the flux of time; but, on the sudden, collecting firmness enough to speak to her, I told her that I should administer the sacrament to her on the morrow. Then I departed with all speed.

The morrow came, and I repaired at the appointed time to Martha's cottage. On entering and passing the curtain, the first object, which caught my view, was the venerable head of old James West. He rose slowly from a chair, supported by his staff, to do me honour; but I soon re-seated him. Next I saw Sarah, his wife, sitting by the sick-bed; she rose too, but I beckoned to her to resume her place. Now Martha spoke. "Here are my good old friends, Sir, come to partake with me of the last supper of our blessed Lord; the last, Sir; yes, it will be the last to *me*; and it will prepare me, I pray God, for my *last* journey. I knew you would be glad to see them, Sir; and they were themselves very glad to come. We have often ate together at the rectory, Sir, and

knelt together at the rail of the altar to eat the bread of life ; and as we did it in sincerity, Sir, though with poor abilities, I think that God looked down upon us from heaven with his favour ; and I hope he will do the same now, although we are not in a sacred dwelling-place of his own."

"*That* he will, I am sure, Martha," I replied ; "the heart is everything to *him*, the place nothing, except for *our* sakes. Walls and ceilings, however hallowed, cannot contain such a Being ; he fills the whole world with his presence ; he is every where at once ; he is *here* now ; where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is *he* in the midst of them ; nay, if they be of a poor and humble spirit, his abode is in their very hearts. But he must be honoured before men ; and for public honour there must be a public place, set apart from every other use ; and he is so gracious, as to promise that he will dwell there in a more especial manner ; and that his ears shall ever be open in such places to receive and accept, with a peculiar favour, the united prayers of his whole congregation. Whilst you were able, Martha, you worshipped him there with these your aged friends continually ; and, perhaps, in the views of his divine mercy he joins you all three together ; and, I doubt not, he will look upon you now, when you serve him jointly in this secret chamber, with equal love and mercy. But before you are joined eternally, you must be separated for a time ; such is the law of our mortal being ; dust we are, and to dust we must return. There is a journey first to be taken, as you very well say, Martha ; and the sacrament is a proper preparation for it."

After this, silence ensued, and all appeared to be

composing themselves for the holy rite ; so, having found a convenient spot for the old man to kneel upon at the foot of the bed, and unpacked my basket, and arranged the contents of it as well as I could under the existing circumstances, I went through the appointed forms ; but not without some thrilling of my nerves ; for the spectacle was very interesting, and the recollections springing from it peculiarly affecting. As for Martha, she was in tears during the whole ceremony ; nor were the feelings of the old people so blunted with age as to enable them to remain dry-eyed. The old man especially, by much the oldest of all, wiped his face once or twice with his handkerchief.

When all was finished, I dismissed *him* and his wife with many kind expressions of regard, and added that it would be good for Martha to be left for some time by herself, to meditate upon the sacred act that had just been performed. I intended to follow them instantly ; but first, as I thought it would be comfortable to poor Martha, I told her, that I had great hopes Mrs. Warton would be stout enough to come to see her in a day or two, if the weather was favourable. Immediately when she heard this, the lips of the grateful woman began to quiver with intensity of feeling ; but at length she said, “ Oh ! Sir, the poor people have had a great loss, and *you*, Sir, have had a much greater loss, in dear Madam’s sickness. We used to see you together always in our cottages, and walking arm-in-arm through the parish, even in the farthest parts of it ; for she could walk almost as well as yourself, Sir. And then, Sir, she made a hundred little inquiries, which you could not so properly do, or for which you want time, about the state of the

poor families, and the cleanliness of their rooms, and the diseases of the children, and the medicines and the food necessary for them, and all their whole needful care and management, of which the parents are generally very ignorant, or neglectful. And, I am sure, it has been a pain to many of us, to have seen *you*, Sir, for so long a time, walking about by yourself, so lonely, without your spouse, and without a creature to talk to, as we know you do for hours together."

What Martha said was very true. It is indeed almost incredible, what a difference it makes, whether the clergyman's wife is able and disposed to perform those duties, or not. Many of them he himself cannot perform, at any rate; and they are of much greater importance than they may seem at first sight, both with respect to the comfort and well-being of the poor in their daily concerns, and also as regards his influence over them for a more substantial good. And there are other things in abundance, of which Martha perhaps was not aware, which can never flourish, or prosper in any degree, without the active superintendance of a lady in authority; especially the charitable institutions for the relief of her own sex. For every duty of this kind Mrs. Warton had a natural aptitude, and disposition; and by long practice, begun before her marriage, she had acquired all the requisite skill and experience; so that when the various advantages, likely to flow from these invaluable qualities, were at once intercepted by the state of her health, my own exertions appeared to be the less availing; and many things, essential to the improvement of the parish, seemed to retrograde, rather than to advance; and

poor Martha was not the only person who made the same remark.

In reply to her I said, that it was certainly very unfortunate in every way, both for myself and for others ; but that it could not be helped. " No, Sir," she interposed, catching up my sentence before I had finished it, " it could not be *helped* indeed. Her kindness made her attempt what her strength was unequal to. With *her* heart she could not *help* assisting even the poorest fellow-creature in distress. We all know what her sufferings arise from, Sir ; but they will be a blessing to her hereafter ; yes, and here too, depend upon *that*, Sir. It is as sure as God is sure. My faith increases, as my death draws nearer. I can see now, Sir, through the blackest clouds. The afflictions of the bad, like *me*, will end in good ; the afflictions of the good, like *her*, will end in good upon good, not to be spoken, not to be conceived."

Thus was the once impatient Martha, one that wrestled under God's yoke, complained against his dealings, and was too blind and too weak in faith to see to the end of them, a very babe in understanding, now so strong and enlightened as to be able to console, to exhort, and to confirm another ; yes, even *him* who had exerted all his faculties and energies to do it for herself. Her allusion to the cause of Mrs. Warton's long imprisonment to her couch would have touched me to the quick, if I had not often heard similar remarks from persons of the same rank. An old crippled pauper, waiting in the back aisle after sacrament had fallen down in a fit ; and Mrs. Warton, although so circumstanced as to require rest, and the

husbanding of her strength, had been the first to rush from her pew, and by an extraordinary effort to lift the epileptic cripple from the ground. I was myself in the robing-room; the tumult called me out, and the mischief was visible enough. My wife was deadly pale, and cold drops of sweat stood upon her face. Years have elapsed, and she still suffers; but I do not now, as Martha lamented, wander about alone; she has borne me many children, the pledges of our love, and the resemblances, I hope, of herself, to accompany and to beguile my walks. But I return to the conversation.

“ Oh! Martha,” I exclaimed, “ if Mrs. Warton were here, she would not permit you to call her good in that sense; nor to magnify, as you do, her humane action. She would never allow that any were so good as to need no correction, or that any charitable deed, followed by sorrow here, might claim an unspeakable reward hereafter. She trusts to something else much more effectual than any poor little deservings of her own. You know what I mean, Martha?” “ Yes, yes, Sir,” she replied, “ I understand you very well; but her good deeds will go up for a memorial of her, nevertheless; and, when the day of reckoning comes, we cannot be ignorant how they will be accounted of *them*; because he, who will judge us, has told us so himself. Ah! Sir, I fear many will be mistaken in that day, and find that they have been building upon sand. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction is true religion, Sir; it is showing our faith by our works; and I think it is St. Paul, Sir, who says, that charity is even better than faith.”

“ He does, indeed,” I answered, “ but I know you do not suppose St. Paul’s meaning to be, that charity

is better than faith, in such a sense as that you may choose charity and leave faith alone. No, no, we can never arrive at the true Christian charity without the help of the true Christian faith. Faith must be the foundation ; charity the building raised upon it ; but the foundation is for the sake of the building ; and so, in this sense, the building is better than the foundation, and charity better than faith. But this charity, of which St. Paul speaks, my good Martha, is not so little a thing as visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction ; it embraces much more, which is so difficult and contrary to our nature, that we must be excellent Christians indeed, nay, almost perfect, to do it. But I will read to you what St. Paul actually says, out of your own Bible, which I am glad to see always at your elbow." " Aye, aye, Sir," she replied, " here it is on my pillow ; and what could I do without such a companion and comforter ! My mind is stayed upon it. But I am preventing you from reading to me, Sir."

" The passage," I said, " is in the 13th chapter of his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, and begins at the 4th verse. ' Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, it is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things ; charity never faileth.' See now, Martha, what a virtue this Christian charity is ; how far it goes beyond visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction ; what a struggle we must have daily and hourly with the bad passions of our nature before we can get it ; meekness, and lowliness,

and humility, and self-abasement, and patience, and long-suffering, you perceive, are the main parts of it ; no envy, no jealousy, no ill will, no ill thought with respect to another, are allowed by it ; in short, it contains almost every other virtue within itself. How much you must conquer, Martha, before you can reach this !”

“ Yes, yes, Sir,” she exclaimed feelingly, “ nobody knows *that* better than I do, for nobody had more to conquer. I tremble even now, Sir, when I look back, and think what little charity I once had ; or, to speak the truth, I ought to say, what a slave I was to every uncharitable desire, and to all bitterness, wrath, malice, and evil speaking, and revenge. But thanks first, Sir, to *your* admonitions and instructions, both public and private ; thanks next to that holy Book which you hold in your hands, and which I have studied day and night ; thanks, above all, to God’s mighty spirit, who hath endued me with a strength not my own, and put feelings into my heart, to which I was an utter stranger before ; thanks, Sir, to all these, I am now at perfect peace with every body in my own breast and thoughts. I have forgiven even my cruellest enemy ; I have prayed for him in the night-watches on my bed ; I have wept for him more often than I can say ; nay, Sir, if I could but save his soul alive, I would gladly suffer here the very worst that this world might bring.” Then suddenly clasping her hands together, and raising her eyes upwards, with a wonderful fervour, she added these emphatic words, “ Spare him, O Lord Jesu ; for thou hast redeemed *him* too !”

I had been wishing, at this crisis, for some additional declaration on this important part of Martha’s history ; and, for that purpose, I had said what I did upon

charity. It succeeded to my heart's content ; and now no doubt remained but that she had imbibed all the divine principles of the holy Christian character. She had evidently the spirit of Christ ; and therefore I was fully satisfied that she was one of *His*. From every trial that I made of her, she came off victorious ; from this last more than victorious. This was even to stretch Christianity itself as far as it could go. The sound of that brief prayer, with all its pathetic and sublime energy, yet rings in my ears. At that time, I grasped her hands, which still remained in the attitude of supplication, and exclaiming with difficulty, " Martha, you are ripe for heaven ; you are fit company for the spirits of the just made perfect ; endure thus unto the end, and then wear your crown !" I hurried away before her devotion seemed to pause ; and whether she heard me, or not, I cannot tell. In a few moments I was beyond the curtain, and out of the cottage ; smitten deeply with the past scene, and revolving, as I paced slowly along afterwards, what it was to be a Christian.

From this day she declined rapidly, although it was too manifest, that she might still linger for a considerable time : but her voice beginning to be very feeble, Mrs. Warton determined to execute the intention of visiting her without further delay ; and accordingly, having a fine morning for this arduous undertaking, she set out, and accomplished the walk with much less fatigue than we had just reason to fear. Upon our arrival we found old Bilson in his daughter's chamber ; he had been there a few hours, and all the agony of the meeting was over. Mrs. Parkes was present at it, and some time afterwards attempted to describe it to me, but all in vain ;

she was of too gentle a mould herself, and too susceptible of sorrow to be able to paint, *vivâ voce*, the sorrows of another. So this scene is lost, but the fancy may easily paint it.

Upon seeing us the old man began to weep, and to exclaim that he was come to see his daughter die ; for he was sure that she never would get over it, nor rise from that bed again. " Well, well," I said, " be firm, and do not talk in that manner to disturb her last moments. Keep your grief to yourself, and submit to God ; he loves us all even better than we love ourselves ; so that we are safest and best in his hands. If he saw fit, it would be just as easy for him to raise her up again from this sick bed, as it was to cast her upon it. Be silent, therefore, for you know nothing about it, my poor old friend. But your daughter is one of the wise virgins, and has trimmed her lamp, and will not be surprised by death and darkness, come when or as soon as they may. She has glorified God by many years of patience under trouble, and she will glorify him by meeting her end with the same patience ; full of tranquillity, because full of faith. Your undue sorrow and idle speeches would do much harm to another not so well grounded in religion as Martha ; and even to Martha they might do some harm, by making her uneasy for *you*, although not for herself. Go and calm yourself, my poor old friend, in Mrs. Parkes's room, and we will send for you again presently." So he went, not unwillingly, but shedding tears profusely.

The imprudence of persons attending upon sick-beds is inconceivable, except by the clergy, and some others, who are professionally in the habit of witnessing it ; and, if it be not repressed at once by a pretty

strong rebuke, it occurs perpetually in every shape, and in every form of expression. I have seen the sick themselves, in many instances, exceeding distressed, and even agonized by it, and I was under great difficulty at first how to manage it. For a time, until I had considered the matter more accurately, I was content to take the imprudent persons out of the room with me when I went away, and to admonish them of their folly privately; but the mischief had been done, and was very often irreparable. A poor woman, suppose, broken down by a recent childbirth, with scarcely a particle of strength about her; depressed too in her spirits, and haunted with the bitter thought of being soon snatched away from a numerous family of young children, has one of those foolish, croaking neighbours to demolish her altogether. I come in, perchance, with the hope of comforting and cheering her sinking mind a little, that it may the better support her sinking body; whilst I would almost imperceptibly prepare her for the worst. But immediately upon my appearance and inquiring how the sick woman is, this officious ill-judging friend cries out aloud, "Oh! Sir, she is as bad as she can be to be alive; an hour ago I thought she would have died, Sir; and I expect another attack every minute. She will never last out another attack, Sir; it will certainly carry her off, Sir; and then what will become of these helpless babes?" The effect of such a speech as this it is almost impossible to efface by anything which I can say afterwards. In general, indeed, whatever I might say afterwards, she suspects it of being only meant to keep her in ignorance of her approaching end.

Martha, no doubt, had heard distinctly my speech

to her father, as I intended she should, because my chief view in making it was to comfort and support herself. But she had no immediate opportunity of noticing it, for Mrs. Warton was now leaning over her, and telling her, in a tone of tenderness and affection, that the pleasure of seeing her again was sadly lessened by seeing her so ill. For a while poor Martha was unable to return any answer. Her natural sensibility was this day touched to the uttermost; first by the arrival of her father, and next by the visit of Mrs. Warton. In the meantime I had seated myself at the foot of the bed; and Mrs. Warton sat on the side, more conveniently for conversation, if the sick person should be able and disposed to talk. At length she said, after a great struggle to compose herself, "Ah! Madam, it is very, very kind of you to come so far to see such a poor creature as *me*. It would kill me quite if you were to catch any harm by it; and I am sure it must be a great risk which you run." "I hope not, my good Martha," replied Mrs. Warton, "but I should regret it the less, if my coming might be of any service to *you*." "Your coming will be of great service to me, dear Madam," she said, "for I shall be pleased with thinking that I have not forfeited your good opinion; and then, Madam, you are so gentle that you will soothe my troubles, and, above all, your wise counsel will teach me how to fight the last fight so as not to lose the prize, and be a cast-away." "Martha," Mrs. Warton answered, "I am come to be a learner, and not a teacher; and who would not give up all other knowledge for yours? All other knowledge is useless in comparison with knowing what *you* know; that is, how to have made

the right preparation for another world. This knowledge you owe to a gracious God ; it comes chiefly from the heart, Martha ; it has little to do with the head, and therefore the wisest of the sons of men cannot get this knowledge, unless God touch their hearts. Dr. Warton has charmed me from time to time with telling me, that out of *your* heart no longer proceed any evil thoughts, any evil desires, any evil words, or actions ; but on the contrary all the graces and fruits of holiness : so that you are now, without more counsel, truly prepared to die, and fully meet to be a partaker after death of the inheritance of the saints in light.” “ Would that it might be so, Madam !” said Martha, whilst her face was slightly convulsed with the praise bestowed upon her, and with the anticipation of future joys thus suggested to her fancy ; “ but I shall owe it all to good Dr. Warton and yourself, Madam ; for I well remember how you were both sent to me by a kind Providence, and how you bore with my ill temper, and with what patience and perseverance you condescended to instruct me, unwilling as I was to learn, in the ways of God, and in the book of life, and in the Gospel of Jesus Christ ; and I remember well, too, when the Doctor sometimes rebuked me with all authority, as became one of Christ’s ministers, how *you* stepped in, dear Madam, with your gentle sayings, and softened down his just severity, and healed all my wounds. Ah ! Madam, I believe it was *then* that you met with your sad calamity, which has prevented you, for so many years, from coming amongst us, to the unspeakable loss of many ; for many might have been blessed as I have been.” “ Such was God’s will, Martha,” replied Mrs. Warton, “ and I hope I

have learnt the difficult lesson of submission to it ; but if I had it yet to learn, I might profit by *your* example ; you might now teach your teacher more effectually than I could then have pretended to teach *you*. I could then only teach you the reason of the thing ; but you would now teach *me* the practice of the thing itself."

" Ah ! kind Madam," said poor Martha, with a mournful, faltering voice, " my practice, I fear, is not so good as you are pleased to think it. Here is my poor old father, and I blessed Providence for sending him to me in time ; but he has shaken me sadly by his grief. I thought it would console me to have him with me at the last, but he wants it himself more than I do ; and I, who so hardly support one, must now support both. But I hope what the Doctor said will be useful to him. Yet it is a pitiful thing, Madam, to outlive everybody ; when I am gone, (and you see, dear lady, how fast I am going,) there will be no human creature left to care for him, or to beg a blessing upon his head. He is a burden upon his parish, and they will wish to be rid of it ; not a tear will be shed over him as they lay him out, and his fellow-paupers will carry him unwept on their shoulders to his grave. *She* will be already there, who should have received his last breath and closed his eyes, whilst they had yet power to look upon her, and to take a long farewell. *She* should have closed *his*, not *he* hers ; *this* would have been the order of nature, and she herself should have had a husband or children to do the same sad office for *her*. *She* will be already there, but far asunder from *him* ; and their dust will not be mingled together."

Whilst she was speaking thus, the tears dropped

upon her from Mrs. Warton's face. She perceived it, and continued, "Ah! dear Madam, how does your kind heart feel for me! But it is wrong to trouble you so much, and I shall lose, perhaps, something of your esteem; and, what is worse, God himself will not be pleased, if I seem thus to question his doings. But it is only to seem to do so, Madam; for I believe, and am sure, as the Doctor told my father, that we are always best and safest in God's hands. Yet my thoughts will dwell upon what has been, and what is to be, whether I will or not."

Martha was now almost beyond tears, but a few drops were visible in the deep sockets of her eyes; and she paused here, as if for an instant, to collect her strength, but with no apparent intention of stopping altogether. She was prolific in the description of the sorrowful circumstances of herself and her father, and would have gone on, no doubt, to finish the picture; but Mrs. Warton opportunely interposed, and catching up her last expression, said, "And you will do well, good Martha, to think continually what is to be hereafter; I do not mean that little hereafter which will end with our lives, but that great hereafter which will never end. The other is so short a thing at the longest, and so poor a thing at the best, that it is not worth the thinking of; but this is worthy of the thoughts of an immortal soul, and alone worthy. It is to think about the greatest things that can enter into the mind of man—how we are to see God himself face to face, and to be transported with joy at such a sight; how we are to hear millions of blessed spirits attuning their harps, and singing hallelujahs to his praise; how we are to be with our divine Master and Redeemer, and like him too, in the

glorious company of all the good that have been from the foundations of the world ; and to meet again our own dear friends and relations in such happy realms ; can anything be greater or better to think of than this ? Why, if we were to have these enjoyments but for a day ; this enrapturing view of almighty goodness, this heavenly music, this delightful society of all whom we love, and reverence, and adore ; it would be cheaply bought with the sufferings of a whole life. But these enjoyments are to last for ever, Martha ; they are to have no end. O wonderful thought ! An eternity of bliss, never cloying or surfeiting, always fresh and new ! Who will stoop to think of any thing else ? Who will imbitter their thoughts with the recollection of what has been, or with the fear of what is to be, in this short stage of their being, which is less than the mere sojourning of a traveller at an inn."

Such, substantially, was what Mrs. Warton said to Martha ; and it is not surprising that the effect of it upon a person so far advanced in Christian attainments as Martha was, should be greatly successful. Her countenance, as Mrs. Warton went along, betokened at first a sense of self-degradation ; that she had, for a moment even, chained down her thoughts to these wretched, low, terrestrial, transitory things, instead of bidding them soar aloft to celestial, glorious, everlasting scenes of bliss ; but at length it brightened with the description of the scenes themselves into that of one who was already in them, and she exclaimed, with a sort of supernatural strength and energy, when Mrs. Warton had finished, " Farewel then to this world and to all its concerns ; henceforth !—henceforth I shut it from my eyes, and try by

faith to pierce into the world above. Nothing earthly shall disturb me more. I will wait thy call, O gracious God and Father, in still silence ; thinking only of thy infinite love to men in Christ Jesus thy son, and commending my spirit into thy hands, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour !" Then relaxing into a softer and feebler tone, she said, " And farewell you, too, kind Madam ! Did I not foretel that your counsels would be wise, and your words gentle and soothing ? So they have been always to *me*, and now not least when I needed it most. Will the good Doctor finish all his labours in my behalf by reading the commendatory prayer for me ? And then nothing further will remain to be done for me here, but to bury me decently."

Upon this invitation I rose from my seat on the bed, and tapped against the wall for the old man to come. Meanwhile, at her own desire, Mrs. Warton and Mrs. Parkes had placed Martha upon her back, as if in that posture she was now about to receive the stroke of death. When this was done, she opened her eyes, and conveying her sight from side to side, as if she wanted, or missed something, at length she rested with apparent satisfaction upon the countenance of her aged father, who was approaching the bed. Then suddenly she closed them again, and we all knelt down, and her wish was accomplished. It was a solemn, and awful, and a very trying act ; reaching, I believe, to the utmost extent of the fortitude of every one of us. I added the benediction at the end of the visitation service, without changing any thing in it ; for I could not.

After this we all rose ; and Mrs. Warton and myself just touching Martha's hands, which were folded

over her face, we slowly left the room. I looked back twice or thrice, but she still remained in the same posture, and would trust herself no more to behold what she respected or loved. For several days, however, she was still alive, and towards the last it was scarcely possible to say whether she was alive or not. Her breathing was not perceptible by *me*, but her face was not the face of the dead. If she performed any religious act during this interval, it was transacted in the recesses of her own breast, and locked up there from all but God. She received some liquid food, but she never spoke.

Here this history should terminate, that I might neither blame myself, nor lower another, as I have done the Claytons, in the good opinion of the reader. But I prefer truth to all false embellishments, and must therefore risk his displeasure by spoiling my story, so far as truth can spoil it. Besides, as I pretend to write for the instruction of my younger brethren, I must point out faults, for which they would afterwards grieve; if, by a negligence similar to mine, they suffered themselves to be guilty of them.

On the Sunday after Martha's death, there were five corpses of poor people brought to be buried at the parish expense. In such cases the passing knell of the dead is rung by the least of the church-bells; no undertaker is employed, nor, in general, any bearers but from the poor-house; the coffin, furnished by contract, is only so many pieces of unornamented wood rudely nailed together; the body is not carried into the church, but straight from the gates to the grave; and most probably there is no train of mourners behind, because there is nothing to bring mourners together; no ensigns of grief to be worn;

no funeral-feast to be eaten ; nothing but a pious regard for the memory of the dead. And I must own, although it will be reckoned, perhaps, but a superstitious weakness, that I have been struck to the heart with the sight of the utter destitution in which the mortal remains of my fellow men have sometimes returned to their own fellow-dust. Such a funeral was to *me* more woful than all the splendored trappings of woe could have made it ; but the spirit nevertheless might have been already with its Saviour in Paradise, expecting a throne and a crown ; or, perchance, (too painful thought, but too common an occurrence !) it had winged its flight from this earth, without the solemn benedictions of the priest, without the true fear of God, without the saving faith of a Christian.

On the present occasion the very number added to the other melancholy reflections. There were five separate graves ; but they were near together, so that one service sufficed for all. I took my station in the front of three, which were in the centre ; and when the bodies were deposited in them, they were completely abandoned ; no creature remained, but one of the sexton's deputies, to scatter, at the appointed moment, a few particles of kindred earth upon the coffins. On my right was a single grave, and a single man was standing on the edge of it ; but he had three infants with him, one in his arms. He was in dirty tattered clothes, his week-day's suit, for he had no others in which to grace the Sabbath ; and the dress of his children bespoke the same wretched poverty. You might read in his countenance the grief which was gnawing his heart ; but he neither sobbed aloud, nor shed a silent tear ; his eyes and his thoughts were ever in the grave, except once, when he looked up

with agony, at the touching expression of our hope, that the departed souls are resting in the Lord Jesus ; but, all the time, the infant, which he carried, was playing with his hair, and smiling at its own fingers ; unconscious of its mighty loss ; unconscious that its mother was sleeping below, never to wake again in this world.

On my left there was a thicker mass, and some sounds of sorrow were issuing from it ; so I studiously avoided the turning my head on that side, until I had finished the mournful ceremony, and was about to retire. Immediately the gray locks of old James West caught my eye ; by his side was Sarah. I was alarmed and looked again. Next them stood old Bilson himself, with his face bent downwards, lingering over the grave and weeping. Not a particle of doubt any longer remained ; I had buried Martha, and I had disregarded her last injunctions, which were, “ to bury her decently.” So foolishly sure was I, that it would be done, without any interference on my part, that I had dismissed the matter from my mind altogether. Who so fit to go through the church to the grave as this good creature, who loved and frequented the church so much whilst she was alive ?

On the following day I would have gone to the hamlet, if it had been possible, to make inquiries. On the Tuesday I went ; but the old man was not to be seen ; he had returned to his own parish, with the produce of the sale of Martha’s bed and other furniture in his pocket, which was said to be amply sufficient to have “ buried her decently.”

CHAPTER II.
JANE WHISTON—RELIGIOUS
MELANCHOLY.

§. 1. *Mrs. Whiston, her Aunt, Mrs. Graves, &c.*

UPON returning home one day from my usual morning's walk, I found that a message had been left at my house, to desire me to call upon my neighbour, Mrs. Graves, who had under her care a young woman reported to be dangerously sick. Mrs. Graves herself was the wife of a working maltster, and had a large family of small unhealthy children ; yet with her husband's earnings, and with some washing which she took in, she managed to keep them all very tidy and comfortable, and to rent a cottage beyond the ordinary size, which had two bed-chambers, and a garden, and the advantage of being detached from other buildings. On my arrival, the eldest child immediately conducted me upstairs, where I saw her mother, and three other women, friends and relations of the sick person ; and I observed the sick person herself in bed, apparently in a state of perfect tranquillity. Her face was blotched a little with red pustules, and she seemed to have lost her strength ; otherwise there was no particular disease about her—at least to an unpractised eye. I was told afterwards, that her pulse was scarcely perceptible.

Not having had any opportunity of making previous inquiries, I accosted her at once with one of my usual questions, and desired to know with what complaint she was afflicted. She answered in a feeble tone, "Bad thoughts, Sir; bad thoughts; I am troubled with very bad thoughts."—This being quite new to me, I was at a loss how to act, and looked round upon the other women for further information; upon which Mrs. Graves told me, that she had been labouring for a long time under an attack of low fever, which had deprived her of all power to help herself; and that she complained besides of these bad thoughts, which disturbed her rest, and were wearing her out by night and day. "But what they are, Sir," she said, "I cannot pretend to describe." "Perhaps these other friends of hers can acquaint me?" I replied; but they were all silent, or only spoke in such a manner as to show, that they either could not, or did not intend to explain the case to me. Turning, therefore, to the sick woman, I asked her if she was troubled with the bad thoughts at the present moment. "No, Sir," she answered, "they left me, as you came up the stairs; but I have them very often, and for a great length of time." Still I was exploring in the dark, and the poor woman herself did not help me. She had heard me questioning her friends as to the nature of the bad thoughts, and yet she made no attempt to tell me what they were. I began, therefore, to suspect some mystery about it; and feeling it unpleasant to press any of them to disclose what, perhaps, they might wish to conceal, I trusted to circumstances to give me by degrees the necessary knowledge upon this subject. I therefore proceeded in the following manner.

“ Had you these bad thoughts before your sickness, or did your sickness cause them?” “ They caused my sickness, Sir, I think,” she answered. “ I had them some time before.” What then—I said to myself—has this poor woman met with some terrible affliction, which weighs her spirits to the ground; or has she been guilty of some horrid crime, which fills her soul with anguish, and banishes peace from her breast? I will try her on these suppositions. So I asked, first, if she was married?—“ I know your countenance,” I said, “ young woman; but I am ignorant of your name and circumstances.” “ Yes, Sir, I am married,” she replied, “ and as times go, I believe I have no great reason to complain of my husband.” “ You have been tolerably happy together, have you?” I inquired. “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ pretty well of that, considering all things.” “ And have you had any children by your marriage?” I inquired again. “ Yes, Sir,” she replied, “ but they are dead, and I thank God for it.” “ Why?” I asked, “ why do you thank God for the loss of that which is generally considered a great blessing?” “ Because it would be too painful for me to part from them, and leave them so young behind me,” was her answer. “ Do you suppose your own life to be in immediate danger then?” I said, with tenderness. “ Yes, Sir, I do,” was her reply, which she uttered with rather a faltering voice. “ The doctor can do nothing for me, and I feel myself going fast. The bad thoughts torment me so!” “ But why should they torment you at all, my good woman?” I inquired. She was silent; so I inquired again: “ Do you encourage them to come?” “ No, *that* I don’t,” she answered eagerly. “ Do you

consent to them, or agree with them, or approve of them, when they come." "No, that I don't, neither," she answered again with equal eagerness. "Then listen to *me*," I said, "my poor afflicted creature; and believe what I am about to tell you, and I am sure I can give you comfort." Her eyes were now fixed earnestly upon me, as if in expectation of some joyful intelligence; and so I told her, that these bad thoughts, whatever they might be, would do her no harm hereafter; that God would never call her to an account for them; and, in short, that they were not sins. Adam's lines to Eve were in my mind, and I gave her the sense of them:—

" Evil into the mind of God or man
May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
No spot or blame behind.

This consolation, however, did not seem to reach her case, as I judged by her countenance; for she said nothing to assist my conjectures, one way or the other. I tried, therefore, to get at some decisive fact, by asking her, as she expected soon to die, whether she had a well-grounded hope of being happy in the next world. At this question she shuddered dreadfully, and after a time exclaimed, "No, Sir, indeed, the devil will not let me have any hope at all." "The devil?" I enquired hastily—"Is it the devil, then, who thus torments you?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "it is the devil, who puts the bad thoughts into my head, and very bad they are, indeed." "Ah!" I said, "I pity you from my heart, and I can readily conceive what some of these bad thoughts may be. Our Bibles tell us the history of the holy Job; how the devil afflicted him with every possible affliction, and brought him down to the very brink of

the grave ; and then, when he had got this advantage over him, and human nature was incapable of supporting such immense sufferings, he would have prevailed upon the poor man, in order to terminate those sufferings at once, to curse God, and die. But Job was not to be deceived. His trust in the infinite wisdom and goodness of the Almighty received at the first a great shock ; but it ultimately triumphed. His faith sustained the grievous trial, and assured him that, if not here, yet hereafter, if he endured to the end with a patient submission to God's will, he should certainly see with his own eyes the just dealings of God, and the exact performance of all his promises. I call upon you, therefore, my good woman, to imitate the pattern of this excellent man, and I say also to you, in the language of Scripture, ' resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' "

She was evidently struck, and pleased at least with my story of Job, for her eyes brightened up a little ; but she was quite silent, and soon relapsed into her former state of quietude. Under these circumstances, I thought it most advisable to offer to pray with her, and so I said, " The best and most effectual way to resist the devil is by prayer ; I will, therefore, kneel down, and try what can be done in that manner. Are you able to pray yourself ? " " Yes," she answered, " sometimes I am ; but not often enough, and never when the bad thoughts trouble me. " " Well, then," I said, " join with me now, whilst the bad thoughts are away, and we will ask God to be so gracious as to keep them away in future for ever. God's power is far superior to the devil's power ; and, if it please him, he can either send his good angels to support and protect you against the bad angels, or

by a single word command the devil back to chains and darkness. But we must pray to him to do this."

Mrs. Graves had now placed a cushion for me, and I opened at once to the prayer for persons who are troubled in mind. It seemed to be admirably adapted to my purpose; and I found it necessary to alter and add but little. Instead of saying, 'thou makest her to possess her former iniquities,' I said, 'thou permittest her to be harassed with wicked thoughts;' and in speaking of her temptations, and distempers, and enemies, I brought the prayer home to her own feelings by the use of forcible explanatory epithets. Having finished it, I asked her whether it had been a comfort to her, and she replied immediately, that it was very comfortable, and that she was quite easy. She also expressed a strong wish that I should proceed. So I turned to the Psalms, and employed myself for ten minutes in reading such passages as caught my eye, and appeared most applicable, or were capable of becoming so by a slight change. I began with the third Psalm, which suited me throughout, the tenses only being altered, until I came to the sixth verse, where I substituted for 'ten thousands of the people,' 'all the hosts of the wicked spirits.'

When I had read in this manner as much as I thought likely to be useful for the present, I resumed the conversation, and said, "Now that you appear to be more at ease, I may venture, perhaps, to talk with you a little; and first I must tell you how much it grieved me to hear you say that you had no hope of salvation in the next world. What is there to deprive you of such a hope? It is sin only which separates us from God and heaven; and the blood of

Christ washes out all sin. But, from my observation of your appearance and respectable behaviour in your days of health, I have reason to think that your life cannot have been a wicked one."

The poor woman looked wistfully at me, but before she could answer, Mrs. Graves exclaimed, "No, Sir, *that* it has not; she has always been a good creature; and I am sure she has been a very kind friend to *me*. God will reward her for it!" Here her tears interrupted her, and at the same time one of the women who were standing by the bedside interposed, and said, "Ah! Mrs. Graves, do not call her good; there are none good but the regenerate,—no, not one. The thoughts of the hearts of men unconverted are nothing but evil continually. The heart itself is desperately wicked; who can know it? It *must* be converted, or it will be all corruption to the end."

Thus she corrected Mrs. Graves; and, puffed up with her superior knowledge of the Scriptures, looked round for approbation and applause. I was surprised; but a new light broke in upon me, and I turned to see what effect this speech had produced upon the sick person. She moved her head from side to side, and betrayed considerable agitation and alarm. Immediately, therefore, I said, "Calm yourself, my poor young woman! Those texts require to be explained, and then you will find them not applicable to your own case; but at all events they are quite out of season now." Then addressing myself to the meddling, officious, ill-judging friend, I reminded her of what she had just heard in the prayer which I had offered up to God, that he would not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. "Here," I said, "is a sick person, stretched, as she herself thinks,

on the bed of death. She despairs of her own condition, on account of the painful thoughts with which it pleases God that she should be afflicted. She humbles herself under his mighty hand ; and has he not promised that all such shall be lifted up ? Let us then be his instruments in the good work of cheering her troubled mind and raising her broken spirits. What if there be none righteous on earth ; what if all be desperately wicked ; did not Christ die for all ? Did he not by his death put the very chief of sinners into a state of reconciliation with his heavenly father ? Place then thy faith and trust in *Him*," I said, turning to the sick woman, " and thy sins shall be forgiven thee. He is mighty to save, and he is as merciful as he is mighty. If he were here he would bid thee ' go in peace.' "

The effect of this was even greater than I expected. She blessed me again and again, and said, that these were truly glad tidings to her, and that it was long, very long, since she had felt so comfortable as she did now. Thinking this a favourable opportunity, therefore, I asked, what I was very desirous to ascertain, whether she had been in the habit of going to church in the days of her health and strength. My mind was strongly impressed with an idea that she had been a frequenter of the conventicle, and that she had been dabbling in the frightful doctrines which are too often inculcated there. Nor was I mistaken. She herself made me no answer. Mrs. Graves, too, who had been so ready to praise her before, was now silent. Upon which the same woman, who had already interfered so inopportunately, answered for her, that she had not been in the habit of going to church, but that she was a regular attendant on the Lord's

day at Sion Chapel, "where the true Gospel," she said, "is always preached."

"*That* I should rather doubt," I rejoined immediately; "at least, they who have been in the habit of hearing the true Gospel preached to them are very seldom in such a condition as this. There is no knowing, indeed, how God may please to afflict, for the sake of trying, his most faithful servants; but the Gospel will not admit of despair. If there be a limit beyond which God will not be provoked any longer by the sins of men, yet the limit is quite unknown to *us*, and the same Saviour is always sitting at the right hand of God to intercede for sinners; and therefore, if they betake themselves to him, as he has invited them to do, there is hope for them to the very last." "Yes, Sir," she replied, "but my niece there is not converted. She has sought the Lord, I believe, and all of us have done it, with prayers and tears; but her heart is untouched, and as hard as ever."

The whole secret appeared to *me* to be now disclosed; and, at first, I doubted how to proceed. But, after a moment's consideration, being assured, that if I could not convince this methodistical aunt, I could at least reduce her to silence, and that it would be better for the sick woman herself to hear the discussion than to have the doctrine explained by me in private, I begged to be informed what was meant by this word 'converted.' "Oh! Sir," she answered without hesitation, "it is the new birth. We must all be born again of the Spirit; and there is no salvation without it. All the elect go through it of course, in some period of their lives, sooner or later." "Well," I said, "supposing this to be true, may we know when we go through it?" "To be sure, Sir,"

she replied ; “ it never takes place without some labour and difficulty, and sometimes it costs a great deal ; so that it may be certainly known.” “ And when it is over, what comes afterwards ?” I enquired. “ Oh ! then, Sir,” she said, “ all doubts and misgivings about our eternal state are at an end ; the heart is all joy and love in the Lord ; and we feel as they who are sealed for redemption, and can never fall.”

Having advanced so far towards the knowledge of her meaning, I now asked her whether she thought that God wished us all to become wiser and better. She allowed that he must so wish. “ Because,” I said, “ the wiser and better we are, the happier we shall be, and the more disposed to make all happy around us ; and God’s wish is, that all his creatures should be happy. Is it not so ?” She assented. “ Well, then,” I continued, “ he does not care about any other things which men call valuable ; such as riches, and honours, and power, and the pleasures of this world, because they can never produce true and lasting happiness ; and therefore he has given us in the Gospel no rules for getting them ; but, as to wisdom and goodness, because in his sight they are all in all, he has given us abundance of rules about them ; has he not ?” “ Yes, Sir,” she said, “ he has certainly.” “ Aye, indeed,” I rejoined, “ the Bible is full of them ; they make the main part of it. Well, and with respect to wisdom and goodness, is not one the means, and the other the end ?” She did not seem to comprehend me, so I asked her, if she thought it was of any real use to us to become wiser, unless we also by means of our wisdom became better. “ Why,” she answered, “ she did not know that it was.” “ Then we come to this,” I said, “ do

we not, that the one great thing most needful for us, and what God chiefly wishes, is, that we should become, by every means, every day, if possible, better and better; that we may resemble himself more and more in goodness and in happiness?" She hesitated, but she did not deny it.

My antagonist being brought to this point, I now put the question to her directly, whether every person who was converted, as she called it, and went through the new birth, became at once a better man in consequence of it; "because it seems that, if he do not, his conversion, or new birth, will be of no use to him whatever." "Of no use to him, Sir!" she cried with astonishment, "of no use to him to be converted! Of no use to him to be born again!" "No," I said, "of none whatever, by your own confession, unless it make him a better man. For God only requires more and more goodness, in order that he may make us happier and happier, and more and more fit for immortality. If conversion, or the new birth, produce this effect, then they are valuable, like any other means producing the same end." "But let me ask you, Sir," she said contemptuously, "is it of no use to a poor sinner to know that he will be saved?" "Certainly," I answered, "it is of great use to a sinner to know that he will be saved in the only way that he can be saved, namely, by embracing and following the Gospel; but every Christian knows this already from the Gospel itself, and he cannot want to know it in any other manner." "But, Sir, I ask you again," she exclaimed with somewhat of petulance, "is there not some difference between reading a thing in a book, and feeling a thing in your own heart?" "There may be," I said, "a very

great difference indeed, speaking generally ; but, in this case, as the book is God's word, and God cannot lie, what you read there is most undoubtedly true, and impossible to be overthrown, and you yourself may be as sure of it as if you knew it by any of your senses. Indeed, if this be not so, where is your faith, and what is it ? Is not faith the evidence of things not seen ? Then, on the other hand, as to your heart and your senses, it is very possible, and even likely, that they may be dreadfully deceived. If the heart be desperately wicked, as you say, it is desperately deceitful too ; and the senses are by no means to be trusted in matters of this kind. No, no ; Scripture is our only safeguard, and can never deceive us. If we know and believe in Scripture, we want nothing else for our guidance and assurance."

As she now appeared to be rather at a loss, I went on thus : " Let us see what Scripture tells us on these points. I presume you mean that these conversions and new births are all effected by the Holy Spirit ?" " To be sure I do," she replied. " Well, then," I said, " the fruits of the Spirit, according to Scripture, are in all goodness, and holiness, and righteousness ; so that you may always know, by these fruits, what kind of spirit influences or dwells in any man's heart. And, if a man goes on improving daily, and bearing more and more of these fruits, the consciousness of these improvements is the surest witness that he can possibly have, with respect to his being in a state of salvation. No other witness can be half so sure ; no, not even a power of performing miracles ; much less a mere inward feeling and conviction of the mind, or heart, that he shall be certainly saved. For what solid ground is there for such a feeling and convic-

tion, independently of our becoming better men? And if this fact of our becoming better men must needs be the test, what use is there of the other? I fear, indeed, that the other is only the fancy, or imagination, of an overheated brain. Indeed, I am sure it is, if they who pretend to it go on sinning as before. In such a case, I do not hesitate to call it a trick of the Devil himself. Here is one evil spirit endeavouring to thrust this poor sick young woman into desperation; but there is a worse, which, by some strange fiction of a new birth after baptism, and by some unaccountable and indescribable feelings, called conversion, exalts men in their own idea, and places them in a state of fancied security; and so they become naturally careless, and too often plunge into fresh sins, which conduct them necessarily, if not repented of, to final perdition."

Here she caught me up, and said eagerly, "Aye, aye, Sir; but he who is born of God cannot commit sin. You will find this in the Scriptures, Sir. Answer *that*, if you please." "Well, well," I replied coolly, "be patient, and I will answer it immediately; but tell me, first, if you would call it sin, supposing a man, after his real or pretended conversion, to tell a lie, or to get drunk?" At first she seemed in great perplexity how to take this question; and, perhaps, if shame had not operated upon her, she would have boldly assumed, like the Puritans and Anabaptists of old, that the converted man might do what he would, without the guilt of sin; but not daring to go so far, she at length admitted that it partook of the nature of sin. With such a partial admission, however, I was by no means satisfied; so I pressed her to say, fairly and openly, whether she considered

it sinful, generally, to lie and get drunk. She allowed that she did. "Well, then," I said, "if it be a sin to lie and get drunk, can it make any difference who they are who lie and get drunk? Will it be sin in one and not in another?" She was obliged reluctantly to confess that sin was sin; and that the person committing the act could make no difference in the thing itself. "Very well," I continued, "then now go back to your text, and apply it to these liars and drunkards; and tell me whether you think they are born of God or of the devil. Remember it says, 'that he who is born of God does not commit sin.'"

She was staggered and confounded, and she wisely held her tongue and spake nothing. But I determined, if possible, to make this matter still clearer and more irresistible to her by an example; so I said, "You know, I dare say, Mr. Perkins, the grocer." She answered, that she knew him by name, but that she was not acquainted with him. "Well, but," I enquired, "you know him by sight, as well as by name; do you not?" "Yes," she replied, "I have seen him sometimes." "Have you not seen him very often at Sion Chapel?" I enquired again. "Yes," she said, "he attends there certainly." "He is one of the converted; is he not?" I enquired once more. "He has gone through the new birth?" "It is so said," she answered shortly and angrily. "Well then," I rejoined, "it is notorious throughout the whole parish that he is perpetually in the alehouse, and drunk almost every day. Nor is Mr. Perkins the only instance of the same thing, as you very well know. What becomes then of their new birth? He who is born of God does not commit sin."

Here the older person being unable to extricate herself from the difficulty, a younger one, whom I had remarked in the room, with a very sombre countenance, (occasioned, as I thought at first, by the melancholy scene before us, but which I now found to be the impression of her principles, the true quinquarticular countenance,) stepped in with a sort of filial duty, (and indeed she was the daughter of the other,) and exclaimed, "Why, mother, if the gentleman looks through his own congregation, I dare say he will find some there who are alehouse-goers; aye, and people who have taken the sacrament too." The mother, relieved by this seasonable help, replied instantly, and rather triumphantly, "Yes, child, *that* he will; I know several of them; so he need not reproach *us* with that vice." "It is too true," I said, "and I am very sorry for it. We do not improve, any of us, by any means so fast as could be wished; the new man is not formed in us at once, and by one operation of the Holy Spirit. God gives that Spirit to us first at our baptism, and we want his aid daily, especially when we are old enough to engage in the business of the world. We shall then make many a slip, and without *him* we should not be strong enough to rise again from the fall. But to be perfect, as God requires us to be, we must get the habit of trying always to obey his commands; and habits can only be got by doing the actions again and again. It is an absurdity and a contradiction to say that habits can be got at once. We do some act to-day, and we do it again to-morrow, and, perhaps, every day; and so, at last, it becomes habitual to us, and a part of our nature, as it were. At first, too, it might have been difficult; but by

being constantly repeated, at last it becomes quite easy. This is the way in which all the Christian graces and virtues must be acquired by us fallen creatures ; and then, when we come, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to practise these virtues with ease, and almost naturally, we may truly be said to be new creatures ; and thus we are what God wishes us to be, and ripe for our translation to heaven. But all this business is ten times more a work of labour to some people than to others, because those people have unhappily got the habits of particular vices ; and they must cease to do evil, before they can learn to do well. They must retrace their steps, and break through those darling habits, by resisting them day after day, until they have quite mastered them. There must be much time, and much struggling, to do this effectually ; and I should place more dependence on such a laborious change, than on one reported to have taken place suddenly and all at once ; because the one is a regularly-formed habit, and the other is I know not what. With respect to the drunken members of my congregation, I hope, and believe, that they are in progress towards this rooted and steady change ; and I advise them, by all means, to be constant at church, and in their attention to the public ordinances, with the view of drawing down God's blessing on their heads ; and of being strengthened with greater might in the inner man ; and of having their course towards sobriety made quicker, and shorter, if possible. And, if they can be brought to ratify their good wishes and resolutions and endeavours, at the altar of their Lord and Saviour, so much the better is it, and so much the more likely are they ultimately to succeed. But these men, mean-

while, make no pretensions to be better than their neighbours; they assume to themselves the distinction of no extraordinary conversions and new births; they are content to toil onward in the rugged, circuitous road of repentance and gradual reformation; and they know nothing of any short, broad cut to holiness. No; they are content, I say, to travel along the rough and narrow way; to advance inch by inch, and to conquer every difficulty by labour and trouble; and their vices, alas! will needs show themselves, in some shape or other, often and again, before they are utterly rooted out, and habits of the contrary virtues established in their room. I can sympathize, therefore, with these persons, when I see their darling sin, in some unlucky, unguarded moment of temptation, getting the better of their firmest resolves, and throwing them, perhaps, so far backwards in their journey; but, as to your converted people, who boast so highly of themselves, and despise and condemn others, like the Pharisee in the parable, if they sin subsequently to their conversion, and habitually also, the world points justly at them with the finger of scorn, and calls them hypocrites, or mad. They are, indeed, hypocrites, if they pretended to a supernatural influence, which they knew that they never had; and they are crazy, if they fancy that they really had it."

I stopped here, and my adversaries also were silent. Without doubt they objected to much which I had said, and perhaps they did not understand the whole. But, as they did not seem inclined, or were unable to pursue the discussion, I took advantage of the pause, which placed me apparently on the superior ground, and addressed myself thus to the sick woman: "This

conversation is for *your* profit. Believe me, no inward sensible operation, by which you may be assured at once of your salvation, is to be expected by you at all. You must not reckon upon it as necessary, nor torment yourself for the want of it. What is now most needful on your part, and at the same time very possible, with the spiritual help which is always ready at hand in the ordinary way, is a godly sorrow working repentance; sorrow that you have broken even one of the very least of God's commandments, and that you have failed of acquiring the degree of Christian perfection which he placed within your power; a sorrow, therefore, which will continually urge you on to new improvements of your character. The feeling of your present deficiencies should make you humble, indeed, but not desponding; it should make you fly to the merits of your Saviour, and repose in them, for the poor in spirit are they whom he promises to bless, and whom he will by no means cast off. Think of this when I am gone, and now let us conclude with the prayer which Christ himself has taught us." So kneeling down again, I repeated the Lord's Prayer, in every petition of which she seemed sincerely to join with me; and then giving her the benediction, I rose, took my leave, and went down stairs, having beckoned to Mrs. Graves to follow me.

When we were come into the room below, "Mrs. Graves," I said, "this aunt and her daughter will do mischief, I fear, to your poor friend. They have possessed her with the idea, that she is desperately wicked, and that her soul is lost for ever, unless some sudden and violent change take place, which will at once assure her of her salvation. She cannot work

herself up to this fanatic feeling, and, therefore, she believes, that she is in the situation which they describe to her. Thus they lay her more open to the temptations of the devil, and to the dreadful notion, that God has forsaken her. I hope that I have restored her to a little ease ; but it will be a little only, if these same persons are always to be about her. Depend upon it, it will end fatally. I should not wonder at all if she were to destroy herself." " God forbid, Sir," replied Mrs. Graves ; " there is some danger of it, however. But, I think, after what you have said, she will not trust them, as she has been used to do." " Well," I said, " do not encourage them to come often to her, or to stay long with her at a time ; and at all events persuade the poor woman herself to trust to *me* to do what is proper for her in respect to her religion. I will see her again very soon."

" I hope you will, Sir," she answered, " for I assure you, Sir, she is a very worthy woman, whatever her aunt may say, or think ; and though you see her in this state of dejection, I am confident that she has no very bad sin to prey upon her thoughts, and to distress her so much. I have known her for several years, very intimately, and a kinder-hearted creature there never was." " How did you first become acquainted with her ?" I asked. " We were next-door neighbours, Sir," she replied, " before she was married. And when three of my poor children were down with the measles, she helped me to nurse them. She carried them in her lap by day, and she watched over them by night, and she was as good as a mother to them. God knows what I could have done without her ! And she did everything, Sir, without fee or

reward, and without the expectation of any. I should be a wretch if I were ever to forget it."

Mrs. Graves pronounced all this with great feeling, and when I had given her the commendations which I thought she well deserved, I inquired by what accident the sick person had become an inmate of her house; for I knew that it was not her practice to take lodgers. "Why, Sir," she answered, "I will tell you: Mrs. Whiston (for *that* is her name now) fell sick, after the birth of her second child; and you know, Sir, it was but right that I should attend upon *her* and her family, as she had attended upon mine. But you see, Sir, how many sickly children I have of my own to look after; and poor Mrs. Whiston lived above half a mile from me; so that in spite of everything that I could do, one of her children died; upon which I made all haste, Sir, to remove herself and the other here; and now the trouble is comparatively nothing." "Upon my word, Mrs. Graves," I said, "this charitable deed of yours may shame all the rest of us. But the husband, I hope, will repay you for your time and trouble, and for the use which he makes of your house. Your own family is now, I suppose, all shut up together at night in one bedroom?" "Yes it is, indeed," she answered. "But I should have thought little of *that*, if by any inconvenience and nursing I could have saved the other little child." "What, did it die here then?" I asked. "Yes, Sir," she replied, "more's the pity! But it was sickly from its birth, and the mother could not suckle it; and so God has taken it, Sir, to my great sorrow. But *he* knows best."

"Yes, indeed," I said, "he does; and in some cases we can see clearly, that what he has done, how-

ever painful to us, is for our profit; in all cases we ought to believe it. This poor child is delivered from much misery, which it could scarcely fail of meeting with in this world, being of a sickly constitution, and without the care and guidance of a mother." "True Sir," she answered, "and the father being not one of the most sober or industrious, although Mrs. Whiston, in the kindness of her heart, softened down his conduct to you." "How then," I inquired, "will he repay *you*? Has he saved anything?" "Not a farthing, Sir," she replied hastily, "and he has been out of work these two months; and his poor wife, when she was at home, sometimes wanted almost the common necessaries." As she said this, the tears came into her eyes, and they burst from mine too; for now the full extent of this poor woman's charity was manifest to my view, and I could only exclaim, "God then will repay you, Mrs. Graves; God will repay you!" And so I hurried out of the house, conscience-struck, as it were, and recollecting, with a pang, in what numbers of opportunities presented to me by providence, my own charity had fallen below, far below, this standard. It might indeed well be so, for this was a deed indisputably of the very highest and noblest stamp of Christian charity; it was done without ostentation; it assumed to itself no glory; it looked for no praise or reward on earth. "Yet," I said to myself, as I walked along, "it *shall* be praised and rewarded on earth too, if I can do it. It *must* be made known abroad, that the rich may be awakened from their prodigal luxuries, and stimulated to a god-like employment of their wealth, when they see, as they may here, that poverty itself can lay up in heaven a greater treasure than their own. Here,

in this humblest scene of life, is a shining pattern for the most exalted."

Arrived at home, I delighted Mrs. Warton with this story of true Christian love. We published it all around in the parish. A subscription was made, and the money deposited in the Saving Bank. Many days afterwards, when this was accomplished, I carried Mrs. Graves a book of account for her own private keeping, in which she saw inscribed the sum that was due to her, and placed at her command. "How is this, Sir?" she asked eagerly, and with a mixture of surprise and incredulity. In fact, I had merely put the book open into her hand, without entering into any explanation. My feelings were too full to attempt it at present. All I could do was to point with my finger at the words, which conveyed the necessary information; and when she had read them she exclaimed, "And is all this mine, Sir?" "It is all your own," I stammered out; "you may do what you please with it." "Then I will keep it against a rainy day," she said, "if God should send me such a day; or it may lie till my children are old enough to be apprenticed to some trade. But, pray tell me, Sir, how, and for what it comes to me thus." "Your goodness," I said with difficulty, "your wonderful charity to the poor woman, Mrs. Whiston, has done this for you;" and without more words I hasted away, not daring to trust myself with her any longer.

She herself, however, was by no means content to let the matter rest here; so she came to my house and saw Mrs. Warton, who explained all the circumstances to her. "But, Madam," said this good woman, "I had no thought that what I did was more

than common, and still less did I even dream of getting anything by it. Well, I am greatly obliged to Dr. Warton and yourself, and to all the kind gentlefolks who have made me so rich for doing but an act of duty." With this she took her leave. The money still remains in the Saving Bank, with all its accumulations of interest upon interest. Upon one occasion it cost her a great struggle to draw something out. Her husband being sick, and no wages coming in, she consulted me about it, and I advised her, by all means, to have recourse to the Bank, and to avail herself of the fund which a gracious Providence had laid up for her, that thereby she might preserve her family independent of the poor-rate. This argument overcame her reluctance, and she subtracted something, which was afterwards replaced, when her affairs were in a better state. But all this was long after the time of which I have been speaking, when Mrs. Whiston was lying sick in her house. I have anticipated events, to finish this part of my history.

My second visit to Mrs. Whiston was on the following morning after I first saw her, and in the meantime I had turned over no small number of sermons and treatises for information and help. Upon inquiring of Mrs. Graves, whom I found below, what sort of night she had passed, I was glad to hear that she had been much more composed than formerly. "Yet, Sir," she said, "the night did not go off without bringing the bad thoughts now and then. But she did not complain of them so bitterly as she has done at other times, nor did they appear to disturb her so much." "In what way," I inquired, "does she generally shew her distress? You know that I have not seen it myself." "Why, Sir," she replied,

“ she turns her head from side to side as quick as possible, and sometimes with great violence; and when the fit is very bad, she screams out, and would tear her hair, if we did not prevent her.” “ And when she screams out,” I inquired again, “ does she ever say anything that you can understand?” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ she says a great deal which I understand, but for which I hope there is no reason. The drift of it all seems to be, that God has forsaken her, that her name is not written in the book of life, and that the devil has already begun to torment her before her time.” “ Let us go up to her,” I said; and immediately we did so.

We were let into the chamber by one of the three persons whom I had seen before, and who had been silent during the whole conversation. She was Mrs. Whiston’s sister, and was alone with her. Mrs. Whiston herself was, as yesterday, in a state of perfect quietude, and continued so whilst I was with her. I had only seen her otherwise for a minute or two, when she was disturbed by the texts of Scripture which, no doubt, she had already heard her aunt repeating too often.

Having advanced close to the bed, I asked her if she was better. She shook her head, and said nothing. “ The Doctor,” I continued, “ has not explained to me the nature of your bodily disorder; (for I have not been able to meet with him;) but your mind, I hope, is in a more comfortable state.” “ A little, Sir,” she said, “ but what does it signify after all, whether I am better or worse, if God has left me?” “ No, indeed,” I answered, “ if it were certain that God had left you, and also that he would not return, then all must be given up for lost. But

neither of these things are even probable ; so far are they from being certain. Has not Jesus Christ said, ‘ Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest?’ Has he not also said, ‘ Ask, and ye shall have ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you?’ If therefore the divine providence had really forsaken you ; yet, you see, it is to be recalled by praying earnestly for it. But what reason have you for supposing that God has deserted you? Are the bad thoughts your reason?”

“ Yes, Sir,” she replied, “ they are my chief reason. If God had not forsaken me, the devil could not touch me.” “ This is not so clear,” I said, “ as you seem to think it ; nor do we positively know that it is the devil who puts those thoughts into your head.” “ Not the devil, Sir, who does it?” she exclaimed ; “ I have seen him come into this room with my own eyes.” “ Well,” I said, “ I will not dispute that matter with you. Let it be supposed to be so ; but it may not be true, nevertheless, that God has forsaken you. Do not you recollect that the devil afflicted Job with God’s permission ; and that God never really forsook him, but only seemed to do so for a season ; and that he afterwards shewed himself again evidently, by showering down blessings upon the holy man, when his trials were finished?” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered, “ I believe it was as you tell me.” “ Very well, then,” I continued, “ let this be a lesson of instruction for *you*. God is trying you, and it is a matter of no consequence whatever to you, whether the affliction be brought upon you by the devil, or by any other means. Believe me it does not come without God, be it what it may ; and so far from proving

that God has deserted you, it proves, on the contrary, that he is watching over you for your good. If I saw you both wicked and prosperous, I should much rather say that God had forsaken you; but seeing you, as I do, in sorrow and adversity, and being assured to my satisfaction that you have been a pious and virtuous woman, according to your knowledge and station, I am confident that this is God's doing, and that it will turn out to your everlasting profit, if you hold fast your faith in Him."

"Ah! Sir," she replied with a trembling voice, "I wish I could; but my faith too often fails me in my distress." "Consider it in this manner," I said, "my poor sick friend; you are now calm and easy. But who gives you these intervals of ease and calmness?" She was silent; so I asked, "Is it not God himself?" This struck her, and she clasped her hands, and exclaimed, "It must be so, and I ought to thank him for it." "Undoubtedly," I rejoined, "you ought to thank him; and you see, if you do but think for a moment, you have a convincing proof that he has not forsaken you. Were the devil to exercise upon you, at his pleasure, all the rage which is natural to him, he would, no doubt, destroy you, both body and soul, in a moment; but as this is not the case, it is plain that he acts under the control of a superior and gracious Being, who will not suffer you to be tempted above the strength which he gives you. He has declared himself, that whenever he permits his creatures to be tempted by the devil or otherwise, he will always make a way for them to escape, that they may be able to bear the temptation."

She did not answer, but it seemed by her countenance that a new light was breaking in upon her; so

I tried again to make the whole argument still clearer to her, by beginning at a more distant point. "Listen," I said: "did it ever enter into your imagination to suppose, that God had forsaken you, because he placed you in a humble condition of life, and made you poor instead of rich?" "No, indeed, Sir, never," she answered. "For then," I said, "you might well ask what is to become of all the poor in all the world, who are so much more numerous than the rich? Would it not be both wicked and foolish to think for an instant that God had deserted them all, because they were poor?" "It would, indeed," she replied. "Our Bibles tell us," I continued, "that the rich and the poor meet together, and that God is the maker of both; which means, that he made them both, not merely as they are both human beings; but that the riches of the one, and the poverty of the other, are equally ordained by God. He made the two stations, and he appoints whom he will to fill them; and in these stations he tries the tempers and the conduct of men, to see whether the rich will use their riches aright, and the poor their poverty. But if they do this they will both alike get to heaven at last; and therefore what signifies it, whether men be rich or poor in this short life? A wise man, choosing his station for himself, would choose *that* (would he not?) in which he would be liable to the fewest and least dangerous temptations?" "Yes, to be sure, Sir," she answered without hesitation. "Well," I said, "and are not the rich more exposed than the poor to many and great sins?" "I should think so, certainly, Sir," she answered as before. "Then," I continued, "upon this view of the matter, poverty is more desirable than riches; and it would be a strange

thing to assert, that God had forsaken men because they were poor; whereas their very poverty, if they knew all, might be the strongest possible proof of God's goodness towards them." "It might, indeed," she said.

"Very well, then," I proceeded, "if you understand and feel all this, I will go one step farther. Are there not evils which come not alike to all descriptions of men?" "Yes, Sir," was her answer, "there is sickness, and the loss of dear relations and friends, and death, which spares none of us." "You are right," I said, "but you do not think, I presume, that God forsakes all those upon whom these evils come? Take sickness first, and I ask you, whether sickness may not be useful to great numbers of persons, to show them their own weakness, and their dependence upon God; to bring down all their proud and lofty thoughts; to chastise them, by pain and suffering, and a more immediate fear of death, that they may seek after true wisdom and holiness; and to exercise them in all the most difficult virtues of contentment, patience, and resignation?" She granted it readily. "So then," I continued, "instead of thinking that God had forsaken the sick, you would be quite of a contrary mind, and say rather, that he was doing them a mighty good, by warning and correcting them in this life, in order to save their souls in the next; for the next life is everything, and this life comparatively nothing?" "It is very true, Sir," she said, "and we all stand in need of being warned and made better." "Undoubtedly," I rejoined, "but suppose, if you will, a person so righteous as to want no warnings and no amendment. Might not God see fit to afflict such a person, for the example of

others; that they may learn, what the faith of a Christian, fixed on the other world, will enable him to bear without murmuring and repining, and without shaking his trust and confidence in the divine goodness? Besides, God has so many good things in store for those who love and obey him, and who kiss the rod with which he scourges them, that he can make them a million times happier in heaven in proportion to their sufferings, or rather far beyond all proportion to their sufferings, on earth. Do you understand and believe all this?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "I understand it very well, now that you have explained it to me, and I have no doubt about it."

"I am glad to hear it," I said. "Tell me then next whether you think it makes any difference what the sickness may be. If sickness in general be no proof that God has forsaken us, but quite the contrary, would any particular sickness, the most grievous imaginable, be a proof of it?" She hesitated; so I said, "Would fever, would inflammation, would consumption?" "No, Sir," she answered, "I see now that it makes no difference." "You are right," I said; "every disease alike is a messenger from God for our profit, be it gentle, or be it severe. Consider also again, whether it makes any difference in what way the disease may come. May not the disease come in a thousand different ways, and yet every way be ordained by God? Sometimes the disease follows the sin so naturally, that we are apt to overlook the hand of God, and to see and acknowledge his hand only when he inflicts the disease by some strange, surprising accident. But it is the same God, who has settled the unchanging course of natural things, and who controls and directs all the chances of human

affairs. And may he not use, if he will, the wicked passions of one human being to afflict another?" "He may, certainly, Sir," she replied. "What think you then?" I inquired, "May he not use the devil also?" She made no answer, but seemed to be wrapt in a profound meditation: so I drew the conclusion, as if she had answered in the affirmative. "If then it were ever so certain that the devil is the agent employed in afflicting any person; yet it would be equally certain, that the affliction comes from God, and is meant for the trial of that person. In short, under all circumstances, God's hand is over us; and it behoves us always to make the best of those circumstances, by looking up to him and trusting in him, and praying to him for comfort and mercy."

She was still silent and contemplative. So far as this argument had gone, she might perhaps be convinced; but, no doubt, she had other reasons for thinking that God had forsaken her, upon which I had not yet touched; and, therefore, the painful persuasion was not eradicated. Here, however, I stopped for the present, hoping that I might be able, at the next opportunity, to probe the wound to the bottom, and to pour in the oil and wine that were necessary to soothe, or heal it. But, before I departed, I proposed to pray with her, to which she gladly assented.

I took the 13th, the 42d, and the 43d Psalms for my basis. In the 1st verse of the 13th, I altered the sentiment, that it might concur with my conversation, by saying, 'How long wilt thou seem to forget me, O Lord? How long wilt thou seem to hide thy face from me?' And this idea I closely attended to throughout. In the 2d verse, to the word 'enemies,' I gave the epithet 'spiritual.' In the 6th, I said,

‘ I will sing of the Lord, because he will yet deal lovingly with me.’ I began the 42d Psalm with the 6th verse, and followed it with the 7th ; then I passed to the 10th ; but I altered it to the future tense, and so went on to the end of the Psalm. The 43d I began with the 2d verse, and, with slight alterations, it suited me very well throughout ; and the effect produced upon my patient appeared to be great, and satisfactory. This being done, I repeated the Lord’s prayer, the first prayer in the Visitation service, and the benediction at the end ; and then I rose from my knees, and gently pressing her hand, took my leave.

Early on the next day the Apothecary came to me in a great hurry, and wished me to lose no time in going to her. Whilst I was preparing myself with all possible speed, I questioned him as to the urgency of the matter, and he said, “ Why, Sir, she has got the devil in her head, I think, and so she wants a divine rather than a doctor. However, I cannot lay him by medicine, whatever you may be able to do by prayer.” “ But do you not suppose,” I asked, “ that her body is very much concerned in this disorder of her mind ?” “ She is bad enough, certainly,” he replied, “ and has been so ever since her last confinement ; but I should not despair of her, even with all those symptoms of a decline about her, if it were not for this seeing, and dreaming, and talking so much of the devil.” “ Then I fear the poor woman is in a bad case,” I said : “ for unless her body be set right, I am morally certain, from what I have been reading on the subject, that she will always be liable to these mental paroxysms. She thinks, indeed, that the mental paroxysms were antecedent to the bodily disorder, and, perhaps, the cause of it ; but

the instances are so numerous, in which we know positively that they came with the disorder, and went away with it, I cannot help fancying there may be something of the same kind in the present case. However, I have so far ascertained, that she has been for some time troubled about her religion, and now it seems that her trouble amounts to a species of madness. God grant that it may not end in the same melancholy way as it did with Mrs. Jenkins, whom you, perhaps, remember. I was sent for to attend upon her; but I found her absolutely raving, incapable of being reasoned with, incapable of prayer. In short, she was carried to a madhouse, where she laid violent hands upon herself. I conjectured, from the persons about her, and the scraps of sentences which she uttered, that some erroneous notions in religion had been preying upon her spirits. Poor Mrs. Whiston has taken up probably the same notions; but hitherto she has not lost the power of reasoning about them, and I hoped that I had removed some of them, by enlightening her ignorance, and expelling her fears. But this fresh attack alarms me as to my ultimate success, unless you can do something for her body. At all events, my good Sir, we must go hand in hand together." "Undoubtedly," he answered; "I will lose no opportunity of helping her; but at this present moment nobody can do anything but yourself. Mrs. Graves tells me that you have acquired a great authority over the poor woman; and perhaps your very appearance in the chamber may restore her to her senses." "Well," I said, "I am now ready, and I shall be with her in a few minutes. You shall hear the result. Whoever can relieve her, with God's blessing upon

his endeavours, it will be a work of divine charity to do it."

I hastened away, and finding none but children below, I went softly up stairs, without being announced. Mrs. Graves and the sister were holding the sick woman's hands, one on each side of the bed, and she herself, with her eyes closed, was turning her head rapidly from side to side, without stirring her body. I had beckoned to the other women not to speak; so she was not aware of my arrival. I thought it desirable to hear what she might say, if perchance I could discover the exact notion which dwelt upon her thoughts, and led to the impieties and blasphemies, as I supposed them to be, which harassed and tormented her imagination. But after standing in silence for a considerable time, and not a single word being uttered, I was obliged to adopt another method; so I made a step or two which might readily be heard, and then said, somewhat aloud, "Oh! our good Mrs. Whiston is asleep, is she? I hope she will be the better for it."

This, as I expected, roused her attention. She opened her eyes immediately, and ceased to move her head, and made an effort to sit up in the bed; upon which they loosed her hands, and lifted her upright, and heaped up pillows behind her back to support her. She was now apparently quite calm, and she said, "You are very kind, Sir, to come and see me. No, no, Sir, I was not asleep. The bad thoughts, Sir—the bad thoughts—they will not let me sleep. I have had no sleep the whole night." "Would to God, my poor friend," I exclaimed, "would to God, that I could be of any service to you! But you have no bad thoughts now I trust?" "Oh! yes I have,

Sir," she replied instantly, "they are not gone yet, and I fear they will hinder me from talking with you." "Try, however," I said, "to tell me what they are." She hesitated. I rejoined, "Tell me any one of them which you can mention with the least pain to yourself." She still hesitated; so I asked her if it was like anything which I had told her about Job. "Oh yes, Sir!" she cried in agony, "very like, and many things much worse. I dare not speak them; they are fit only for the devil's ear."

She now became very uneasy, and I was fearful that I had pressed her too much. I said, therefore, in a gentle, soothing tone, "Well, never mind, my poor sick friend. I will kneel down and pray for you, and so will your sister, and kind Mrs. Graves." They were both in tears, but strove to hide them. I had in my pocket Dr. Stonehouse's prayer, intended to be used by a person afflicted with a distemper of long continuance. It occurred to me, that, with a few slight alterations, it would suit me admirably; and it did so. But before I began, I bade Mrs. Whiston recollect, that the prayer which I was about to offer up was supposed to be spoken by herself in her own person, and not by *me*. She was now calm again, and all attention; so I read the prayer with a slow, solemn, and pathetic voice; master of myself to an unusual degree, and therefore making the most of it that I could, and marking, as I went along, the effect which every sentence produced.

As I proceeded she became more and more affected; and at that beautiful passage which begins with the words, 'I desire, in this poor condition of my health, to search and try my ways, and turn unto thee, O Lord,' she joined her hands together

with fervour, and cast up her eyes towards heaven with a saint-like devotion. At the next sentence, which supplicates for the removal of her disorder, the tears chased each other down her cheeks. But when I came still nearer to her piteous case, and repeated the sentence, ‘Support me, gracious Lord, that my soul may not be quite cast down, and too much disquieted within me,’ she wept aloud, and exclaimed, again and again, “God help me! God help me!” At length I reached the noblest and most touching sentiment of all, which opens thus: ‘If by this affliction thou intendest to bring me down to the grave, prepare me by thy grace for my removal hence;’ and when I had finished it, still clasping her hands and weeping, she cried, “Ah! it is too late; it is too late; I am a vessel made for dishonour and destruction.” The women were in an agony of grief at this dreadful ejaculation, which I pretended myself not to heed, but went on with the remainder of the prayer. As I hoped, it abated gradually the keenness of her feelings, and at length she grew again composed and tranquil.

To increase this effect, and observing her still intent to hear me, I now read the twenty-seventh Psalm, with the requisite alterations, to make it applicable to her case throughout. In speaking of the wicked, and of enemies, foes, and adversaries, I annexed such epithets as marked them to belong to the world of fallen spirits. The tenses I changed continually. Take the second verse for an example. I put it into the following form: ‘When the wicked spirits, even mine enemies and my foes from the kingdom of darkness, come upon me to torment and destroy me, they shall stumble and fall.’ Thus I arrived at the last

verse: 'O tarry thou the Lord's leisure; be strong and he shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord.' This was so strikingly adapted to her circumstances, that when I had repeated it, "See," I said, "my good Mrs. Whiston, how the holy men of old were tried, like yourself, with [the heaviest afflictions, as gold is refined in the fire; and see, also, with what patience they submitted to the divine chastisements, and with what firmness of resolution they rested in their God. These things were all written for *us* to study, that through the comfort of the Scriptures *we* might have hope."

I should have proceeded, but she interposed, and said, "Yes, Sir, they are very comfortable indeed. I am full of peace with hearing them; and I could almost hope that God might not finally cast me off, but that—" Here she paused, and I took up her broken sentence, "But that what, my poor afflicted creature? What is it that lurks in your mind, and outweighs all the comforts of Scripture, and all the reasonings of your friends? Yesterday, I think, you were clearly convinced that the bad thoughts were no proof of your being forsaken by your God; and the day before, I showed you that there was no need of any sudden or violent change of your heart and feelings, which your good aunt called conversion, to assure you that you were sealed for heaven. Were you indeed satisfied on these points?" "Indeed I was," she replied with earnestness, "and my aunt was not able to unsettle me again, when she talked with me last night; for she had no Scripture to prove her doctrine by. But ah! Sir, I fear she was too right in other things which have haunted me ever since, and which alarmed me greatly when I heard them first at

Sion Chapel." "And what were they?" I inquired eagerly; "let me know them. I am sure beforehand, by their effects, that they must be erroneous, or that you yourself have made some mistake about them. Happy will it be for you if you can lay open your whole mind before me, and thus enable me to clear away all the misconceptions of God and your religion, which otherwise, perhaps, will hasten you to an untimely grave."

Encouraged by this, she asked me, but with trembling, whether God had not settled in his own mind, from the beginning, who should be saved and who should be lost for ever. "Suppose," I said, "that he had done so, what has *that* to do with *you*?" "Why, Sir," she answered, shuddering, "I may be one of those whom he has determined to destroy." "Yes," I rejoined, "but you cannot know *that* beforehand; can you?" "My aunt, Sir," she replied, "and our ministers at Sion Chapel, always say, that the new birth will make it known to us, and that God will call us in some sudden and unexpected manner, by means of the Holy Ghost coming upon us. But I never could understand this, Sir; and I am sure that I never had any of the feelings about which they talk so much; and *that*, Sir, was one great cause of my fears." "Well," I said, "*that* cause of your fears is now at an end. I have taught you, and you have taken it upon my word and upon my reasonings, that no such feelings are necessary, or to be expected by wise and sober people; that the only sure testimony of your being in the favour of God is the testimony of your own conscience, bearing witness within you, when you examine yourself, that you are striving to the utmost to keep all God's command-

ments, and that you put your trust for the rest in the merits of your blessed saviour, Jesus Christ. The Gospel tells us, over and over again, and always in the most decisive manner, that persons under those circumstances shall undoubtedly be saved. If this then be your case, as I really believe it to be, you need not trouble yourself about any decrees which God may be supposed to have made in the beginning; it matters not at all to *you* in any way, because you have those marks about you, which show you to be one appointed to salvation. Do you clearly understand my meaning?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied, "I think I do; but I have not so favourable an opinion of myself, as you are kind enough to have, upon the report of that best of friends, Mrs. Graves; and might I not fall, Sir, from such a state, if I were really in it?" "Certainly you might," I answered, "and it is most likely that you would, if you trusted in your own strength to keep you upright." "*That* I do not," she exclaimed, interrupting me. "Very well, then," I said; "but let us suppose for a moment, that, by being less cautious and vigilant, you relapse into a course of sin; that you become a liar, a thief, a drunkard, an adulteress." "God forbid, Sir," she cried with horror, "God forbid that I should ever commit such crimes!" "No, indeed," I said, "I do not think that you ever will; but only suppose it, that I may explain the doctrine to you. What would you do in such a case? You ought to consider with yourself, that, if it be true that God has appointed some persons to dishonour and destruction from the very beginning, it is too likely that such as you would then be, and, continuing such, must be,

amongst the number of them; because the Bible says plainly, that the wages of sin is death; death temporal and death eternal, which is far worse. Finding yourself then on such a precipice, and in danger of falling into the bottomless pit, what are you to do? Not to plunge into the depths of despair, and to do nothing else than to torment yourself with the notion that you are condemned already, and that there is no help for you; but, on the contrary, to fly back from the precipice with all possible speed, and to take every step prescribed by the Gospel for your recovery; first, to be sorry and indignant with yourself for offending your God and Saviour; then, like the prodigal son, to acknowledge your own baseness and wickedness; and, lastly, to return, as he did, into the forsaken paths of piety and virtue. And have you not the greatest encouragements to try to act in this manner? Did not Christ die to reconcile sinners to God? Does not God himself see the penitent and returning sinners, whom he has first stirred with his grace; does he not see them, whilst they are yet afar off, and run forth, as it were, to meet them with open arms, and to fall upon their necks, and kiss them with the kiss of peace? And does he not also, afterwards, at their earnest desire, send his Holy Spirit to assist their repentance, so as to carry it on to an effectual reformation of their hearts and lives? Well, then, proceeding in this manner, and with this mighty help, you may again regain your ancient state; you may perceive again growing up about you the same marks which you had before of your being in favour with God; and perhaps also you may feel now a double abhorrence and detestation of all sin. I say, therefore, that, if so, you are born of God; that you are

in a renewed state of salvation ; that you are of the description of those who are predestined to eternal life. What signifies this doctrine, then, to *you*, Mrs. Whiston, that it should scare you with dreams, or keep you waking both night and day? If you were an unrepentant and incorrigible sinner, the doctrine might well scare and terrify you ; but as you are the contrary, it ensures to you the certainty of future everlasting happiness."

" God grant it !" she exclaimed, her face beaming with a joy to which she had been long a stranger, " God grant it! You have taken a dark cloud from my eyes, and a heavy load from my breast, Sir. Blessings on your head!" Her gratitude deeply affected me, but I proceeded thus, in order that I might put her upon her guard against anything which her aunt and cousin might say, to disturb the present explanation. " I am delighted, my poor friend, that I have been able to give you so comfortable a view of this doctrine ; and to convince you, that you have nothing to do with it, except to believe firmly, that the promises of Scripture, through Jesus Christ, shall certainly be made good to every faithful Christian. But I will tell you fairly, that, if you were absurdly to consider the doctrine by itself, as too many do, and apart from those gracious promises of the gospel to the humble, the penitent, and the faithful, it would appear to be a very uncomfortable doctrine, indeed ; but, under such a limited view, it must directly lead to such bad effects, as to give good reasons for supposing that it cannot be a true doctrine. Hear, therefore, what I have further to explain about it."

Upon this she prepared herself to listen to me with a most earnest and fixed attention, and said,

“Thank you, Sir! thank you a thousand times! I shall be most glad to hear it further explained; for I cannot get rid of the idea, that my fellow-creatures are deeply concerned in it, whatever may be my own case.” “Yes, indeed,” I rejoined hastily, and with admiration of the sentiment; “our fellow-creatures are greatly interested in it; and, what is more, God himself is greatly interested in it; and, if it were true, we should have some difficulty to justify his goodness, his justice, and his wisdom, with the help of all the faculties which he has given us. I put the doctrine then thus, that you may have it in the very shortest compass, and stript of every thing else which might disguise it, and occasion it to be less clear to your understanding. God, before he made the world, settled and determined, once for all, and for ever, whom he would save, and whom he would damn, without any respect whatever to what any individual person might be, when it came to the lot of that person to live upon the earth; so that, do what we might, or be we what we may, it matters not at all; there is no help for it; we shall be saved or damned, according to that ancient, original determination, fixed irrevocably and unchangeably before a single man was created or born. Do you comprehend this?”

“Too well,” she answered immediately, “and it makes me shudder at it.” “So it may, with reason,” I replied; “but consider first, what the effect of such a doctrine must be upon any man who believes it. He may say to himself, ‘God has determined, before I was born, what is to become of me at last; what I do, therefore, is of no consequence whatever; I cannot alter God’s decree; nothing on my part can

either hinder it, or help to bring it to pass : if I am to be saved, I shall be saved ; if I am to be damned, I shall be damned. I will live, therefore, as I like ; I will snatch every pleasure for which I have an appetite ; I will follow the bent of every passion ; I will satisfy every lust ; I will give the reins to every desire or imagination which comes uppermost ; I will drink, rob, fornicate, murder ; nothing shall stand in my way to stop the gratification of my wishes.' Well, if the man reasons thus, I do not see what answer could be made to him. But it is likely that we should all reason in the same manner ; and then you may readily conceive what a world this would be—fit only for the devils themselves to inhabit—a hell, indeed, upon earth."

"So it would, Sir," she said, looking very thoughtfully, and pondering something in her mind, which occasioned me to pause in my argument longer than I had intended—"so it would indeed," she repeated : "but I am considering another case, where a person having a better nature than such as you have just described, and abominating all those crimes, and assured that a God of goodness must love goodness in others, and, therefore, endeavouring, to the very utmost of his knowledge and strength, to do what he supposes to be pleasing to God—what must happen, Sir, if this person be condemned already by that shocking decree ?"

I could scarcely conceal the satisfaction which this question gave me. She had stated, I believe, precisely her own case. However it was a home question, and most fully to the point before us. My answer was, that, if God loved goodness, and therefore could not punish it without a contradiction to himself, he

must ordain, that this person should fall into the habit of some grievous sin, and die in it. "So then," she interrupted me with quickness, "you make God to be the cause of the man's wickedness, in order that, when he punishes it afterwards, he may seem to be just?" "Even so," I said; "but as you very well suggest to me, he would only seem to be just; at least, if justice be what *we* mean by the word; and if it be any thing else, it is vain for us to talk or think about it."

Mrs. Whiston's anticipation had advanced us miles upon our road; so I continued immediately. "To impute such conduct to God would be monstrous, impious, blasphemous; and, therefore, the doctrine which leads to this consequence cannot be true." "It cannot, Sir, it cannot," she repeated with emphasis. "Well, then," I said, "let us now call in Scripture to help us. The first text, which occurs to me, is *that* which informs us, that all effectual religion and goodness in men are impossible, unless they believe that God is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him. This is the language of plain, common sense, as well as of Scripture; it agrees with all our best notions of the divine goodness, wisdom, and justice; and no doctrine can be true, which is not capable of being reconciled with it. Is it possible, then, so to modify, or qualify, or explain the doctrine, about which we have been talking, as to make it correspond with this? Very easily, I think. For we have only to suppose that God adapted his decrees to the conduct of men, which he perfectly well foreknew; so as to determine to reward those who in all after-ages should diligently seek him, and to punish the rest who should disobey

his calls to repentance, and do despite to the spirit of grace. Do you see any difficulty in this?" "No, Sir," she answered, "none whatever." "If," I resumed, "the decree be supposed to be general, that God will save or condemn all who act in such or such a manner, there is really and truly no difficulty in comprehending it; but if it apply to, and embrace, every individual human being, individually considered, there may, perhaps, be some difficulty to comprehend it in all its bearings. However, in practice, the difficulty vanishes. Suppose two brothers, being born into the world under exactly the same circumstances, with respect to the possibility or probability of their being good or bad Christians. Well, we will suppose also that God foresaw, from the beginning, that the same discipline, by judgments and mercies, and the same assistance of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to them, would not have the same effect upon both: in short, that the eldest would attend to all the divine warnings, and profit by the divine help; but that the youngest would despise or neglect them all, and continue to walk according to his own corrupt imaginations: might not God, upon the foresight of this, decree in his own mind, without any violation of goodness, wisdom, or justice, that the youngest at the last judgment shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the eldest into life eternal?"

- "To be sure he may, Sir," she replied without hesitation; "for you know, Sir, God does not make his decree, and then caused that youngest brother to be what he turns out to be, in spite of all his wishes to be a different sort of man; but, on the contrary, God disposes every thing by his providence in such

a manner, that the youngest, as well as the eldest, might become a good Christian, and then, foreseeing that the youngest will ruin himself wilfully, he makes the decree." "You are quite right," I said, "you comprehend the matter thoroughly; there needs not another word on the subject, and we come to what I said in our first conversation. Scripture points out certain marks of these two opposite states, the plainest imaginable; and we have nothing to do individually, but to look to those marks, and see in which state we are, and to endeavour to get into the right one, if we are not in it already. No dependence must be placed on anything else. Your aunt's dependence on conversion and the new birth is worse even than a broken reed. For, if a man could work himself up to think, which many unfortunately for themselves have done, that there is a decree in his favour, although he produces no fruits of righteousness, you may reasonably fear that he never will try to produce any. He will most probably be puffed up in his own vain imagination; despise the rest of his brethren, as if they were reprobates; and so, like Mr. Perkins and too many others, plunge himself into damnable sins. Let us, therefore, carefully guard against such a delusion, and pray to God to keep us steadily in the love and fear of him, and in strict obedience to his will. Think of these things, my good Mrs. Whiston, when you meditate on your condition. And now, God bless you, and farewell for the present." So I left her.

The apparent result of this day's visit sent me home with a light heart and a joyful countenance. It seemed strikingly evident, that great progress had been made towards the restoration of peace and tran-

quillity of mind to this afflicted woman. Mrs. Graves called in the evening, and said that all was going on prosperously, except the bodily complaint. It remained, however, to be seen how she would bear another visit from her aunt.

The same evening I saw the apothecary. He had been with Mrs. Whiston, and had found her as calm as possible. The bad thoughts had not returned since my conversation with her in the morning. "Perhaps," I said, "if she were left to you and me alone, with Mrs. Graves and her sister to nurse her, we might do something, with God's blessing, to compose and tranquillize her mind permanently; you might administer your medicines with effect to the body, and I mine to the soul. I had, I believed, already rooted out some painful notions which were taken up on erroneous grounds, and this morning I have perhaps rooted out some more. But the experience of this day has shown me, that I have a great difficulty to contend with. She has an aunt and a cousin who are Calvinistical Methodists, as I suppose; and their visit to her last night, I am pretty confident, was the main cause of an aggravated attack of her mental disorder. It was evident, from what passed with myself, that they had been talking to her upon the deepest points of divinity, which were well calculated to disturb and confound her. In short, I should expect now, that her disorder will ebb and flow in proportion as I and they converse with her; and that whatever good I may do her for a time will certainly be lessened, if not entirely overthrown, by *them* afterwards; or, at least, that they will be constantly stirring up in her mind new doubts and misgivings about her salvation, which will require much

pains on my part to dissipate. Would it not be wise, therefore, for *you* to order that she should be kept as quiet as possible, seeing but few persons, and talking with none? Her aunt, no doubt, has a good object in view, and wishes to save her poor niece's soul; but how this is to be done by the preposterous method which she is pursuing, I cannot understand. Would you recommend predestination and conversion as proper subjects to be continually impressed upon a mind already crazed with 'bad thoughts?' Predestination and conversion, too, not as we explain them, but as Calvinists and Methodists explain them? She cannot be wrought to any fanatical raptures and extasies, the only test, as they tell her, of her election to life; and therefore very naturally, and almost necessarily, she sinks into a religious melancholy; she is dejected, she desponds, she despairs."

"No wonder, indeed, Sir," replied Mr. Benson, "and it is certainly necessary to do what you recommend. I will see about it. But may I ask, Sir, in what way you have talked with her, so as to produce her present serenity?" "Why, I have talked with her," I said, "upon her own supposition, that the devil himself is personally her tormentor." "Then I must adhere to the same supposition," he answered. "Yes," I said, "for the present, if you find it necessary to mention the subject; but then I have taught her to draw a different conclusion from it than she has been used to do. She thought it to be a proof that God had forsaken her; that her name was not written in the book of life; and that her sufferings were the beginning of the punishments of the damned. But I have shown her by reasoning

which she was very capable of understanding, and by the particular instance of Job, that God might employ any instrument for the correction or trial of his creatures, and any sort of disease; and that her bad thoughts must be considered in no other light than as a disease, which, like every other, was under the control of God. Indeed, I fully believe that her bad thoughts are, strictly speaking, a disease, and will yield to the power of medicine; especially now that she is more easy as to her prospects in the next world. For I hope she is at present quite satisfied about these terrible doctrines, and will be prevented from hearing anything more about them; and if you can give her a little strength, I do not despair of being able to weed out of her mind even the idea that the devil has been visible to her, and consequently that he is the immediate author of her sufferings. Her confidence that she has seen him, I take to be a mere dream of the disordered imagination; and if she can be persuaded of this, I am sure that, with the return of bodily health, it will go a great way towards the complete establishment of her tranquillity. I beseech you therefore, my good Sir, to co-operate with me with all your skill and attention; and, above all, to give a strict order that nobody may be permitted to talk with her on religious subjects but myself."

"I see now clearly," said Mr. Benson, "that it is necessary to place some restriction upon her ill-judging relations; and with respect to her body, besides the medicine which I will give her, I know of nothing so likely to be useful as fruit, if it can be had." "It can be had very easily," I replied; "not indeed out of my own garden just at present, but from Mr. Cornwall's where it abounds. It happens too,

very luckily, that I shall see Mr. Cornwall this very evening, and I will mention it to him." Upon this, Mr. Benson left me.

Mr. Cornwall was a rich young clergyman, living at one of the best houses in my parish. He was already acquainted with the case, and had contributed secretly (for it was all a secret as yet) towards the recompense of Mrs. Graves's good deed of charity. He promised at once to supply the poor woman with as much fruit as might be proper for her, and also to carry it to her himself; which he did continually, and now and then, at my request, he prayed with her. I mention this the rather, because it gives me an opportunity of reminding the clergy how useful it is, especially under peculiar circumstances, to converse as well as to pray with the sick. This poor woman always seemed to me to derive great benefit from my prayers, but still more from my conversation; and as Mr. Cornwall, out of delicacy to *me*, never conversed with her, but simply repeated the prayers in the Visitation-service, she told Mrs. Graves, that *my* visits were the most comfortable to her, and that she hoped I would come as often as possible.

When I learnt this, and found also that the bad thoughts began to be of rarer occurrence and less distressing, I determined to avail myself of so favourable a juncture, and try to extirpate the main idea which had so long disturbed her. Sitting, therefore, by her bed-side, one day, very soon after the last conversation, her sister only being present, after having prayed with her, I said, "My good Mrs. Whiston, what do you suppose to be the devil's great object in going to and fro in the world, as the Scriptures represent him to do?" She hesitated to answer;

so I continued : “ Is it not said also in Scripture, that he goeth about, seeking whom he may devour ? ” “ I believe it is, Sir,” she replied. “ But what is meant by his devouring people ? ” I asked ; “ Can it be anything else but tempting them to commit sin, that, if possible, he may make them wicked, like himself, and bring them at last to the same terrible place of punishment ? ” “ *That* must be it, Sir, I dare say,” she exclaimed eagerly. “ Well, then,” I asked again, “ do you suppose the devil to be very shrewd, and subtle, and cunning ? ” “ Yes, indeed, Sir,” she answered, with still more eagerness, “ *that* I do, above all others in the world.” “ Then,” I said, “ if he be so, he will always understand what is most proper to gain his object, will he not ? He will understand, that is, what temptations are most suitable to the temper and disposition of each particular person ; and by leading men, as the case may be, into those very temptations, he will be more certain of success in trying to effect their ruin. Is not this so ? ” “ It is most likely,” she replied. “ If, for instance,” I thus continued, “ a man be too fond of money, would not the devil, seeing such a fair opening for temptation, be always suggesting to that man the expediency of getting as much money as he could ; of hoarding it up closely, without expending it upon himself or others ; and if honest means failed, would he not urge him to have recourse to dishonest ones, in order to gratify this avaricious passion ? ” “ I suppose so,” she answered. “ Do you think,” I said, “ that the devil would ever put it into this man’s head to perform acts of charity which would cost him anything ? ” “ No, indeed,” she replied. “ Because,” I said, “ acts of charity, in the first place, would be

a proper employment of the man's wealth, and therefore contrary to the devil's own interest; and, secondly, the man being so covetous, and his whole soul bent upon the possession of money, if the devil tempted him the contrary way, namely, to spend his money, this would show a great want of that cunning in the devil which we justly suppose to belong to him; would it not?" "It would, Sir, to be sure," she answered. "Well," I continued, "and if a man was too fond of drinking, the devil, intent upon his proper business, would be always putting into this man's head the deceitful pleasures which spring from that vice; the mirth, the song, the idleness, the freedom from care, the forgetting of troubles; and would also contrive expedients to throw him perpetually into the way of companions fond of the excesses of jollity and revelry; would he not?" "No doubt of it, Sir," she replied. "But," I rejoined, "he would never tempt the man to be sober; because sobriety being the man's own interest, could not be the interest of the devil." "Very true, Sir," she answered. "Besides," I said, "even supposing sobriety to be a bad thing for the man, yet it would not show any shrewdness in the devil to tempt him to a thing most contrary to his nature, and in which the devil himself was so little likely to succeed; is not all this so?" "I understand you very well, Sir," she replied; "and I agree with you in everything."

"We are come then to this," I said, "that the devil never tempts men to do what is right, but always to do what is wrong—to follies, to vices, to sins; and not all men to all follies, vices, and sins, indiscriminately and at random; but each individual according to his individual propensity: the sensual

man to gluttony, drunkenness, or lust, as it may happen; the covetous man to extortion, oppression, and every sort of injustice, to multiply his gains, and so in like manner with respect to the rest of the vices. So far you understand. Well, suppose now that this Evil Spirit, subtle as he is, should make a mistake, and tempt any person to something towards which he has no inclination whatever; nay, to something which that person utterly abhors; and suppose that he shows this abhorrence more and more under every fresh trial of the thing, whatever it may be; do you think that the devil would proceed with so hopeless a temptation, and not rather betake himself to another plan more promising of success?" "There is no doubt," she answered, "but that he will try something else." "But, perhaps," I said, "we have supposed too much in supposing that he will ever be mistaken. Although he may not succeed at all times and with all persons, is it not most likely, and have we not already allowed, that he will always have recourse to the most probable means of corrupting and ruining every individual whom he assails?" "Indeed, Sir," she replied, "I fear it must be so." "Well then," I continued, "if we saw a person actually assailed by some perplexing and distressing temptation—by sickness, suppose, or any other affliction—but so far from yielding to the temptation, or committing any sinful act in consequence of it, that this same person detests and abominates the very thought of murmuring and repining, and of falling into any sin to which the affliction might seem most liable, and prays to God, and tries all human means, to expel every such thought for ever; and yet it continually recurs, day after day, and is re-

newed and repeated for months and months together ; should we not reason with ourselves, and conclude that this could never be the work of the devil, unless he were one of the most foolish of beings, whereas we know him to be one of the shrewdest and most cunning ? Have we not agreed, too, that when the devil has any hand in a temptation, he always fixes upon something to which the tempted person is inclined by nature, or custom, or accident ; and that if it were possible for him to be mistaken in what he fixed upon, he would by no means continue the same temptation for a long period, and without the slightest hope of success ?”

Here she hesitated to answer, and appeared to be pondering the matter deeply in her own mind, as if she began to suspect that the argument touched her own case, and therefore that there was some error in it ; for that the devil was her tempter she had never doubted for an instant ; so I proceeded in this manner : “ Whenever you perceive certain marks in a temptation, such as we have described before, and certain sins following the temptation, would you not be justified in thinking that the devil was concerned in it ?” “ I suppose so,” she said. “ Well,” I continued, “ and if you perceived none of those marks about the temptation, and what is more, no sins following it, would you still ascribe it to the devil ; and so not only make him lose his labour, which I hope he often does, but also, which is more extraordinary, make him do things contradictory to his nature and interest, which are quite useless with respect to the furtherance of this kingdom of darkness, and which betoken folly instead of subtlety ?” “ I should not have done so,” she replied, “ if I had not been in my

present wretched state. My bad thoughts must come from *him*." "What?" I asked, "when the bad thoughts are no sins in themselves, and lead to no sins whatever? For you told me, that you neither encouraged them to come, nor approved of them when they did come. On the contrary, it is self-evident, that you would keep them out of your head, if you could; and that you hate them to the very uttermost. Then again, instead of producing sin, they seem to me only to make you more averse from it, and more desirous of God's help and mercy. If at times you have doubted of the Divine mercy, that has been chiefly an error of ignorance, and the consequence of your having been taught those terrible doctrines about which we have talked so much. I cannot understand, therefore, what the devil has gained, or is likely to gain, by this temptation; but I am almost certain, on the other hand, that you yourself have been indirectly improved by it. So then, upon the whole, I think that you would be right in concluding, that the devil has nothing to do with it."

I am not sure that she quite comprehended the whole of this reasoning, although I took great pains to state it clearly, and put it at much greater length than it appears here; turning it about into various shapes, and endeavouring to make all the ground good, as I went along. However, the earnestness of my manner, and the deference which she paid to my authority, produced a desirable effect to a certain degree; but it perplexed her to account for the circumstance of her having seen, as she was confident that she had done, the devil himself. At length, therefore, she said, "But why then, Sir, did he come to me at all, if it were not to put these bad thoughts into my head?"

“ He might have come to you,” I replied, “ for some other reason, without being the cause of your bad thoughts. But might you not possibly be mistaken in supposing that he came to you ?” “ If a person who has seen may be mistaken,” she answered with quickness ; “ you know, Sir, that I told you I had seen him.” “ I recollect that you did so,” I said : “ but persons so ill in body as you have been, sometimes in great pain, sometimes drowsy and slumbering, often brooding over uncomfortable opinions in religion, know very little indeed of what passes around them. And there is another thing ; do you not dream now and then, when you are sleeping or dozing ?” “ Always, Sir,” she replied, “ almost always ; and the dreams break my sleep continually.” “ As much lately as they did before ?” I inquired. “ Not so much,” was her answer. “ And in your dreams,” I inquired again, “ did you not often fancy that you were wide awake ?” “ Very often,” she said. “ So, then,” I rejoined, “ it might have been in one of those dreams, when you fancied yourself wide awake, that you also fancied yourself to have seen the devil. But tell me under what appearance did you suppose that you saw him ?” “ As he is generally described, Sir,” she said. “ What,” I asked, “ in some horrible shape ?” “ Yes,” she answered, “ so horrible, as to terrify me very much.” “ That is just what I should expect, if it happened in a dream,” I said, “ but it would be very extraordinary, indeed, if it were a real appearance ; for I cannot imagine how his appearing in a terrifying manner could further his purpose of leading you to sin. On the contrary, I can see clearly, that the showing himself so must defeat his own object ; because the tempted person would put

himself immediately upon his guard, and fly with horror from the most distant approach of the very least sin. Do you think that the covetous man, of whom we talked a little while ago, or the drunkard, would plunge deeper into their vices, if the temptation to do so were accompanied with the sight of the tempter himself, in one of his dreadful forms, and consequently, bringing home to their imagination the place from which he comes, and the intolerable punishments to which he himself and all his wicked followers are doomed for ever?"

This idea seemed to flash the conviction upon her, that she might indeed have been deceived in her supposition; and accordingly she said at once, that, after what I had said to her, she thought it much more likely, that he would appear in some pleasing shape, and carefully conceal who he was. "Very true," I rejoined, "and, therefore, with the view of admonishing us to be always on our guard, the Scripture informs us, that he sometimes changes himself into the shape of an angel of light. Why, you know, that in the foolish stories, which we might have read when we were children, about his appearing to different persons, they always represented him as endeavouring to hide his deformities; and, when he made himself suspected by his conversation, and a search took place to discover who he might be, then those deformities were found, and he was in consequence immediately cast out, before his glozing lies and seducing insinuations had done any mischief. So far, indeed, those old stories were not foolish, but wise; and we may learn something useful from them. Tell me then, my good Mrs. Whiston, what do you think about it now?"

“ Why, Sir,” she answered, “ I think that what you say is very reasonable ; and my only difficulty is, from whence these bad thoughts can come ; and they come too so suddenly, and so unexpectedly.” “ This may very well be,” I said, “ without the devil having anything to do with them. Have not good thoughts also sometimes come into your mind suddenly and unexpectedly, when you were not doing or saying anything that could have led to them ?” “ It is very true,” she answered. “ And have not very strange thoughts, neither good nor bad, occurred suddenly and unexpectedly ?” “ Often, Sir,” she replied. “ Then,” I said, “ we need not trouble ourselves any further about the suddenness and unexpectedness of the thoughts. It proves nothing as to their cause. All sorts of thoughts come and go, we know not whence, nor how, nor where. We have only to pray, and strive, that the bad ones do us no harm.”

“ I will do both,” she exclaimed, “ with all the strength that God may give me. But such bad thoughts as mine, Sir, must come from the devil alone, after all.” “ I have already given you,” I said, “ very good reasons to prove that they do not come from *him*, and our not knowing from what other quarter they come would be a very bad reason for concluding that *he* sends them. But I will tell you something about it, which may, perhaps, comfort you.” “ Do Sir,” she cried eagerly, “ do, by all means.”

“ Well then,” I said, “ since I became acquainted with your distressing case, I have inquired into the matter ; and I find that it is considered to be a disorder, like any other disorder ; and that it is not at all an uncommon one ; and that, although capable of

being cured by medicine, it has now and then turned out to be incurable ; never entirely leaving the afflicted person, until death put an end to it. Do not be alarmed at this. Should it happen to *you*, I advise you to disregard it altogether, if you can do so, as I think you may, after the conversation which has passed between us on the subject ; but at all events I advise you to pay as little attention to it as possible : for then, perhaps, these bad thoughts, painful as they have been to you before, and still continuing to come, will occasion you but little trouble in future. However, I find besides, that this disorder seldom attacks any but those who are in a bad state of bodily health, and that it is heard no more of when the bodily health is restored. Mr. Benson, therefore, I hope, with God's blessing, will restore yours, and then we shall see you happy again."

The poor woman shook her head significantly, and made no remark as to the recovery of her health ; but she reminded me, that the bad thoughts preceded her bodily disease. " So you think," I said ; " but I am told, that your bodily health had visibly declined, before the particular disease affecting it was apparent ; and my information as to bad thoughts goes to this point also, that they are very closely connected with religious troubles—you have had such troubles. Now if your health began to decline, and these troubles in religion to harass you about the same time, and then came the bad thoughts, does not this explain everything ? But I must be gone. God bless you !" Thus I left her.

This conversation had turned out very much according to my wishes, and for a few days things went on as smoothly as possible. The bad thoughts came

indeed during that interval; but, fortified as she now was with more knowledge and faith, she did not suffer them to prey deeply upon her spirits. Her health, however, did not amend; and the apothecary thinking her recovery extremely doubtful, I employed myself chiefly in preparing her for death. It was at this time that I administered the sacrament to her, which she had never before received; and she assured me that, if God should be so gracious as to spare her life, she would receive it regularly in future at the altar of her parish church, and conform to the established religion of her country in all things.

In the midst of all this I was sent for one afternoon by Mrs. Graves, and I was desired to come to Mrs. Whiston with as much haste as I could, because she was in great suffering. Paley's volume of religious tracts was lying by me when I received the message, so I snatched it up, and speeded away.

Arriving at the house, I found Mrs. Graves waiting for me below, to admit me, and to explain the state of affairs. "The aunt, Sir," she whispered immediately in my ear, "Mrs. Whiston's aunt is upstairs with her; and I fear, as you foretold too truly, she has done no little mischief." "Why did you let her go up?" I inquired hastily. "Why Sir," she answered, "having orders from the doctor and yourself to keep her away as much as possible, I have refused her permission to go up very often, in spite of the most urgent entreaties, and of her complaining that she was used hardly in not being allowed to see her own dying niece. But to-day I could not refuse any longer, because Mrs. Whiston herself began to be unwilling to occasion her aunt so much unpleasant feeling, and also thought that she might see her now

with perfect safety. However, Sir, she was mistaken; and unhappily she is at this moment suffering for her mistake by a very painful attack of her bad thoughts." "Let me know," I said, "as quick as you can, what it was that appeared to *you* to cause them, and perhaps I shall be better prepared for the scene above." "It was the old story, Sir," she replied; "scarcely was her aunt seated upon a chair by her bed-side, but she began to inquire about her religious state; and I was in great hopes for a long while that Mrs. Whiston would have borne it very well, but at last she talked so uncomfortably about the few that were to be saved, and the vast numbers whom God would pass by and leave to their doom, that my poor friend became dreadfully affected, and I sent immediately for you, Sir." "This aunt is very indiscreet," I said, "and very cruel, although probably without meaning it;" and by this time I was upon the stairs.

The door of the sick-chamber being open, I saw the poor woman before I entered it. She betokened her distress by the quick movement of her head from side to side, as on former occasions, and her eyes were shut. The other women were standing on the farther side of the bed, observing her. Thinking therefore to rouse her attention, and to divert it suddenly from the bad thoughts which at present were in possession of her mind, I exclaimed, as I passed the threshold, in a solemn tone, 'Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it.' She opened her eyes at the well-known voice, and gave me a most piteous look, and the tears started forth; but her peace was not at once restored. If I judged rightly, there was also in her look a little mixture of anger with herself for having suffered the agitation to prevail so far;

nevertheless she could not shake it off immediately. Not a word did she utter.

Being aware of her condition, and seeing that conversation was hardly possible, I said, 'Let us pray;' and then kneeling down I opened Paley at page 467, and began Mr. Jenks's prayer for one under deep melancholy and dejection of spirit. It suited her case extremely well, and she listened to it earnestly; the consequence of which was, that her tranquillity was nearly restored by the time that I had finished it. Next came a prayer of Bishop Patrick's, which was equally suitable; and at page 474 one of Mr. Kettlewell's. When these were finished, she was become quite calm: so I rose and read the 103rd Psalm, as a sort of thanksgiving for the ease which she now enjoyed. In that sense she understood it; and, when I paused after the last verse, she repeated herself aloud the concluding sentence, 'Praise thou the Lord, O my soul!'

She was now prepared for conversation, so I said, "How sorry I am, my poor Mrs. Whiston, to have seen you again in so much distress. I had hoped never to witness it any more. Has any new fear come over you? Open your mind to me, if you can, and I have no doubt but that I shall be able to comfort you." "You have done it very often, Sir," she answered; "and God bless you for it! But, ah! Sir," she said, fetching a deep sigh, "I do not see how I can get to heaven, when there are so few that will be saved." "Why not?" I inquired. "May not you yourself be one of those few?" "When there are to be but a few, Sir," she replied, "it stands to reason that a single person must have a smaller chance." "Yes, indeed," I said, "if it were

a matter of chance it might be so, but chance has nothing at all to do with it." "No, truly," interposed the aunt, "it has been fixed and determined long ago by One whose decrees cannot be overturned by chance." "Do those decrees alarm you yet?" I inquired of the sick desponding woman. "No, Sir, not at all," she answered; "since your explanation of them, and of the gracious declarations of Scripture, I am encouraged rather than alarmed. But only think, Sir, what is there in *me* that my God and Saviour should vouchsafe to make me one of a few. If there were many, might I not have a better hope to be one of many?" "At all events," I said, "your humbleness of mind is very much to be praised. It is the true Christian spirit, and has a blessing promised to it. But as to hope, there is none for any who have not the Gospel marks about them. All who have those marks will undoubtedly be saved, whether the whole number be large or small. If the whole number be small, *that* will not exclude any individual having the marks; and were the whole number absolutely countless, yet it would not include any who have them not. In short, it matters not to us, whether there be few or many who will be ultimately saved. We must get the marks. Few or many have nothing to do with our own salvation."

The idea had taken so firm a hold of her imagination that my reasoning failed to convince her, and she still persisted in her opinion, and repeated it over and over again, that the smallness of the number to be saved diminished her hope of being one amongst them herself; "And, indeed, Sir," she said, "it is a most sad thing to reflect upon." "It is very sad, certainly," I replied, "to reflect that so many souls

will be lost ; yet it seems absurd, on the other hand, that all men should despair, or at least be dejected, on that account ; which all must be, if your notion be right, that the hope of each individual is lessened. And, what is remarkable, the best men should be the most dejected ; because the best men are always the most humble, and think meanly of themselves ; knowing their own deficiencies, and not daring to compare their Christian attainments, with the attainments of others. In short we come to this, that not one person in the whole world could ever feel anything like what the Scripture calls the full assurance of hope, unless it might please God to reveal to any man that he should be certainly saved." " And this he does," cried the old lady, eagerly interrupting me ; " this is exactly what he does by the birth."

" Well," I said, " we will not argue that point over again. Your niece here is, I believe, quite clear about it, that there is no testimony equal to the testimony of our own conscience, that we have endeavoured to obey all the divine commands in godly sincerity. This was St. Paul's test. ' My rejoicing is the testimony of my conscience.' Let the same be ours ; and then we need not mind for ourselves, how few they may be who will be saved by Christ's gospel. But, my good Mrs. Whiston, you use this word ' few,' as if it meant ten or twenty persons only. Why, verily, if there were but ten or twenty to be saved, there might be a better excuse for being alarmed about the smallness of the number ; but surely you do not limit the few to ten or twenty persons, do you ?" " No, Sir," she answered ; " not to ten or twenty, certainly." " No," I continued ; " nor to a hundred, I suppose ; nor even to a thou-

sand; no, nor to tens of thousands, or millions either?" "A million is a great many, Sir," she said. "Yes," I rejoined, "in itself; but it is very few in comparison with the thousands, and tens of thousands of millions who will be judged at the last day. This is the sense of the word 'few.' The persons saved will be of all nations and languages; they will come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south; in fact, there will be numbers of them without number, without the power of being reckoned up by *us*. But still all these will be few in comparison of the greater numbers who will lose the prize. Well, then, now consider, my good Mrs. Whiston, do you think that there will be no room for *you* amongst these few, who turn out after all to be so many? Cheer up; the last in their own estimation may be the first in the estimation of God."

A new light, as after some of my former explanations, again broke in upon her, and she exclaimed, "Heaven bless you, Sir, for enlightening my darkness! How ignorant and foolish I was! What do you think now, aunt? Has not the good Doctor Warton made this terrifying doctrine quite easy to us, and as clear as the sun at mid-day?" This forcible question produced, however, no answer. Her aunt was speechless, evidently mortified, that the cloud of dust which she had raised was now so completely dispelled. So the sick niece continued: "Why should we trouble ourselves, my good aunt, with these difficult doctrines, which are above our understanding; and, if we understood them ever so well, have nothing to do with our salvation? Would it not be wiser for us to do all that we are commanded

to do, to the utmost of our power, and then trust patiently to the promises of God?"

This sage and excellent advice drew forth no approbation from the aunt. She had been admitted, as she thought, within the secret recesses of God's dwelling, and knew his most hidden counsels; the plain things, therefore, and such as were revealed for the use of ourselves and our children, namely, the divine laws, and the sanctions of those laws, and all other motives to obedience, these were beneath so exalted and advanced a Christian; these were but beggarly elements for mere babes and sucklings. These, however, were things which I considered it my bounden duty to applaud, inculcate, and enforce; so, after a short pause, I took up Mrs. Whiston's sentiment, and said, "Our blessed Lord himself advised as you do. Some foolish people put this question to him, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' He gave them no direct answer to it, but warned them to strive to enter into his kingdom themselves, through the narrow and rugged road. And upon another occasion, when Peter, with an idle curiosity, inquired of him what was to become of John hereafter, he rebuked him with this admonition; 'What has *that* to do with *thee*? Follow thou *me*!' So you see, if we believe Jesus Christ, we must look to ourselves and to our own steps, and be careful that we walk blamelessly in all his laws, and seek after his kingdom with due earnestness; and then *we* shall not fail, whatever may happen to the rest of mankind."

"I beg your pardon, reverend Sir," said the old lady, bursting from her long silence, and wrought up to a high pitch of anger; "you must excuse me,

Sir, but I cannot sit here, and see the texts of Scripture so shamefully perverted, without noticing it in the proper terms, and with the proper feeling. Why, Sir, in this very text about the few that shall be saved, we are positively told, that many shall seek to enter into God's kingdom, and shall not be able. But it pleases you, forsooth, to overlook this, the most important part of the text, and so to represent it, as to make it appear to suit your purpose. No, no, Sir; Christ's flock is but a little flock; he says so himself, and they only shall belong to it, who have been appointed thereunto from the beginning: the rest may seek, and labour, and fret themselves about it as much as they will, but all their pains will be thrown away; God will have his own will, and we are but clay in his hands."

The tone of passion and incivility, with which all this was spoken, dismayed everybody, and especially the sick woman; and they seemed to be considering what they ought to say, or do, to soften it down to me, and to prevent a similar ebullition of fanatical zeal; but I anticipated them by replying with the utmost calmness, and with little delay.—“Listen, Madam, if you please, and if you can bring yourself to hear reason. You say that Christ told us, his flock should be a little flock; but how does that apply to what we are now talking about, unless by the word ‘flock’ be meant the persons that shall be saved?” “And what else can it mean?” she said peevishly. “We shall see,” I answered, “in a moment; but first let me know, if this be the text in your mind: ‘Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’” “To be sure it is,” she said. “Well then,” I rejoined, “the little flock

were those to whom he spoke ; were they not ?” She hesitated ; so I continued : “ You will not say, I presume, that all the elect of all ages were then standing before him ?” She allowed reluctantly that it was not possible. “ It could not then be all the elect whom he called the little flock, but only that very small portion of them which then surrounded him : in fact, his daily followers. These were the persons whom he consoled with the assurance that they should ultimately obtain the kingdom. Is not this so ?” She was vexed, and confounded, and bit her lips in silence. “ The elect then,” I thus proceeded, “ might be any number whatever, so far as this text is concerned. At first, without doubt, and of necessity, they were but a few, a little flock ; but how does it appear from this text, that the flock might not afterwards become very numerous ? Beware, therefore, my good Madam, how you accuse others of perverting texts of Scripture ; for you must be conscious now, how entirely you yourself have perverted this.”

Here Mrs. Whiston interposed, and said, “ You must be so kind as to pardon my aunt, Sir. She did not mean, I am sure, to pervert Scripture ; she was under a mistake ; she cannot be supposed to understand these things so well as you do, Sir.” The aunt did not at all relish this sort of help, which assumed her ignorance of Scripture ; but still she spoke nothing. So I said, “ Oh ! yes, I pardon her very readily. What I lament is this, that persons ignorant of Scripture will persist in quoting it, and, what is worse, wrest it often to their own destruction. Now I am quite sure that your aunt here has not the least notion of the true meaning of this text ; and most

probably none of you have." The old lady bit her lips as before ; but Mrs. Whiston said immediately, " Pray then explain it to us, Sir." " I will with pleasure," I replied : " the kingdom here spoken of is not the kingdom of heaven, as I dare say you all imagine, but the triumph of Christianity upon earth. Our Lord bids his disciples to fear nothing : for, although they were now so small a flock, and without riches, or learning, or power, or authority, or any other human means to spread his religion in the world, and, in short, would have all these things against them, and every sort of persecution and misery to boot, yet that they should ultimately conquer all opposition and every difficulty, and that kingdoms and empires should submit to their superior rule. He foretold this, and this has happened. The grain of mustard-seed has sprung up into a mighty tree, and now the fowls of the air lodge in its branches, and the beasts of the field repose under its shade. At the name of Jesus the greatest monarchs of the earth now bow their knees."

" Thank you, Sir !" said Mrs. Whiston ; " thank you, again and again ! This text is now so plain to me, that I am sure it will frighten me no more. What a pity, aunt, that we, who are no scholars, should run with our itching ears after cobblers and carpenters, who are as ignorant as ourselves, and leave Dr. Warton and such as he is, who have nothing to do but study the Scriptures, and become able to explain them to *us*. Why, you know, our ministers at Sion Chapel have had no education, and know they work all the week to maintain themselves and their families by the labour of their hands and the

sweat of their brows; and how then can we expect them to understand these things so well as Dr. War-
ton, who has been brought up to the ministry from
his youth, and has never been otherwise employed
than in preparing himself for it?" "Pshaw! child,"
exclaimed the aunt, boiling with rage at the odious
contrast which her niece had drawn, "hold your
tongue, for shame! Thou knowest nothing. What
were the Apostles? Were they not fishermen?" "Yes,
aunt," said Mrs. Whiston with great composure;
"but you may remember, they left their nets, and
followed Christ, and so ever afterwards they were
fishers of men." Still more irritated, and not seeing
at once how to answer this on account of her passion
the aunt exclaimed again, "But what was St. Paul?
Was he not a tent-maker; and did he not work daily
with his own hands, at his own trade, to procure him
self daily food? He says so himself, and therefore it
is undeniable."

This was beyond poor Mrs. Whiston's depth, and
she looked round to *me* for assistance, if assistance
were to be had; the aunt, meanwhile, being mistress
of the field, and triumphing, as long as the pause
continued, in her apparent victory. Here then I in-
terposed: "St. Paul," I said, "was a very extraor-
dinary man; he had all the helps of human learning,
and of divine inspiration. Born in a learned city,
and brought up in all the other learning of his time,
he was sent by his parents to Jerusalem to get all the
learning of the Jews; and this he did at the feet of
Gamaliel, a most distinguished doctor of the Jewish
law. Meanwhile, this did not prevent him from being
instructed in a trade. In fact, all the Jews of all

ranks were instructed in trades ; it was the custom of the people. These, then, were the circumstances of St. Paul, when he was converted from being a Jew to be a Christian ; all the Scriptures at that time in existence, namely, the Scriptures of the Old Testament, were thoroughly known to him ; indeed, no man knew them better. He had, however, the Christian learning yet to obtain ; and this was given to him in the course of two or three years by communications directly from above ; not in the ordinary way of instruction, or from the other Apostles, but immediately from Jesus Christ himself ; that is, whatever the rest of the Apostles knew, by having lived and conversed with Christ, was made known to St. Paul by inspiration ; this inspiration placed him exactly upon the same footing of knowledge with *them*. Thus furnished, then, and under the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost, he went forth to the great work of converting the Gentiles to Christianity. He had nothing further whatever to study, or to learn ; he was perfectly acquainted with everything ; he could besides perform miracles ; and all the languages of all nations, amongst whom he went, were in an instant made quite easy and familiar to him by the teaching of the Spirit, without any other master, and without any trouble of his own. It is plain, then, that such a man, when he was not employed in his sacred ministrations, might spare time to work with his hands for his daily support ; and indeed that he *must* have done so, in some of the strange countries which he visited in the course of his travels ; or, if not, one of these two things would necessarily have been the consequence ; either, that he must have been

fed and clothed miraculously, as some of the Prophets were; or that he must have been a burden to those people, to whom he preached the Gospel. This, for the very best reasons mentioned by himself, he determined most carefully to avoid; God did not vouchsafe to feed or clothe him miraculously, but on the contrary permitted him to be afflicted with hunger, and thirst, and cold, and nakedness; nothing remained, therefore, but to labour with his own hands to supply his necessities. Now, then, I should be glad to hear in what respects your cobblers and carpenters resemble St. Paul? Is there one single feature the same in both?"

"Yes, Sir," said the aunt, who had had time to cool during my long speech, "that which is the only thing of any consequence is the same in both. Our ministers are called as he was, and the Spirit teaches them always what to do, and what to say. How else could they go on as they do?" "A supernatural call," I answered, "and supernatural help, would be very difficult for your cobblers and carpenters to prove. From what I hear, they do nothing more than what cobblers and carpenters might very well be supposed able to do of themselves. St. Paul proved himself to be a divine messenger by performing miracles; do they perform the same?" She could not say that they did. "Well, then," I continued, "we must give up their supernatural calls and their supernatural helps, unless they can be proved. For, even if they really had them, it would not signify to *me*, unless I were convinced of the fact, and how that could be without miracles I do not see. We come, therefore, back again to what your niece observed; that it is better

to stick to the Church, than to look for right instruction to such persons, who are perhaps but arrogant or fanatical pretenders to knowledge and inspiration."

"Yes, aunt," said Mrs. Whiston, "let us follow the Doctor's counsel, and go back to our church. For myself, if it please God to give me strength, I shall make up for the past neglect by future diligence." This resolution was by no means agreeable to the old lady; but she saw, I suppose, that it would not be quite decent to combat it in my presence, so she recurred in her thoughts to the text which she had accused me of garbling and perverting, and she escaped by that loop-hole from the present difficulty. "Our ministers, Sir," she said, "are better gifted than you, I suppose, will be ready to allow; and they know the Scriptures too well to think of telling us, that all who choose to seek after the kingdom of God shall find it. You have forgotten, Sir, the main portion of that text, which says, that many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able. I wait to hear how you will account for having overlooked it."

"I did not overlook it, Madam," I replied, "nor did I misrepresent the whole text; and I am glad that you have brought me back to it. To the best of my recollection I said, that, if we sought after the kingdom of heaven with the proper earnestness, we should not fail of obtaining it. I did not say that mere seeking in any way would be enough, but seeking earnestly; and this is what the text most awfully teaches us. I will ask *you*, Mrs. Whiston, (because I am sorry to observe that it is painful to your aunt to be convinced of the truth, instead of being a reason for joy to her,) I will ask *you* a few questions about this text, but I desire that she will immediately

stop us when she is not satisfied with your answers." To this compact there was a silent assent. So I said, "Tell me then, first, whether our Lord does not admonish us to strive to enter in at the strait gate?" "Certainly," she replied, "those are his very words." "Tell me next," I continued, "whether it is likely that he intended to mock us?" "It would be wicked, Sir," she said eagerly, "to think so." "But would it not be a downright mockery," I inquired, "if he bid us strive, and yet knew all the time in his own mind that striving would be utterly useless?" "Indeed it would, Sir," she answered. "And would not striving be utterly useless," I inquired again, "if every man's lot was fixed unchangeably from the beginning?" "Most certainly," she said, without hesitation; "there can be doubt of it whatever." Here upon looking across the bed I saw that the old aunt was very uneasy, so I begged of her by all means to correct these answers, if she could: but she only bit her lips and remained silent. I therefore drew the conclusion—that every man's lot was not fixed from the beginning, and also that every one who strove might be saved, however few the whole number of the saved might be. "This is very just, Sir," said Mrs. Whiston, "and very comfortable too."

"Well, then," I proceeded, "we will now go on. Did our Lord say, 'Strive to enter in;' and then immediately afterwards, 'for many will strive to enter in, and shall not be able?'" "No, indeed, Sir," she answered with quickness, "for that would have been very like contradicting himself." "Truly so," I rejoined; "but what did he say then?" "Seek, was his word, Sir," she answered. "To strive and to seek, then, are not the same thing; are they?" I

inquired. "No, Sir," she said. "And 'to strive' will be enough; but 'to seek' too little: is not this his meaning?" I inquired again. "It is as plain as possible, Sir," she replied. "Seeking, then, being too little of itself," I continued, "suppose we add to it zeal, and earnestness, and diligence, and perseverance; might not a man be said to strive, if he seeks zealously, and earnestly, and diligently, and perseveringly?" "We may well think so, Sir," she answered. "Seeking, then," I said, "is only a low degree of striving, and too low a degree of it; is not this the case?" She assented readily. "Yes, indeed," I proceeded, "striving is a very strong expression in our English tongue, but the actual word which our Lord himself used in his own tongue is tenfold stronger. Do you happen to know John Atkins of this parish?" "Yes, Sir," she said, "I believe every body knows him." "He is a great fighter, or boxer, or pugilist, as they call such persons; is he not?" I inquired. "And does he not wish to get the character of being the champion of the whole country, and more than a match for every other pugilist?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "that is understood to be his great desire." "Well, then," I said, "do you know how he prepares himself for a long time before, when he is challenged to fight a battle?" "Oh! yes," she replied, "I have heard all about it." "He eats and drinks every day," I said, "the sort of things, and in such quantities, as are likely to make him as strong as possible; he takes the proper medicines, if the habit of his body be out of order; he clothes himself so as neither to catch cold, nor to be weakened by too much warmth; he takes regular exercise, so as to keep up his whole activity, and not to be out of

wind in the time of need; he practises, in sham fights with other skilful boxers, whatever may be most likely to occur in the real battle; in short, he turns his mind from all other business and all other objects; the prize to be gained engrosses every thought and every wish of his heart; he has not even a secondary care to distract him; he whets his courage, and stirs up every energy within him, by fixing his view upon the prize, and the prize alone: is not this a just description of the system which John Atkins pursues, without once deviating from it, in order that he may climb to the top of his ambition?"

"You have described it exactly, Sir," said Mrs. Whiston, "and I suppose you know besides what a drunken fellow he is; and how, on these occasions, he debars himself of his drink, and keeps quite sober, to the astonishment of every body." "Yes," I replied, "I know it all very well, and therefore I will crown my description by adding, that he submits willingly to every privation; whatever darling vice he may have, most delightful to his nature and habits, and at other times his supreme happiness, he renounces it now without the slightest hesitation, and without a single pang. Such, then, is John Atkins, when he 'strives' for this mastery on earth; for a poor, worthless, fading, withering crown after all; in fact, for a mere empty name. But this is really to 'strive:' now you may understand and feel the mighty force of the actual expression of our Lord, and you may see also what is required of *us*, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven. And it is no wonder that we should be required to exert ourselves so much, when the crown which is set before us is so rich, beyond all price, one that never withers or fades, incor-

ruptible, immortal in the heavens. Do you think that this crown should be given to any who will not strive for it, as John Atkins strives for his?"

"Ah! Sir," she answered tremblingly; "but whoever strives in that manner? If *that* be necessary to get to heaven, the number will be few, indeed." "Few," I said, "in proportion to the whole race of Adam, certainly; but not so few, perhaps, as you may imagine. A prophet once complained that he was the only man left to worship the true God; but God told him that there were seven thousands more who had never bowed the knee to Baal. Without doubt it is the same now. There are thousand of whom we know nothing, secretly, and without show, believing, and endeavouring to obey the Gospel, in all sincerity and godliness; using great diligence to make their calling and election sure; working out their salvation with fear and trembling, and trying to add to their faith, step by step, every Christian grace and virtue. This sort and degree of striving God will accept for Christ's sake; this he puts into the power of us all; and you may be confident that no man will ever perish but by his own fault. Why is it that those who perish will be so many? Is it not because they will not renounce their bosom-sins, repent, and amend their lives; cease to do evil, and learn to do well; strive, in short, to become what Christ would have them, and the Holy Ghost would make them? Can any other reason be assigned why such numbers will fall short of the glory of God? For, as to your aunt's reason, that God condemned them before they were born, to be vessels of wrath, what do you think of it?" "It is horrible, Sir," she replied, shuddering; "it is too horrible." "Yes, niece," exclaimed the aunt

hastily, "but I never said so. The Doctor misrepresents me. I only said that God passed them by." "That is precisely the same thing in the end," I resumed. "It is a softer and a gentler mode of expressing it, but it comes to the same conclusion. There are but two places to go to, heaven and hell, and all must go to one or the other; so that they who are not appointed to heaven are virtually, whether by appointment or not, doomed to hell. It is but foolish quibbling to state the matter otherwise. No, no, the real truth is, what I laid down before, that the Gospel having placed life and death before us, and the choice of the one or the other being put into our own power, if we perish, we shall perish by our own fault. To avoid this, therefore, we must be strivers, and not mere seekers; we must be doers of the word, and not hearers only; we must not build upon any sandy foundations, but shake off our sins; we must not sit idle, in expectation of conversions and new births; we must not say, Lord, Lord, and neglect to obey him; we must not depend upon faith whilst we are without works, but by our works we must demonstrate and adorn our faith. All who act in this manner will be received into that glorious house, in which, thank God! there are many mansions, and of which the maker and builder is God himself. As for the rest, who seek only and never strive—who may wish, but not endeavour—although it may be painful to us now to think how numerous they will be, yet we shall be convinced hereafter, not only of God's justice in their condemnation, but also of his previous merciful dispensations to save them from it."

Having now, as I thought, exhausted the subject, I prepared to close the conversation; so I inquired

if she understood all that I had said, and was convinced of the truth of it. She assured me that she both understood and was convinced: "Then," I said, "you will never more trouble yourself about the number of the persons to be saved, but you will apply the text to yourself, as an awful warning to attend to your own condition. *That* was the very use which Christ intended us to make of it. I will now, therefore, leave you; but I must request of *you*, Madam," turning to the aunt, "not to talk to your niece upon such points, which perhaps none of us thoroughly comprehend, and about which you are proved to be yourself greatly mistaken." The aunt did not answer me, but champed the bit with an impatient restlessness. Then kneeling down, I prayed, as after a sermon, that God would graft what had been said inwardly in our hearts, so as that it might produce a holy and religious life. After which, pronouncing the benediction, I rose and departed.

Subsequently Mrs. Graves told me that the old lady had expressed herself as by no means satisfied with my doctrines, but that still she would hold her peace in future, lest I should accuse her of being the cause of her niece's troubles. So ended this matter.

§ 2.—*Mrs. Whiston, her Husband, Mrs. Graves, &c.*

AGAIN things proceeded smoothly for some time, and without any interruptions from the aunt, and I have no new occurrence or conversation to record, during that interval, peculiar to the case before me. But one day afterwards, by accident, I found Mrs. Whis-

ton's husband with her, as well as her sister and Mrs. Graves, in the sick chamber; and I soon observed a look of uneasiness in her countenance, and a restlessness of manner, which betrayed something wrong.

Upon my entering, Mrs. Graves, pointing, said, "This is Mrs. Whiston's husband, Sir." "Yes," I replied, "I know him very well, now I see him here." Then, addressing the man himself, who had risen from his chair to receive me, I continued: "We have met each other in the street very often, and I have also of late observed you now and then at church, but without knowing you. I am glad to meet you at length in this house of mourning; where, perhaps, it is better for us all to be, than in the houses of joy." He took this for a reproof; so he tried to excuse himself for his apparent carelessness about his wife, by pleading, that he had been much engaged in inquiring round the country, from morning till night, and day after day, for work; and he added, "I am sorry to tell you, Sir, that I cannot get any." "Why, it is a pity, to be sure," I said, "not to be able to get any work, when the sickness of your poor wife calls upon you so strongly to labour to the very utmost for her comfort and support. God knows, she has no appetite to eat or drink much; but a sick person, and especially one who has been so long sick, wants a thousand little things, out of the common way, and which are not to be had without cost, to lighten the misery of the sick-bed, and to keep body and soul together. It surprises me, however, to hear you say, that you have been obliged to go round the country to seek for work, when there is so much to be done at this season at home. I am almost sure that there is not

a single, able-bodied man in this parish out of work at this moment, but of his own will, or by his own fault; none, in short, but the idle and the drunken. You must have been very unfortunate, therefore, in not inquiring at the right places. Where have you been used to work?"

During this speech of mine the man's conscience smote him severely, and his colour came and went in quick succession. The proof of his mismanagement was but too evident, and could not be denied. At length he answered, with much stammering, that he had worked sometimes with one, sometimes with another, in order to get better wages for the more respectable maintenance of his family. "Supposing your account to be true," I replied, "the event shows that your scheme is a bad one. Here are *you* out of work, whilst all the regular people are in full employment, and likely to be so during the winter. What signifies, therefore, the short gain of your larger wages? If you divide what you get into fifty-two parts, I fancy you will find that the regular workman, keeping the same place all the year, gets much more weekly upon the average than you do. To tell you, however, my opinion of the matter, I must confess, that I have always observed that system of yours to be accompanied by idleness and drunkenness; and I believe that the great wages for the better support of the family are only the pretence, and that the indulgence of idleness and drunkenness is the real cause of the system. Such persons, instead of taking better care of their families, generally spend much time and money at the alehouse, and seldom go to work on a Monday at all. I do not accuse you of being one of those persons; for as you do not belong to this

parish, I am not sufficiently acquainted with you ; but you know perfectly well yourself, whether you have done your duty to this poor, sick, afflicted creature, who lies here. I advise you, therefore, to examine your own conscience about it strictly and severely ; and if you find yourself guilty, to repent and change your conduct, whilst God spares you time to do it ; for otherwise you will have a terrible account to give before the Great Judge, when you leave the present world."

The solemn tone in which I spoke this ; the destitute and dying condition of his wife, unalleviated by any help of his ; the loss of his two children ; the want and beggary which stared him in the face ; and the fears of another world, conspired to agitate the man, although unused to softer feelings, and I saw with pleasure a tear stealing from his eye, the gracious symbol of remorse. His wife also saw it, and from her natural kindness of heart she was unwilling that he should suffer any pain, and so she interposed here, and said, " Ah ! Sir, we were talking about it when you came in ; and I am pretty sure that he thinks differently now from what he used to do. God, I hope, will give him grace to repent seriously and thoroughly, and also without delay. It is not an easy thing, Sir, to do it upon a sick bed ; and in such a situation we can hardly give any proof of our sincerity. Indeed, Sir, I tremble for myself. I fear that I do not feel such a degree of sorrow for my sins as I ought, and such as is sufficient to make my repentance effectual. I try, Sir, to feel more deeply, but I cannot do it. I do not even shed a tear. Can I hope for salvation with so hard a heart, as my aunt used to call it ?"

“Sins !” exclaimed her husband, rousing himself from his agitation, “she has no sins to repent of, Sir, except her goodness to *me*, and her bearing so easily with the wrongs that I have done her. She is an angel on earth, Sir, and too good to continue here.” “Very well,” I said, “let this be a warning to *you*. You see how she feels when preparing for death, after a whole life, as you suppose, of goodness ; what then must the feelings of the wilful sinner be, when he thinks of meeting his God ? But I hope, with respect to yourself, as you have begun to come to church, it is a proof of your intention to change your whole conduct, and by an early repentance to spare yourself that bitter pang.” Then turning to the wife, I said, “It is very true that no life, no, nor any single act, can stand the scrutiny of God. If he were extreme to mark whatever is done by us, even our best deeds, we could not abide it ; some flaw or other would be found in them. But supposing them to be perfect, what would they be in comparison with the everlasting joys of heaven ? However, they are in fact very imperfect ; and there is one great class of sins which too many are apt to overlook altogether ; sins of omission will call them ; the things which they ought to have done, and which they have left undone. No doubt, therefore, but that every man living is a sinner in the eye of God, and stands in need of a Saviour to atone for him, and of repentance to show his sincerity ; his whole life, indeed, must be a life of repentance.”

Before I could proceed to topics of consolation, as I intended, she interrupted me, by saying with a faltering voice, “Ah, Sir, so it must be indeed ; and, after all, how can we be sure of our sincerity ? The

heart, you know, Sir, is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; so that nobody can make any certain judgment of his own. This is what troubles me, Sir; and I dare not speak peace to myself, for fear that there may be no peace for me." "Then I will speak peace to you," I exclaimed, "so far as that text of the Prophet Jeremiah is concerned; you and many others mistake the sense of it." "Indeed, Sir!" she cried eagerly. "How I wish my aunt were here, that it might be explained to *her*, as well as to myself! I am sure she understands it as I did. We heard it very often mentioned at Sion Chapel; it was a favourite text with our ministers."

"Very likely," I said; "but consider for a moment. What do you mean by the heart?" She hesitated; so I continued. "Do you not mean the thoughts, inclinations, intentions, desires, affections, and passions of the human mind?" "*That* must be it, no doubt, Sir," she replied. "Well then," I resumed, "if you think anything, intend anything, are inclined towards anything, desire anything, love anything, hate anything, are disturbed in any way about anything; do you not always know it?" "To be sure I do," she answered. "If you thought of stealing," I said, "or of telling a lie, could you possibly be ignorant of the thought?" "No, indeed," she replied; "it could not be." "In short, then," I said, "you agree with me, that every one must know everything that comes into the heart upon every occasion." "I do, Sir," she answered. "You are right, certainly," I continued; "for Scripture tells us, that the spirit of a man, which is in him, knows all the things of the man; all the things which pass in his

own breast. But then, what does the Prophet mean ? you will ask. Why, he means that none of us know the hearts of others ; and therefore, as this is the case, as men's hearts are so deceitful, that we can never know how they will act towards us, we must put our whole trust in God only."

"Why this is very plain indeed, Sir," she said, recovering her serenity ; "and I see no reason now to fear, as I have done, about this text. But may I ask, Sir, is there nothing in which we may be deceived by our own hearts ?" "Oh, yes," I replied, "with respect to the future they may deceive us in this manner. Here is your poor husband, who seems to have resolved to leave off drinking ; and probably his heart assures him, at this moment, that he will certainly keep his resolution. But may he not take to drinking again, and thus deceive himself ?" "He *may*, Sir," she said ; "but I hope he will not." "Well," I continued, "he knows perfectly what his own resolutions are ; he knows perfectly whether he is sincere in making those resolutions ; his heart does not deceive him in any of these things ; but he does not, and cannot know, whether he shall keep his resolutions for a single day. In this respect he does not know his own heart ; and in this sense, although he did not mean it, the Prophet's text is true. There is also another way in which our hearts may deceive us with respect to the future. Have you observed how men go on from one crime to another, from bad to worse ?" "Yes, Sir," she answered ; "it is almost always so." "Does not the drunken man," I said, "very often take to robbing, for the sake of getting money to spend in drink ?" She allowed it, shuddering on account of her husband. "And does not the

robber," I asked again, "sometimes commit murder?" She assented. "Now then," I said, "let us ask your husband, whether he does not abhor the very thought of robbing and murdering." Here the man answered for himself, at once, and with vehemence, that no love or desire of liquor could ever urge him to a dishonest deed. "Very well," I continued, "at this moment you feel quite sure of your honesty. But let me tell you, that there is no security but in leaving off drinking. Every robber, and every murderer, has said or thought the same that you do now; and yet, becoming by degrees familiarized to vice, and carried onward by circumstances, they plunge into the worst crimes. This, then, is another way in which we may be deceived with respect to the future; and none but persons who are daily growing in the Christian graces and virtues can venture to answer for themselves at all."

"It is too true, indeed, Sir," said the sick woman; "but are we not deceived by our own hearts very often at the present moment? Do not many people think that they are in a good state, when they are in a bad state?" "Yes," I answered, "and some people think themselves in a bad state, when they are in a good one; but neither of these cases is the consequence of a deceitful heart. They happen, because men will not sufficiently examine their own hearts, or because they make mistakes about the terms of salvation. Are there not persons so full of business or pleasure every day, every hour, that they scarcely ever think about their spiritual condition at all?" "I fear there are too many," she answered. "But if these people were to ask their hearts about it," I said, "would not their hearts tell them?" "To be sure

they would," she replied. "So then," I continued, "it is not their hearts which deceive them; for they never consult their hearts to find out the truth, and perhaps they do not consult them for this very reason, because they are afraid of knowing the truth. Did you ever hear of tradesmen being afraid to examine their books?" "Yes, Sir," she said, "I believe it often happens." "Is it not," I asked, "because they are apprehensive of finding themselves ruined men?" "I suppose so," she answered. "But if they were to examine their books properly, would not the books show them precisely in what state they were?" I asked again. "Without doubt they would," she replied. "Well then, now tell me," I said, "if their books deceive them." "How can that be, Sir," she answered with vivacity, "when they never look into them?" "It is just so then," I said, "with our own hearts, which are to *us* what the tradesman's books are to *him*; if we consult them at all, or not sufficiently, we shall have an imperfect knowledge of our condition; but it would be a great mistake to say that our hearts deceived us."

"It is very true, Sir," she replied; "and I wonder now that I did not understand this before. But you talked, Sir, of our mistaking the terms of salvation: *that* is a very alarming thing, Sir, and I hope you will explain it to me." "Certainly," I said, "I will do so immediately; and you shall see, that the deceitfulness of the human heart has no concern with such mistakes. Do you remember, that the Scripture positively tells us, 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord?'" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "and it is fearful to think of it." "Suppose then," I said, "that you saw persons very diligent in at-

tending God's public worship, and even now and then partaking of the holy sacrament, but not relinquishing any one habit of vice, nor mortifying a single lust; and yet hoping to get to heaven nevertheless on the strength of their regular church-going: would you not say, that it had happened to them, by some means or other, not to be properly instructed as to the conditions of salvation?" "I should certainly," she replied. "It is no deceitfulness of the heart, then," I said, "which leads them into this mistake; but it is their neglect of studying the Gospel, and of informing their understandings aright about it. Suppose, again, that a person frequenting a conventicle should hear perpetually that any righteousness of his own was but filthy rags, and to be utterly disparaged and disclaimed; and that he must lay hold of Christ's righteousness, and trust to *that* alone, as being imputed to himself; and that this, without any further trouble on his own part, or any seeking or striving after holiness, will ensure salvation to him: well, the man hearing this doctrine, and knowing no other, adopts it greedily, and soon brings himself to feel as the preachers have taught him; will you tell me that this man's deceitful heart is to blame? No, no; it is his ignorance, it is the misfortune of his not having been able to read or understand the Scriptures himself, and of his having depended upon ill-informed, fanatical instructors. His heart does not deceive him at all; it tells him precisely what his present state is, namely, that he is not fruitful in good works; and he, unfortunately for himself, thinks *that* to be a good state which is a bad one, because he knows no better. They have never impressed upon him, that he who doeth righteousness is righteous;

that he who nameth the name of Christ must depart from all iniquity ; and that by patient continuance in well-doing he must look for glory and immortality. What wonder, therefore, if the man, corrupt by nature, and sinful by habit, be readily and almost willingly mistaken !”

“ Yes, indeed, Sir,” she said, “ it is natural enough, without accusing our poor hearts of being deceitful or wicked. But suppose then, Sir, that I am sincere in my repentance towards God, as my heart tells me now that I am, and cannot but tell me the truth with respect to my present thoughts and designs ; yet still you know, Sir, that even a sincere repentance may not be anything like what it ought to be in the greatness of the sorrow and affliction which accompany it. Mine I cannot call the broken and contrite heart. Peter wept bitterly ; and the penitent woman washed the feet of our Saviour with the abundance of her tears ; whilst I myself, as I mentioned before, cannot shed a single tear.”

“ Listen,” I said, “ my good Mrs. Whiston, and believe me, when I assure you, that one man may shed abundance of tears, when he reflects upon the unworthiness of his past life, and another may review it with dry eyes ; and yet this latter may be the more really penitent and contrite of the two. To understand this matter you must consider, that two things are necessary to make up the true and complete repentance ; one inward, showing itself in our own breasts only, the other outward, and showing itself in our actions. As to that of which we are now speaking, namely, that which takes place in our own breasts, if it be perfect it generally proceeds in this manner :—first, we are conscious of our sins ; then we

are sorry for them ; then we hate them ; and, lastly, we resolve to forsake them. But this last is clearly the most important step, and the others are only so far important as they tend to produce this ; and indeed we might naturally suppose, that where the sense of sin is deep, and the sorrow for it, and hatred of it, very great, there the resolutions against it will be stronger, and more effectual, and more likely to show themselves in the outward conduct ; that is, in the actual abandonment of sin, and in the bringing forth of the fruits of repentance. Nevertheless, a sorrow which is really very great, and fixed deeply in the heart, may not produce any passionate signs or expressions of its power : the thing depends upon a man's body, as well as upon his mind ; it is in a great degree constitutional. Some persons, therefore, are ready to shed tears on all occasions ; others never, or rarely do it, on the greatest ; yet the real inward sorrow of both may be equal, and the conclusion to which they come the same.

“ There is another circumstance, also, to be considered ; and that is, whether the sins for which we are sorry were committed lately, or a long time ago. If a long time ago, it seems impossible that our sorrow for them should be expressed with any very passionate outward tokens. The memory of a remote action cannot affect us as the same action might have done at the time when it was fresh : the poignancy of the feeling will be blunted by years, although, what is most important, the permanent hatred of sin and the resolution against it may be always the same. If a well-disposed person, under an unusual temptation, or off his guard, were to commit a sin, no doubt he would be much afflicted at the first ; but if this sorrow

were to wear off in after-life, it would be no proof that his repentance was not then sincere, or not so afflicting as it ought to be. Have I made myself intelligible to you, and touched your case?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied, "I understand you very well, and your doctrine brings me great comfort: but I will not content myself with trying to avoid all sin; I will try to be sorry for it, and to hate it more than I now do; and then, perhaps, I shall find it more easy to avoid it." "That is not unlikely," I said, "at least for people in general, and so I have already explained it; and whoever would wish to get a deeper sorrow for sin, and a more thorough hatred of it, should consider what a pure and holy being God himself is; and, therefore, how odious and abominable all sin must be in his sight, and what danger there is, lest it might provoke him to let loose his wrath and indignation against the sinner. Indeed nothing could have prevented this, but that Jesus Christ interposed between his offended Father and us, and shielded us from utter destruction in hell. It was sin which drew him down from heaven to suffer what he did in our stead. What a detestable thing, therefore, and how perilous, must sin itself be! What a price did it cost to atone for it! Ah! whenever we commit sin we crucify our blessed Redeemer over again! But think besides, what a kind and merciful God we have, and how many good things he gives us every day; and, above all, that he spared not his own beloved Son from his bosom to come down, and die for us: think of this, and then, I am sure, you ought to burn with gratitude; and gratitude will produce love. But if you love God, it is the more probable that you will never disobey him, or offend him, without grieving from

the very heart, or without abhorring yourself in dust and ashes. However, we may save ourselves much of this pain, by striving always to keep his holy word and commandments ; and if we do so strive, we may be quite certain that we shall have such abundance of grace bestowed upon us, as will enable us to go on the rest of our way through life rejoicing with joy unutterable. This I recommend to your husband. Let him begin at once. He has, I hope, begun already ; so let us kneel down, and pray that he may have strength to continue, and to advance with the quicker steps."

For this purpose I read the four Collects in Advent, beginning with the last ; and then the Lord's prayer. After which I pronounced the benediction, being in a hurry, and left them.

The same day, in the course of my walks, having made inquiries amongst the farmers of the parish, I obtained employment for Mrs. Whiston's husband, with an understanding that it should be continued through the winter, if he behaved well, and if there were no particular demand for labour amongst our own parishioners. He pretended at least to be thankful for this successful negociation of mine for him, and immediately went to work ; so that something now came in to lessen the burden, which had pressed heavily upon Mrs. Graves, but which she herself, good creature, had sustained without a single murmur. Indeed, she had undertaken the charge voluntarily at the first, and she bore it cheerfully throughout. As yet she knew nothing of the reward which I was preparing for her, and which I studiously concealed. Her own conscience, however, was a rich and perpetual feast.

One day after this, by accident going into the cottage between twelve and one o'clock, I found there William Graves, the husband of this excellent woman. He had just dined, and was playing with his children, his wife being upstairs with her sick friend. I was glad of such an opportunity of speaking to him. A good opinion of him I had already, as I knew that he was sober and industrious, and as I saw him constantly at church. But I was curious to ascertain particularly what he thought of the expense, and trouble, and inconvenience, occasioned to his family by Mrs. Whiston's abode in his house.

He rose from his chair as I entered, and put down two children from his lap on the floor. They were in high spirits, and pulled the flaps of my coat, as they ran by me with the rest into the garden. We were now quite alone. "How do you do, Graves?" I said. "You are so regular in your business, that, often as I have been here, I have no once seen you before." "No, Sir," he answered, "when I have my health, as I have had lately, thank God! I am never at home but at meals; and not always then." Upon this he placed a chair for me, and invited me to sit down, which I did at once. He continued standing himself, and seemed as if he intended to do so during my stay; but I pressed him to resume his own seat, which, at length, he did reluctantly. "I am glad to see you," I said, "so happy in your family, Graves. Your children are better in health than they used to be, and as merry as grigs, I perceive; and your good wife keeps your house so nice and tidy, that I don't wonder you like it more than the alehouse. Aye, if all the wives in the parish were like yours, the ale-

houses would be shut up. The men would look for their comforts, and find them, at home."

"Why," he replied, "it is very true, Sir, what you say. But she has hard work now, poor soul; and the children begin to run wild a little. I am so much away, that I cannot look after them at all; and as for *her*, the sick woman upstairs wants her continually, and cannot do without her." "So I suppose," I said; "indeed it was a great undertaking to receive such a guest into a sickly family of your own, to be nursed, and provided for in every way." "Yes, Sir," he replied, "it was, and it has cost us a great deal of money besides attendance. But my wife wished it, and so I would not say her nay, though I was sadly frightened about it. She was sure, she said, that it would bring a blessing upon us; and besides, Mrs. Whiston had been very kind to *us* in our troubles; and one good turn, you know, Sir, deserves another. So I have never grudged the expense, Sir, and I verily believe that she was right in saying we should be blessed for our deed. The health of us all was never better, and I never got better wages. Mrs. Whiston's husband being now in work, he talks of taking her away; but, poor creature, she is not able to move; and, if she were, I think my wife would not part with her, unless she was so far recovered as to want no more help."

"I am afraid," I said, "that poor Mrs. Whiston will never move from this house, until she goes to the last house in the present world, which is her grave. But never mind;—your wife is certainly in the right, and you are in the right for listening to her so cheerfully, and so readily. God will reward

you. God has rewarded you already. But there is something still better in store for you hereafter, if you spend your life in this truly Christian manner. Do you remember what our blessed Lord himself mentions that he will judge us by, when he sits upon the throne of his glory, and we all stand before him to hear our last sentence from his lips?" "Yes, Sir," he answered, "I remember it very well; but, sure, you do not think, Sir, that this deed of ours will be so graciously considered by him as to entitle us to a place upon his right hand? If that might be so, then we should be blessed in our deed beyond anything that we could hope for here. But will he reward so greatly, Sir, for so little a service? And will he forgive our other failings for the sake of this one good action?"

It was impossible not to be pleased with these sentiments; and I began to esteem the character of the husband as highly as I did that of the wife. By living together they had improved each other; and each reflected the other's virtues. I answered him as follows:—

"In the eye of God, charity is the most lovely of all the Christian graces and virtues, because they who exercise it are most like himself, and most useful to their fellow-creatures. In short, if there were no charity in the world, it would be a fit place for devils only; if there were nothing else but charity, it would be fit for the abode of angels; it would be full of happiness and joy. If evil occurred, every tongue would soothe it; every hand relieve it. In whatever degree, therefore, charity prevails, so far the welfare and comfort of mankind, as well as the desire of God himself, are promoted and obtained. What wonder,

then, that the Scriptures, which are God's word, should be continually praising this virtue, and offering the highest recompense to those who practise it! What wonder we should be told there, that, of the three things most essential to every Christian, faith, hope, and charity, charity is the greatest and most essential of all!

“ Now one main branch of this Christian grace, which extends to a vast variety of particulars; one main branch, which some people improperly consider to be the whole of it, is the going about to do good. And this branch is so magnified in Scripture, that to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction is there called pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father. In short, no religion, or rather pretence of religion, unaccompanied by this spirit of active love and beneficence, will bear the scrutiny of Jesus Christ when he judges us at the last day; and therefore he himself has told us so; and so much stress does he lay upon it, that he seems to make it the only thing about which he will inquire at all, and the only thing which he will reward.

“ But observe carefully how he puts the matter. The kind act of charity, whatever it may be, must be done to himself; that is, it must be done in *his* name, and in consequence of *his* command, and to alleviate those sufferings to which *he* was liable in the flesh. For then it will indeed be done to himself, being done to those for whom he died, and whose head he is. The sufferings of all the members are felt by the head; and when any one of them is relieved, even the meanest and most insignificant, the head is relieved too. This is the true doctrine, and this habit, therefore, must be acquired if we would hear Christ

say to us, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father.' Doing good upon any other principle, although it may be useful to men, and amiable and commendable in their eyes, stands not upon the same high ground; Christ is not the object of it, although it may relieve the sufferings of some of his members; in short, he has nothing whatever to do with it, and he will say to those who intrude into his presence on this plea, 'Depart from me; I know you not.'

"Now, Graves, I delight myself with thinking and being persuaded, that this charitable act of yours and your wife's to the afflicted woman upstairs springs from the right Christian principle, and is a habit of goodness formed in you both by the influence of God's holy spirit. Whether the particular deed which shows the habit be great or small in itself, as men consider greatness or smallness, makes no difference whatever. God looks to the habit, and not to the single work. Nevertheless, I must say what I think, and I say this; that such a work as yours, which you modestly and humbly call a little service, is as great, all things considered, as great can be. It will rank with the very greatest. If that celebrated text is to be understood in any sense of this kind, 'it will cover a multitude of sins,' it is applicable to this deed of yours.

"But mistake me not, Graves. Do I mean that a charitable habit, founded upon faith in Christ, will excuse any sins that a man may commit? Drunkenness, for instance, gaming, stealing, lying, slandering?" "No, Sir," he replied, "that you don't, I am sure, for I have often heard you preach the very contrary." "No," I said, "assuredly not. The sins which charity will cover, if the text be taken in this

sense, are sins of infirmity, sins which are the almost unavoidable consequences of our natural frailty and weakness; sins, however, which so pure and holy a being as God would not excuse, but for Jesus Christ's sake. But do not rest contented even with these, for these too may be surmounted by the divine aid which is promised us. If in some things we offend all, yet the number of them may be lessened. But the hour, I suppose, calls you to your business. I will not detain you any longer. Go, and prosper." He thanked me a thousand times, bid his wife come down, took up his hat, and went away in haste.

Mrs. Graves came down immediately, and said at once, "I hope you have not been waiting here long, Sir." "Yes, I have," I replied; "but my time has been well employed. I have been talking with your husband." "I am very glad to hear it, Sir," she said, "and I am quite sure that he will be the better for it." "Why, as to that, Mrs. Graves," I answered, "to tell you the truth, I think I am the person most improved by talking with either of you. But tell me, how does your poor friend to-day?" "Ah! Sir," she said mournfully, "there is a new evil come upon us. She has been lying so long in bed, that she is now full of sores. I have just been dressing them, and there is one in particular which quite frightens me. Mr. Benson has seen it this morning." "And what does he think of it?" I inquired. "Why, he shook his head sadly," she answered, "and did not seem to know what to make of it." "Did he apprehend mortification, do you suppose?" I inquired again. "It is very likely, Sir," she replied, "for he ordered her to drink Port-wine, if it could be got; and he altered her medicines." "Port-wine may be

got certainly," I said; "but in what state are her own spirits?" "She is very low, Sir," was her answer, "very low, indeed. Will you be kind enough to go up to her? She depended, Sir, upon seeing you to-day." "Lead the way," I said, "and let her know that I am following you immediately."

Having allowed her a minute or two to prepare Mrs. Whiston for my reception, I then went up, and observed at once a much greater change for the worse than I had expected, even after Mrs. Graves's desponding language. She will not live many days, I thought with myself; and her own opinion was the same. For as I stood over her with a look of concern, and was in no haste to speak, she said to me, "My strength has declined apace, Sir, in the last six hours." "Is it anything more," I inquired with tenderness, "than the consequence of these sores, which are brought on by so long a confinement to your bed?" "Oh! yes, Sir," she answered: "the sores trouble me very much, and force me, as you see, to lie in this inconvenient and painful posture; but I am as weak as water too; and it seemed to come on very suddenly, and it increases fast. God knows, I have been weak enough all along; but this is a different thing. Ah! Sir, my end approaches; pray for me! pray for me, if you please, that I may die in the right faith, and that I be not after all a cast-away!"

This she spoke in a faltering tone, which betrayed great uneasiness of mind. I was afraid that she had been troubled with another attack of her old disorder, and I questioned her directly to that effect; but she answered, "No, Sir, thank God, I have been quite free from bad thoughts. Fears, however, I have,

very great fears, lest my faith be not of the right kind. Must not I believe, Sir, that my Saviour died for *me* in particular? And can my sins be otherwise forgiven me? Alas! I tremble to think that mine may not be the saving faith after all. I cannot bring myself to believe that my sins are forgiven, and so I dread lest I should die in them."

Thus she expressed her own peculiar state of feeling, which seemed to embrace several important points, the remnant, manifestly, of what she had learnt at the conventicle. I attempted to soothe her alarm by saying many obvious things about herself and her condition, but in vain; so I betook myself to the ancient mode which had been so often crowned with success. "Do you suppose, then, my poor friend," I asked, "that the Gospel requires this sort of faith; namely, that we must believe that our sins are forgiven; and that if we have it not, our sins will not be forgiven?" "Yes," she said, "*that* was the idea which has been troubling my mind." "Tell me, then," I said, "whether, in thinking about it, you considered it to be necessary, that all persons whatsoever should have this same belief, in order to secure their salvation." "Oh! yes, Sir," she answered; "it must be as necessary for one as for another." "Then the greatest sinners," I said, "must believe, as well as the best of men, that their sins are forgiven; must they not?"

She was staggered a little at this question, and hesitated how to answer it; so I proceeded. "This doctrine would have a bad effect, I think; for if none can be saved unless they believe that their sins are forgiven, then it will be the duty of all men to believe this, even of the most wicked upon earth; will it

not?" "It should seem so, indeed," she said. "Yes," I continued; "and now that you have mentioned the matter to me, it comes to my mind that many of those wretched people who are executed for their crimes get this same idea, from the mistaken, fanatical teachers who attend upon them in their last days; that is, that Christ died for *them* in particular, and therefore that their sins are forgiven as a matter of course, and consequently that they have nothing to fear; the result of all which is, that they go to death with what I should call impieties and blasphemies on their tongues. But considering the subject soberly, my good Mrs. Whiston, do you think it likely that God, in his just government of the world, should so appoint as that all who believe their sins to be forgiven should actually have them forgiven at once? Is not this notion very foolish and very fanatical?" "Indeed, Sir," she said, "I do not know what to make of it now."

"Well, then," I resumed, "meditate upon it in this manner. We are to believe all that is revealed in the Scriptures; are we not?" "Yes, Sir," she answered. "And whatever is not revealed there, or not deducible from something revealed, we are under no necessity of believing at all; are we?" "No," she replied, "*that* is very clear, Sir." "If that be clear, then," I said, "mention to me any text, if you know any such, in which we are commanded to believe that our sins are forgiven us." Upon this she began to consider with herself, whether she could find anything to the purpose; and having tried for a long time in vain, she confessed that she could not recollect a single command of that sort. "And for a very good reason," I said, "for there is really none such." "Yes, Sir," she replied suddenly, "but

it is just come into my head, that in the Apostles' Creed we say, that we believe in the forgiveness of sins. Is not *that* the same thing?" "No, indeed," I answered, "it is widely different. You say, in the same place, that you believe in the communion of saints, and do you therefore think yourself commanded to believe that you are yourself a saint, and in communion with the rest of the saints?" "No, Sir," she replied immediately, "I neither think myself a saint, nor that I am commanded to believe myself to be a saint. I am not so presumptuous, Sir; and I am sure that I could never bring myself to believe such a thing." "Very well," I said; "but you say also that you believe the life everlasting. Do you therefore consider yourself commanded to believe that you yourself shall rise to the life everlasting?" "No, Sir, nor that either," she answered eagerly. "Are you aware," I asked, "that there are many people in this wicked world who do not believe that there will be another life after the present?" "I have heard so," she answered; "but it is very surprising to me." "Very well, then," I said, "when we repeat that passage in the Creed, we profess that we are of a contrary opinion; we profess our belief of an everlasting life to succeed the present short one; but we profess no belief, whatever, with respect to ourselves personally, or what our own lot may be hereafter; still less do we mean, that we cannot inherit everlasting life ourselves, unless we believe that we shall do so. Do you comprehend me?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied, "I think I do, but perhaps not perfectly; yet I can apply what you say to the other things, the communion of saints and the

forgiveness of sins. I understand now, that, in professing our belief of these things, we go no further than the general doctrine that there are such things ; but still I have always been taught that we must apply them to ourselves, to make them useful to us. How is this, Sir ?” “ So you must,” I said, “ but the application is very different from what you imagine. For instance, you believe that there is an everlasting life to come hereafter, according to the words of the Creed ; but believing this, then you begin to apply it to yourself ; that is, it spurs you on, and makes you think in what way you yourself may be able to obtain it ; and having learnt from Scripture how this is to be done, you set about it with all the spirit which so glorious a prize demands. Again, you believe that there is a blissful communion and fellowship between all the blessed spirits and just men made perfect, and every faithful servant of Christ ; and this belief spurs you on, and makes you wish to belong to so excellent a company, of which Christ himself is the head. You search the Scriptures, therefore, to see what qualifications will fit you for such a heavenly society, and you strive with all your might to acquire them. This is the way of applying the doctrine to yourself. It is the same with respect to the forgiveness of sins ; need I explain it at length, as I have done the other cases ?” “ No, Sir,” she said, “ I hope there is no occasion for so much trouble.” “ Then,” I rejoined, “ as you are neither commanded in Scripture to believe that your own sins are forgiven, nor do you profess any such thing in the Creed, you seem to be perplexing and troubling yourself to no purpose. But undoubtedly you must apply the delightful doctrine of forgiveness

to your own case ; that is, you must be spurred on, by reflecting upon it, to do what Christ commanded you to do, in order to obtain forgiveness ; and then you may be assured that you will obtain it. But to begin with believing at once that you have already obtained it, is a most preposterous method indeed. Do you think that God will be deceived by any man's arrogant assumptions, and really grant him forgiveness, merely because he assumes it? Will not God know whether the conditions have been performed or not, and decide accordingly, whatever the man himself may believe? What has the man's belief about himself to do with the decisions of infinite, unerring justice?"

Thus I turned and twisted the argument into various shapes, in the hope that in some shape or other it might be adapted to her comprehension : but though she manifestly understood a great deal of it, yet she still seemed somewhat uneasy and dissatisfied with herself ; so I began again in this manner. "Your husband is gone to work for Mr. Markham ; what has Mr. Markham promised to give him by the week?" "His wages," she answered, "are to be twelve shillings." "And will he get these wages," I inquired, "whether he works more or less ; the whole day, or half a day ; six days, or five days?" "Oh ! no, Sir," she replied, "he must work the whole day, and all the six days, to get the twelve shillings." "There is a covenant, then," I said, "or bargain between them ; is there not? On the one side is the promise of the wages, on the other a certain quantity of work to be done." "*That* is it exactly, Sir," she answered. "And your husband knows perfectly that, without doing the work, he can

put in no claim to the wages?" "He is quite certain of it," she replied. "And when the time comes for paying the wages, what rule will Mr. Markham go by? Will he go by any other rule than the doing of the work?" "By no other, certainly," she answered. "So that if your husband should be so foolish as to claim the wages on any other ground, Mr. Markham would most probably remind him of the bargain, and stick to it closely, and reject every plea inconsistent with it?" "There can be no doubt of it," she replied.

"Well, then," I said, "now tell me whether you do not think forgiveness of sins to be most excellent wages." "Yes, indeed," she answered; "happy should I be if I could get them!" "And God is the person who promises these wages; is he not?" She assented. "And he promises them, for Christ's sake, to all mankind; does he not?" She assented again. "Without conditions?" I inquired. "No, Sir," she said, "not without conditions. We have a work to perform too." "Yes," I rejoined, "not to mention, at present, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, repentance towards God is required on our parts for one thing; is it not?" "It is, certainly," she said. "Then," I asked, "without this work of repentance, which is difficult enough to some people, have we any right to expect the promised wages, even forgiveness of our sins?" "Indeed, it seems not," she said. "If we were so foolish as to claim them on any other ground, exclusive of this, would not God remind us of the covenant, and cast us out with indignation?" She allowed that he might justly do so. "And he would not listen for a moment, would he? to any presumptuous person, who should intrude

into his presence, and say, I have made up my mind to think, and be assured, that you will give me these wages at any rate?" She confessed that there was no probability of it.

"Well, then," I said, "now you can have no difficulty, I should suppose, in applying all this to your own case; and it is plain that your fear about not believing the forgiveness of your sins is an idle and useless fear. Indeed, how can any man believe that his sins are forgiven, unless he believes also that he has performed the conditions, one of which is repentance? In short, if he does not repent, he must believe that his sins are not forgiven. The true fear, therefore, respects the performance of the conditions, and especially this business of repentance; whether we have truly repented all, and whether we have repented sufficiently. I have talked to you on that subject before, and I hoped that I had quieted all your doubts about the sincerity and the sufficiency of your repentance. Strictly speaking, no man's repentance can be sufficient, considered by itself; but it may be sincere, and God, for Christ's sake, may consider it to be sufficient also. At all events, this is what we must look to, and nothing else will avail without it. Aided by the Holy Spirit, strengthened by our faith in Jesus Christ, we must make our repentance more and more perfect; and then, whether we believe our sins to be forgiven or not, (for *that* is nothing to the purpose,) we shall certainly be forgiven in the end, and receive the wages, eternal life."

My poor patient began now to be very much comforted, and she showed it visibly in her countenance. Her brow was expanded, and her eye sparkled. In a moment she said, "Oh! thank you, Sir! thank

you, again and again, for the great pains which you take to set my poor, ignorant, doubting mind at ease. Indeed, Sir, when we are going to die, it is fit enough that we should look into every corner of our hearts, and make all right, if we can, before the last struggle, which will be enough of itself to engage all our thoughts. It will be too late then to begin to learn what we must believe, and what we must do." "It will, in truth," I replied; "so I beg that you will not forbear to tell me whatever troubles and perplexes you, that I may try to explain it."

"Ah! Sir," she said, "you are very kind, and I should like to hear something more from you about my believing that Christ is *my* Saviour, and that I am one for whom he died. At Sion Chapel, Sir, I heard that language continually; and I am sure that all the ministers who preach there would charge me with a sad want of faith, if they knew that I could not bring myself to have a lively sense of those things; and more especially if they knew that I doubted about them. All doubting, Sir, in such cases, they would call the sin of unbelief. But if I understand you rightly, Sir, I may doubt, and yet be saved?"

"Most certainly you may," I replied. "This is not the sort of doubting which proves a person to be without faith; that is, a person may very well doubt about his condition, and yet believe everything revealed in Scripture respecting Jesus Christ and the terms of salvation. I approve of doubting, which betokens humility, rather than of assurance, which too often betokens only a presumptuous confidence. In short, if confidence and assurance were faith, then the wicked, being worked up to this pitch, might be

more perfect believers than the good, or rather the wicked might be the only true believers, and go to heaven ; whilst the good are but infidels, and must be condemned to hell. Is not this too extravagant to suppose ?”

“ It is more, Sir,” she said, “ it is horrible !” “ Yes,” I rejoined ; “ but nothing of this sort is to be found in the word of God. All this is of man’s invention and making, and all the phrases by which it is expressed. It is no true belief in Christ, or any part of it, to be persuaded in our own minds, that he is *our* Saviour in particular ; that *we* are those for whom he died to purchase salvation ; or that *we* are righteous, because he was righteous ; but that he came into the world to reconcile sinners to God, and to redeem the whole fallen race of mankind from eternal punishment. This is what we must believe, and we can only make such a belief applicable to our own particular benefit, by becoming his faithful disciples, and obeying his commands. And could we but be satisfied in our consciences, that we *do* obey his commands, and rank amongst his faithful disciples, then, indeed, there would be no longer any room for doubt, and we might have the full assurance of hope. But this assurance is not faith itself ; it is the effect of faith, the blessed fruit of it. Nor is it any part of our duty ; it is a wonderful comfort and happiness to us, but it is no duty of our religion, or condition of our salvation. So, on the contrary, if we cannot arrive at this blessed assurance, although we earnestly endeavour to be Christ’s faithful disciples—this is no sin ; no, nor even defect of faith ; it is a defect of judgment, perhaps, and it is certainly our unhappiness. But whatever unhappy notions we may enter-

tain with respect to ourselves, will God be deceived too?" "No, Sir," she exclaimed with animation; "no, indeed,—he will see to the very bottom of our hearts; he will see us as we are, not as we suppose ourselves to be; and he cannot be mistaken, whether our faith and obedience are such as to entitle us to his glorious promises or not."

It gave me great pleasure to hear her say this, and I was now satisfied, that she both understood me, and that her ill-grounded scruples would no longer disturb her peace. However, before I left her, I made this short recapitulation of the argument. "It is often expressly commanded in the Gospel," I said, "both that we should believe, and that we should repent; but it is nowhere commanded, that we should believe ourselves to be true believers, or true penitents. To doubt, therefore, whether we are so is not unbelief. Again, to true believers and true penitents, certain promises are made by one who cannot lie; and these promises we must apply to ourselves; but how? Why, as motives and encouragements to us to become true believers and true penitents; not as if any vain persuasion of our own minds were necessary to obtain them. Remember this, then, and now I will pray with you;" which having done, I bid her farewell.

The poor woman being now, as I thought, manifestly approaching to her latter end with rapid steps, I was the more diligent in my attendance upon her; and I administered the Sacrament to her a second time. Nothing seemed now to remain upon her mind to disturb it. Every doubt and difficulty, I believe, had been completely banished, and, assured herself that her death was at hand, she waited for it

with calmness, with firmness, and with humility. In short, all her preparations were made ; her mind was drawn off from this world ; and, without any other care, she watched for the coming of her Lord.

In this state of things, her husband, anxious, I suppose, by a great exertion, and an unusual display of affection for her, to retrieve his former neglect, fetched a physician from the neighbouring town to see her. His opinion, upon what foundations I could never discover, was favourable in a high degree ; and he told, not only her friends, but herself also, that so far from being in any immediate danger of death, she was more likely to recover altogether.

I had always observed, in the beginning of my parochial labours, that medical men of every description were extremely averse to intimate to their patients any uncertainty of their life, or to mention the propriety of summoning the clergyman to the sick-bed. I attributed this, in part, but erroneously, I hope, to the want of a sufficient regard in themselves for the subject of religion ; and, in part, to the fear which they might be supposed to entertain, lest the feelings of their patients might be shocked, and the benefit of their medicines diminished or destroyed by any measure which tended to excite an apprehension in the sick that their case was hopeless. However, by degrees, I brought the medical men of my own parish to think differently. At first, I prevailed upon them to call me in, to the poor at least, under the pretence of supplying them with such nourishing things as their cases might require ; and at length, as no bad coadjutor in healing their disorders. In fact, the most usual effect of my ministrations was to soothe and tranquillize their minds, on such grounds

as the gospel points out to us. The sick performed duties which they had never performed before ; they were conscious of better thoughts and better desires ; and thus they became comparatively easy, and more at peace in their own breasts, and consequently, I was assured, more open to the salutary powers of medicine.

So, it appeared, the practitioners within the verge of my influence were ultimately well convinced ; and they acted accordingly. But the stranger, I presume, adhered to the old maxim, and his conduct was very mischievous to all of us ; but especially to the sick person herself. I saw her very soon after his visit ; and, instead of that serenity of repose in which she lay before, submissive and resigned to her Maker's will, and expecting every hour to meet her Judge, I now observed a strange flurry and fluttering of her spirits : her soul, which had almost taken its flight to another region, was entangled again in this ; the cares of this life again forced themselves upon her notice, and, as it seemed, with an unusual vehemence. Indeed it might well be so, for she considered herself like one newly risen from the grave, and as having a new existence to begin.

I was myself in great doubt how to act. I had not seen Mr. Benson, and it was unreasonable for me singly to appear to distrust the judgment of the physician, which was very positively pronounced, and thus to dash to the ground the hopes of those who surrounded the sick-bed. I contented myself, therefore, with making for the present some common observation upon this sudden, unexpected change in her prospects. "Certainly," I said, "it seemed to *me*, my good Mrs. Whiston, that God was about

to take you to himself. But he has granted you, perhaps, to the prayers of your afflicted husband; and, without doubt, he has some merciful object in view. You have glorified him, I think, by your patience under sickness, and by your preparations for death; you will glorify him still more, I hope, by your life."

"Ah! Sir," she replied, "how is all this? It is against my own opinion. I feel myself sinking more and more; but the joy of my husband and of good Mrs. Graves, and their confidence in my recovery, force me, whether I will or no, to think as they do. But this new doctor, Sir, is he, indeed, to be believed? If he was afraid to tell me that I must die, he does not know me, Sir; he has mistaken my character. Blessed be God! by *his* help, and by your instructions, Sir, and trusting in my Redeemer, I was better prepared to die, than I am now to live. But God's will be done! He can scatter at once all the gloomy cares which are gathering fast and thick about me. First, in any case, as my recovery must needs be long, (for why should I expect another signal mercy?) I shall be a great burden to my dear Mrs. Graves here, and to my poor husband, and I am troubled with thinking in what way I may be able to lighten it. Ah! Sir, the world is getting hold of me again, after I had cast it off. I shall be the seed sown amongst the thorns, I fear; for all the good which I had gotten by affliction is beginning to be choked and destroyed already. My head swims with a thousand thoughts of what I may be called upon to do."

Before I could answer her, first Mrs. Graves and then her husband, with a warmth of feeling to which

he had seemed hitherto a stranger, both cried out, that they wished for her recovery beyond all things; and that any thing which they could do to promote it would be no burden, but the greatest pleasure. At the same time, one after the other, they took her by the hand affectionately, and attempted to comfort her by every possible endearing look and gesture. But a tumult of mingled sentiments had arisen in her breast, which it was not so easy to assuage. Prayer, I thought, might, perhaps, be the most effectual remedy. I proposed it, and all assenting, we were immediately upon our knees around her.

I opened a prayer-book, rather at a loss where to find any thing precisely suitable to the peculiar circumstances of the case. My eye was caught immediately by the prayer at the end of the Communion Service, which invokes Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, as knowing our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, to have compassion upon our infirmities, and to vouchsafe to give us what we might forbear to ask, either because we were too blind to see that it was for our good, or too unworthy to dare to ask it, although persuaded of our own want. I read this first, and was very well satisfied with the effect of it; and as, on a former occasion, I had found two or three prayers in Paley, from Patrick, Stonehouse, Jenks, and Kettlewell, which appeared to succeed much better than others, not taken from the Liturgy, had generally done, I now wished for Paley again; but, on my return home, having looked over the pages, to see if there were any such prayer as I desired, I met with none very applicable to the purpose. However, being left at the instant of need to my own resources, I betook myself, as usual, to the

Psalms; and, having fallen accidentally upon two pages which presented the 17th, and portions of the 16th and 18th, I glanced over some passages, which I thought would do admirably; and, therefore, without any further search, *there* I fixed, and began at once with the first verse of the 18th, in which I made no alteration. After this I proceeded as follows:—

“The sorrows of death compassed me; the pains of hell came about me; the snares of death overtook me. In my trouble I called upon the Lord, which is worthy to be praised, and he heard my voice out of his holy heaven, and my prayer came before him, and entered even into his ears. O God, thou hast tried and visited mine heart in the night season; I will thank thee for giving me warning; O hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. Show thy marvellous kindness, thou that art the Saviour of them which put their trust in thee. O keep me as the apple of an eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from all my spiritual enemies, and from all the dangers and temptations of a wicked world! I will set thee always before me; thou shalt show me the path of life; thou shalt maintain my lot; and therefore I shall not fall.”

Having thus exhausted the two pages, I turned over to the following one, and resumed the thread of my ideas in this manner: “Thou shalt send down from on high to deliver me out of many troubles, for I will keep thy ways, and not forsake my God, as the wicked do. I will have an eye unto all thy laws, and will not cast out thy commandments from me. Thou also shalt light my candle; the Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light; he is the defender of all them that put their trust in him. For who is God

but the Lord ; or who hath any strength except our God ? Thou wilt give me the defence of thy salvation ; thy right hand also shall hold me up ; and thy loving correction shall make me great. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my strong helper, and praised be the God of my salvation !”

Two more pages were now exhausted, and my poor patient being in a dreadful state of feebleness, I attempted nothing further ; but, pronouncing the Lord’s Prayer, and the benediction at the end of the Visitation Service, I hurried away, leaving them all, as I was myself, in tears.

Early the next morning, before I was dressed, a messenger came in haste to fetch me to the same scene. I hurried after, and took Paley with me, expecting something extraordinary. William Graves was in the room below, and his countenance marked a deep concern. From the room above I heard loud wailings. “ What is the matter, Graves !” I exclaimed eagerly. With difficulty he answered, that Mrs. Whiston was dying. I rushed up stairs, and the expectation of seeing me repressed for a moment their lamentations. The husband and Mrs. Graves were supporting on each side the dying woman. He would have burst forth immediately upon seeing me, as I saw by his gestures, into some impatient exclamation of sorrow, and perhaps would have foolishly murmured against the dispensations of the Almighty, but I beckoned to him with my hand to be silent, and at the same time with a sterner look I signified my disapprobation of his conduct. Upon this he curbed his reluctant spirit, but not without manifest pain, and the utmost difficulty.

I now observed the poor woman herself. She

was gasping for breath, and apparently very near the last agony. However she lifted up her eyes towards me with an inexpressible mixture of various feelings; and, being still in possession of her intellect, she seemed to implore my prayers. To speak I was unable; to pray I might at least endeavour. So I fell upon my knees, and the rest did the same—her sister, William Graves, and two or three women, whose countenances I had not time to recognise.

I read first the commendatory prayer, as it stands in Paley. She had closed her eyes, but still continued to breathe. Her left hand was within my reach; I took it into mine, and pressed it gently. She did the same, and opened her eyes convulsively. Her husband and sister cried out, but Mrs. Graves having disengaged one of her own hands, closed her friend's eyes again with great judgment and tenderness. This was a trying scene to all of us.

After a pause of no long duration, having rallied my strength, and being convinced that she was yet sensible, I turned to the following page, and began Bishop Andrew's Litany for a sick person at the time of departure; but, in proceeding with it, I retained only what was strictly applicable. She was now fetching the last sigh, so I concluded the whole with Bishop Cosins's form of recommending the soul to God. Before I had quite finished it, every spark of life had fled.

For a few moments they all watched the corpse in deep silence, as if it were impossible to believe that she was dead. When the fact became too evident, a tumult of woe seemed upon the point of breaking out, but I anticipated it by exclaiming, "Listen to me," and immediately I read aloud the consolatory

sentences which are collected together at page 446 ; then, omitting the burial psalm, I went through the following prayers to the end.

The effect appearing to answer my wishes, I rose from my knees, and departed in great comfort.

CHAPTER III.

MR. COMPTON—SCEPTICISM.

§ 1. *Mr. Compton, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison.*

HAVING observed a gentleman and lady at church two or three Sundays in succession, both morning and afternoon, sitting sometimes in one pew and sometimes in another, as the pew-openers were able to accommodate them, I inquired who they were, and found them to be a Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, then on a visit to Mr. Compton, who was Mrs. Harrison's brother, and who had a handsome villa in my parish. This information, and the appearance of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison themselves, together with the regularity of their attendance at church, suggested a hope to me, that through their means I might get at Mr. Compton, who had hitherto shunned all my advances, and kept aloof from any sort of acquaintance with me, from the consciousness of his own profligacy, and the total absence of all desire to change his mode of life and character.

Whilst I was deliberating upon this subject, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison came together to the Rectory; and, after the first salutations were over, Mr. Harrison having stated his wish to have some private conversation with me, I left Mrs. Harrison under the care of Mrs. Warton, and retired with him into the Shrubbery. Here he opened to me at large the lamentable case of his brother-in-law. He was a

man of considerable fortune, who had held an office under the government. Unmarried himself, he had lived chiefly with unmarried men, and without any restraint as to manners and conversation. A mistress was, of course, a part of his establishment. He condemned the Christian religion, because it condemned *him*, and because he knew nothing of it but the objections against it. To himself and his companions it was the theme of many a scoff, and since he had been in my parish he had never joined in any of its sacred rites. He could not, indeed, well have done so without a terrible disturbance of his opinions and practices. But he had no wish even to set an example of going to church; and thus, there being nothing to bring him there, and much to keep him away, it seemed likely, without some special interference of Providence, that he might have gone on uninterruptedly in the broad way to destruction.

However, a grievous sickness surprised him in the midst of his career, when he appeared to have health, and strength, and length of days before him. In an instant he lost the use of all his lower limbs. He was stretched, as he supposed, on the bed of death. There was no creature about him that had any affection for him. He reflected, and he was humbled. He longed for the tender care and consolations of his sister; he adapted his family to her reception, and she came to him, together with her husband, with all the speed in their power. After their arrival he seemed to mend, and could move about on crutches. Nor had he turned a deaf ear to their gentle insinuations about religion; but, on the contrary, in consequence of what they had said to him of my preaching, he had expressed a desire of

coming to church, if a pew could be found for him suitable to his present circumstances. And this, therefore, was the inquiry which Mr. Harrison had now visited me to make.

Fortunately I was able to do them this service. There was a pew near one of the doors on the ground-floor, the usual occupiers of which were absent. I assigned it to them, and on the following Sunday morning, to my great satisfaction, I saw Mr. Compton in it. His carriage had brought him to the church-gates, and from thence, with the help of a servant and his crutches, he had hobbled to his seat. This he did two or three times, but the fatigue of it was so very severe, that, after such a trial, he was compelled to relinquish any further attempt. What had been the effect upon his mind I could not precisely ascertain. It seemed, from his sister's account, that he had been struck with the appearance of a full church, and of so much earnestness and devotion in the congregation, and he had thought, perhaps, within himself, that there might be more truth in the matter than he was yet aware of; for why should so many people be mistaken, and he only and his companions in the right? The clergyman, indeed, had been educated for the purpose, and might be said to depend for his maintenance upon the upholding of the Christian religion; but this suspicion attached scarcely to anybody else. However, mere custom and habit, and early prepossession, would account for a great deal; they were so brought up, and now they continued in it without reasoning about it at all. In short, as Mrs. Harrison thought, her brother was at this time a confirmed sceptic, and she was extremely anxious that I should see him and talk to him.

I was quite ready ; so I called, under the pretence of returning Mr. Harrison's visits, and also of asking Mr. Compton himself how he was, after his painful exertions to attend church. I was taken at once into the room where he happened to be, and where Mr. and Mrs. Harrison were sitting with him. At first he was very much flurried, and my appearance seemed to be both unexpected and disagreeable to him ; but by degrees we fell into conversation, and every token of unpleasant feeling entirely vanished. Not a word, however, to the great purpose of my visit could for a long time be hooked into the other topics ; but at length a little opening having presented itself, Mrs. Harrison, who had been watching for it in silence, interposed and said, " We have not told you, Dr. Warton, how much we have been all pleased with your church and your congregation." " Yes," added Mr. Compton, " but one thing surprised me ; that you still continue to read the Athanasian Creed in these liberal and enlightened times." This had been done on Easter-Sunday, which was one of the days on which Mr. Compton was at church.

Here was a beginning of his own seeking. It seemed to me to matter but little how we began, provided that we had time to finish. At all events I hoped soon to arrive at something useful. So I said in answer to them both at once, " We pride ourselves upon adhering closely to the Rubric. The minister and the congregation are equally satisfied with the old trodden paths, and we think ourselves most secure when we are in them. But whatever the congregation might think, I act under authority myself, and should no more venture to omit the Athanasian Creed on the Sunday appointed for the reading of it, than a soldier would venture to quit his post upon active

service." "It is very true, Sir," said Mr. Harrison, "in everything of that kind, the line of the minister's duty is exactly prescribed to him, and I do not see how he can conscientiously swerve from it. But I suppose my brother Compton intended to speak generally, and not to insinuate that any particular clergyman had the power to do as he pleased." "What I wonder at," said Mr. Compton, "is this; that all the clergy by common consent do not leave it off, now that they know better. I am very well aware that it is not so easy a matter to alter a rule of the church; but many things become obsolete in the lapse of years, and it is a pity that the Athanasian Creed has not shared the same fate long ago."

"You must excuse me, Sir," I said; "I am of a very different opinion, and should be grieved to lose it. There is an astonishing dignity and majesty about it which commands the reverence of mankind. It is a most awful declaration of a most awful doctrine, and it explains the doctrine itself in a most rational, consistent, and probable manner. Some of the heresies indeed, against which it was intended to guard, have fallen to the ground, never perhaps to rise again, and therefore the particular parts aimed at those heresies might now seem to be useless. But the Creed, taken together, makes a whole, so grand and sublime, that it would be very bad taste to maim and mutilate it by the abstraction of any of its parts. The antiquity of it, too, is so great, that its very age makes it venerable, and almost a crime to touch it. But what is of most importance, it is truly a scriptural production, being deduced logically from Scripture itself."

"However all this may be, Sir," he replied, "very eminent men in their respective ages would have

been glad to be rid of it. I believe *that* was the expression used by the great Archbishop Tillotson himself." "Yes," I said, "for the sake of peace, and of bringing back the nonconformists into the bosom of the church, the Archbishop and others would have sacrificed, or altered, some few things in our services; and this creed was one. Not that they themselves objected to it, but that the dissenters objected to it, and demanded the surrender of it as the price of uniformity. Uniformity amongst Christians would be a most glorious consummation; and men might well consent to change or even abandon human expressions and explanations for it. But it would be going too far to insinuate that those excellent men differed from the Athanasian Creed in doctrine. In fact, the event showed that they did not. For, if they had, they might have got rid of it very plausibly, in the first instance, under pretence of conciliating the persons with whom they were engaged in discussion. No, no: this was far from their intention; and, accordingly, we find that this Creed has survived all the discussions of the learned, and all the revisions and alterations of our services recorded in our church history. A powerful criterion of its inestimable value!"

"But it is so intolerant, Sir," he exclaimed hastily, "and so illiberal; so ill-suited to the enlarged spirit of the times! Why, let me ask you, do you not accuse the Catholics, and lay it to their charge, as an eternal bar against their admission to equal political privileges with you, that they deny salvation to all who are without their own pale? And what do they more than you yourselves do in this Creed, and in one of your articles? Is not *your* system equally exclusive?"

Then, triumphing in his fancied superiority, he added, that he believed this was the case with all persons who were fond of creeds ; that they were so bigoted as to be fully persuaded in their minds, that nobody could be saved, except in their own peculiar, exclusive way.

In reply to this, I began with asking him to point out to me that article of ours, in which we exclude from salvation those who do not belong to the English Episcopal Church ; “ For I confess,” I said, “ that I do not recollect any such article.” Mr. Harrison also, who professed to have read the articles very recently, expressed the same doubt whether any such article existed. Upon which, Mr. Compton exclaimed, “ Then bring me the great prayer-book immediately. You see how helpless I am myself to-day.” The poor man was lying at his length on a sofa, and could not stir without a great deal of assistance ; not even to turn from one side to the other. Yet he spoke with considerable energy and vivacity. He was a warm friend, it seemed, to the Catholic question, but he liked still better to fix a slur, if he could, on the religion of his country and his ancestors.

The prayer-book, which he had called for, was put into his hands, and he fumbled it about for some time without finding anything to his purpose. At length he pitched upon the 18th Article, and cried out, “ *Εύρηκα, εύρηκα!* I have it here. Do you not assert in this Article, that *they* are to be held accursed, who maintain, that all persons following the light of nature and the laws of their own sect, may be saved by it, whatsoever it may be ?” “ Undoubtedly we do,” I answered, “ unless they lay their foundation in Jesus Christ ; for Scripture positively declares, that there is

no other name under heaven, whereby men may be saved. But, after all, this might appear to be a question between *us* and the heathens only ; not between *us* and other Christian churches. The Roman Catholics affirm, that none can be saved out of their own church of Rome, neither heathens, nor Christians. We affirm in this Article, generally, that it is impious to maintain, that there is any salvation except through Jesus Christ. So far, therefore, as this Article is concerned, we exclude no Christian from salvation, to whatever particular church he may belong, if he hold the great fundamental principle. At all events, then, we are not so illiberal as your friends, the Catholics. For, if we are illiberal at all, it is only towards the poor heathens ; but, in fact, we are not illiberal even towards *them*. For, the Article being rightly interpreted, we hold those only accursed, who, having had the Gospel made known to them, assert, nevertheless, that it is unnecessary to salvation. Our Lord himself said, that the unbelievers should be condemned at the last day ; but, of course, he meant those who were wilfully so ; those who, having life and death put before them, choose death. The same restriction is implied in our Article."

" Brother Compton," said Mr. Harrison, " you must give up this point ; you have no ground to stand upon." " Well, well !" he exclaimed ; " then let Dr. Warton come back to the Athanasian Creed, and see whether I have any ground to stand upon *there*." " Certainly," I said, " I think you have none ; if you mean, out of that Creed, to charge us with holding an exclusive doctrine, as we charge the Roman Catholics, generally, with doing so. We affirm in that Creed,

that all persons who wish to be saved must think of the Trinity in Unity, after a certain manner; not simply as the English church thinks of it, or because the English church has any particular view of it; but because the universal Church of Christ once so thought of it, and settled the point for ages to come. In fact, to speak more properly, we, of this church of England, affirm nothing at all of ourselves. It is the Creed which affirms whatever is affirmed; and the Creed is not *our* work, but the work of the age in which it was drawn up. We indeed have adopted it into our ritual, as being consistent with Scripture, and with the sentiments of the whole Christian world in remote times. But we do not presume ourselves to anathematize anybody who may think differently. The Creed itself, certainly, admonishes all nominal, pretending Christians of their danger, if they interpret the doctrine differently from the declared sense of the universal Church. We take the Creed, and, of course, those admonitions which make a part of it; and it seems to me, that it would be ridiculous, at this time of day, to expunge them. In fact, to do so would be the same as to say, that we agreed with the early Christians about the interpretation of the doctrine; but disagreed with them as to the danger of those who impugned or perverted it. Now see, then, how little comparison there is between *us* and the Catholics. It stands shortly thus: they exclude from salvation all who are not in their own Roman church, and especially *us* Protestants. We have adopted a Creed, which denounces the usual scriptural penalty against those who pervert an important scriptural doctrine. How does the matter strike you now?"

Mr. Compton not answering immediately, Mr.

Harrison said, that it had always appeared to *him* to be quite absurd to compare the two churches in this manner ; the church of Rome being notoriously intolerant, and the church of England renowned for the contrary disposition. And then he added, “ If there be any ground of accusation with respect to this Creed, it lies equally against both the churches, for they both adopt it ; but nobody ever thought of accusing the Catholics of intolerance on this account. Why then *us*? It might, perhaps, be a question, how far it discovers a want of charity, first, in the framers of the Creed, and, secondly, in the adopters of it, for denouncing, either directly or by implication, so severe a penalty against those who disapprove of the Athanasian interpretation, which is but a human interpretation, of the doctrine of the Trinity.”

“ Perhaps,” I said, turning to Mr. Harrison, “ you may not be aware, that we do not consider the penalty as attaching to the lengthened explanation, description, or illustration of the doctrine, which forms the body of the work ; but only to the simple doctrine itself, as it is stated in the beginning, and repeated afterwards when the penalty is introduced. I will open the Prayer-book to the Creed itself, and you will understand me better. See here in the 3rd and 4th verses, it is said, ‘ that Catholic faith is this ; that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.’ Here, I say, we have the true doctrine stated simply, and in the manner that every Christian is bound to believe it. But it is evident that this brief outline may be filled up in various ways ; and the compilers of the Athanasian Creed have done it most admirably in the following twenty-two verses, which

I called the explanation, description, or illustration of the general doctrine. If any man can fill up the parts by a more rational, consistent, and probable explanation, embracing at the same time a refutation of all the heresies which have arisen respecting the Trinity, he is welcome to do it; and they who like his explanation may take it, without fear of incurring the penalty denounced. But I myself think it impossible; and such, I imagine, is almost the universal opinion. However, after these twenty-two verses, you observe, the practical statement of the simple doctrine is resumed; and then follows the penalty, which attaches to that statement only. For, after the explanation is finished, the whole question is summed up in this manner: 'So that in all things, as is aforesaid'—that is, as was said in the beginning—'the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped; he, therefore, that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.' The great caution is, that we should beware of confounding the Persons, which are so clearly distinguished in Scripture, and of dividing the Substance, which both Scripture and reason make to be but one. Adhere to this view, and worship the Deity under this form; and then, whatever other notions you may entertain of the Trinity, you are guiltless."

"Well, but," exclaimed Mr. Compton, who had been listening with his whole attention, "these twenty-two verses are a pretty long-winded parenthesis, Dr. Warton; are they not?" This little witticism occasioned a smile in the faces of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, and Mr. Compton himself quite chuckled at his own *jeu d'esprit*. But to *me* it was no novelty; so I replied, without being discomposed for a moment;

“ Call those verses what you please, Sir. In fact, they resemble the demonstration of a mathematical proposition, which may happen to admit of several modes of proof. Taking the whole process together, first comes the statement of the matter to be proved; then the form of demonstration which the author selects; and, lastly, the original proposition is now stated again as proved and determined. What is of consequence to *you* for practice, is the matter finally settled; namely, that the three angles of a triangle, suppose, are equal to two right angles; the mode of proof, if there be different modes, is quite immaterial. Thus it is, then, here; we have a doctrine put simply, and an explanation afterwards at length; and then a conclusion in favour of the original doctrine. To this alone, as being alone of importance, the penalty is annexed. Have I made myself at all intelligible?”

“ Yes, yes,” answered Mr. Harrison, “ I understand you perfectly; but I admire the explanation so much, as to be unwilling to give it up, or lessen its authority.” “ I agree with you, Sir,” I said, “ and you already know my opinion about it. And no doubt, it will maintain its place, as long as the doctrine of the Trinity is acknowledged to be a doctrine of the Gospel, with all the authority which it had at the first, after the extinction of the Arian heresy, and with all the authority which it has since acquired in the Christian world. But by limiting the damnable clauses to the mere doctrine as stated in the 3rd and 4th verses, and resumed in the 27th, we take away all reasonable grounds for the charge of being uncharitable. For no one, surely, will say that it is uncharitable to pronounce an anathema in any case

whatever, liberal as the age may be. In short, there are credenda as well as agenda, and Scripture pronounces an anathema against vicious belief as well as against vicious practice. If the rulers of the church, therefore, were to endeavour to conceal these denunciations, by carefully omitting them in all their formularies of worship, it might be called liberality; but, in truth, it would be mere squeamishness, or rather a shameful neglect of the souls of men. I once met with a lady of high rank, who complained of a want of delicacy in a clergyman, who, in his great office of preaching, had wounded her ears with the frequent mention of the devil and hell. But that clergyman might well have said, like St. Paul, ‘Madam, I know the terrors of the Lord, and, therefore, I would persuade you, if it were possible, to renounce your vicious pleasures and selfish indulgences.’ So stands the matter, then. If a right faith be necessary to salvation as well as a right practice, which Scripture asserts, the people must be told so, and the certainty of the thing must be constantly brought before their eyes. To do this is the true charity; to act otherwise would be downright uncharitableness. But, then, the denunciations should stop where Scripture stops. I would not apply them to any elaborate system, however scriptural, and deduced from Scripture by logical inference; but only to Scripture itself, or to that which, in the chain of reasoning, is the very next link to it. Now you have the whole of my ideas upon this controverted subject.”

“And I for one,” said Mr. Harrison, “am infinitely obliged to you for the trouble which you have taken to set the thing in a new light before us. What do *you* think, brother Compton?” “Why, I think,” replied the sick man, “that Dr. Warton has certainly

removed some of the objections against the Athanasian Creed, by showing, that we are not bound to believe, under pain of damnation, all that incomprehensible explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, which you are both of you pleased to call so admirable and so sublime. I am right in saying 'incomprehensible;' for you know that the Creed itself uses the same term." "Yes; but does it use that term in the same sense that you use it now?" I asked. "What other sense can the term possibly have?" he answered. "Why undoubtedly," I said, "the Godhead is incomprehensible in your own sense, at least by man. Man can never find out God to perfection. He is unfathomable by our scanty line. But the Creed meant nothing of this sort. The real meaning is, that each of the Persons of the Trinity is unbounded by any limits of space or time, and fills the universal creation at every instant with his actual presence and influence, and will fill it to all eternity."

My antagonist was piqued at this discovery of his ignorance, as I manifestly perceived; and chiefly, as I thought, because Mr. Harrison was by, whom he appeared to *me* rather to affect to despise. But he turned the matter off with pretended good humour, and said, "Well, Dr. Warton, if you deny me the word 'incomprehensible,' I shall adopt the word 'unintelligible,' which, I presume, I am in no danger of mistaking." "We shall see presently," I replied; "but, pray tell me, whether you apply the word 'unintelligible' to the Creed itself, or to the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, which is the subject of the Creed?" This question puzzled him, and for some time he was at a loss what to answer; but at length he summoned courage enough to assert, that it

amounted to the same thing. "Pardon me," I said, "there is a great and a clear difference. Suppose I were to affirm, that two lines, prolonged indefinitely according to a certain law, should continually approach nearer and nearer to each other, and, in short, should approach so near as to be within a smaller distance than the wit of man could assign, and yet should never be capable of meeting; the proposition, I should think, paradoxical as it might seem, would still be intelligible to you; although, perhaps, you are not mathematician enough to pronounce upon the truth of it, and much less to demonstrate it." "No, no," he exclaimed laughing; "this is a question for a Cambridge man—I am of Oxford, and the mathematics were not in fashion there in my time." "Well then," I resumed, "it is very likely that, if left to yourself, you would doubt, or even deny, the truth of my proposition, at the same time that you have no doubt whatever as to the meaning of it." "Certainly," he said, "I cannot deny that I understand what the proposition means; but how it can be possible for two lines, lengthened indefinitely, to come nearer and nearer at every instant, and yet never to meet, I cannot understand at all." "Very well," I proceeded; "but the thing is true nevertheless; and the mathematical intelligence comprehends the truth itself, and the reasons of it. Just so may it be with the doctrine of the Trinity. The proposition, which states it, I understand perfectly; the truth of the proposition I admit on the authority of Scripture, as you admit the truth of the mathematical proposition on my authority; but the grounds of that truth I cannot understand with my present faculties, any more than you could understand the mathematical demonstration

with your present mathematical knowledge. But there are, no doubt, superior intelligences to ours, from which no divine mystery is hidden; and, perhaps, our own understanding hereafter may be expanded to such a compass as to be able to grasp them. However, be that as it may, I am sure you will no longer assert that the Athanasian Creed is unintelligible. It is impossible but that you must understand what is meant, when it is said, that 'the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God.' A plainer proposition than this, so far as the mere terms are concerned, cannot be. The truth of the proposition, and the reasons of that truth, are the only difficulty. But, with respect to the truth, the difficulty vanishes, if we embrace Scripture; and there remain only the reasons, on which the truth is founded, and which are, indeed, unintelligible to *us*. And these will always be so, while this world lasts; but the Creed is not to blame for this; the Creed has done its duty in putting into our mouths a right confession of our faith, and in warning us of the danger of a perverse interpretation; there it stops; and there our own duty begins."

"Many thanks, good Sir," said Mr. Harrison, "for your excellent lecture on the Athanasian Creed. I wish several persons, whom I know, had been present to hear it. They catch up expressions, and scraps of ideas in the coxcomical world, and take them for solid knowledge and irrefragable argument. But, when such things as these are tried by the touchstone of sober sense and reasoning, they are found immediately to be hollow and empty. Brother Compton, you have mixed too much with people of that descrip-

tion ; but I have so good an opinion of your candour, as not to imagine for a moment, that you will not bow to the force of truth, when it comes before you so convincingly, as it does now from the lips of Dr. Warton."

This little speech was better received than might at first have been expected. For Mr. Compton allowed at once that he had been led into some errors by yielding too implicitly to the dicta of men of the world, without examination or reflection. "But, after all," he said, "it perplexes me extremely, when I try to account for the revelation of a doctrine which it is confessed on all hands we cannot understand. Is it possible indeed, (I beg to ask you, Dr. Warton,) is it possible that we can believe at all what we do not comprehend?" "Your question surprises me," I exclaimed, "after our discussion on the mathematical proposition." "It is very true," he replied, "I believe the proposition without comprehending it." "And you may go a most important step farther," I said, "for men not only believe, but act upon these mathematical propositions, without comprehending the reasons of them. In the most useful arts of life the generality of mankind carry these problems into practice without thinking any further at all about them. And what reason can be assigned for a different conduct in religion? Does not all religion terminate in practice? Why, therefore, may we not take a theological proposition, and apply it to the conduct of our lives, without searching into the depths of it, to fathom them? 'God is,' for instance;—there is a very short proposition for you, but one most prolific in practical results. But who pretends to know anything of the mode of the divine existence?

And if we knew it most thoroughly, in what way would that sort of knowledge improve our practice?"

"But then," he replied, "all the propositions relating to the Trinity are mere speculations, and have nothing whatever to do with practice; so that if such a doctrine be indeed revealed, I do not see what design it could have in view, except to confound our understanding, and to impose upon our belief in an arbitrary manner." "The case is not so, my good Sir," I said; "on the contrary, every branch of the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity is most essential to Christian practice; but this cannot be well explained without going into the very arcana of the Christian religion, and I fear we have not time for such an investigation now. To put it shortly, I affirm, that no man can be a perfect Christian, unless he be assured in his mind that the Father is God, and the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; and yet that these three are substantially but one. From such an assurance alone can flow a complete and stable practice. But if any one of these propositions be more connected with practice than another, it is that which asserts the divinity of the Son. Without this, the man who would be a true Christian cannot stir a single step. He cannot suppose, indeed, that any atonement has been made for sin; and therefore he cannot set about the arduous task of becoming a new creature."

Here Mr. Compton shrugged up his shoulders, and exclaimed, "Ah! Sir, the difficulties thicken upon us so fast, that I shall soon be lost in the multitude and the intricacy of them. I cannot presume, Dr. Warton, to occupy so much of your valuable time." This was a civil mode of wishing me good

morning, and turning me out of the house. But I was determined that the conference should not end exactly so at all events; and a glance from Mrs. Harrison, who had been elevated with hope, and was now sinking into despair, as I conjectured by her countenance, urged me to attempt at least to make an opening for a future conversation; so I said, "Oh! pray, Sir, do not spare me by any means. My time is only valuable whilst it is thus and similarly employed. Besides, it may be well for yourself, in the present precarious state of your health, to have these religious difficulties cleared away, if it can be done; and I do not know to whom the duty so properly belongs as to *me*."

He was silent, and seemed unable to determine what course to take. Upon which Mrs. Harrison, still more alarmed, interposed, and said, "Dear brother, as Dr. Warton is so kind, we will continue the discussion to-morrow, when I hope you will be a little stronger. I speak for myself too, for I have profited already, and I am sure I shall profit more by what I foresee is to come. It is impossible for any of us to be the worse for it."

This judicious speech settled Mr. Compton's wavering thoughts; so he said hastily, but graciously, "Then we will give you chocolate to-morrow, Dr. Warton, at one o'clock." Upon this I bowed, and departed.

The next day I went according to the appointment. He was on the sofa as before; but I learnt from his sister that he had passed a bad night, and that it was with some difficulty they had got him up, and prepared him for my reception. However, as he was alarmed about himself, I expected to find

him so much the more serious, and open to conviction. In fact, it was no light matter that we were about to contend for, but life or death; whether the remnant and the close of his mortal existence should be cheered or not by the bright prospects of the Christian religion.

When we were comfortably seated, and some common things had been said, observing him very much depressed, I endeavoured at once to turn his thoughts towards religion, by remarking, what a vast advantage we had over the very wisest of ancient times, in regard to the means of supporting pain and evil with patience and resignation. In their beautiful works which have come down to us, they talk perpetually of a fate which none can control, and of the folly of complaining where there is no remedy. With no better reasons than these, the Stoic could arm himself with triple steel, impenetrable by any assault; and buffet the waves of adversity, without sinking under them. How much rather, then, must the Christian be firmly upheld, who sees, in every thing that befalls him, the hand of a wise and merciful Providence outstretched over him; and which disciplines him for a better and more durable existence hereafter. "Certainly," said Mr. Compton, "this is more comfortable and animating. The other is cold and gloomy enough. What a pity that the Christian account of things cannot be more satisfactorily made out, so as to leave no shadow of doubt in the mind!" "Then," I said, "if the thing were made out to an incontrovertible certainty, there would be no room for faith at all, which is ordained, however, to be the constant exercise and trial of the Christian. But, with respect to the proof which you call unsatisfac-

tory, wherein does it fail? If it be not actual demonstration, what matter of fact ever had greater evidence?"

"A book which relates extraordinary things cannot be admitted without extraordinary proof," he said. "No, certainly," I rejoined, "the book records miracles, and miracles perhaps require more, or greater, evidence than other facts; yet it can only be evidence of the same kind as is necessary to establish those other facts. Of course, we must have in all cases of facts the testimony of witnesses. But the criterion to try the credit of witnesses is this. It is directly as their knowledge of the facts which they relate and the impossibility of their being deceived themselves; and inversely as their interest, or wish to deceive *us*; so that if they are perfectly acquainted with the facts, and can have no probable wish or interest to deceive, their credit is complete. This was the case with the writers of the New Testament; they could not by any means be deceived themselves, or ignorant of the fact of miracles being performed, especially as they themselves performed them every day; and men, who sacrificed their lives, rather than forbear to affirm what they affirmed, could have no conceivable worldly interest at least in view, which might create a wish in them to deceive the rest of mankind. Thus the matter stands simply. Then comes the collateral evidence of the truth of the miracles, which seems to have a strength about it incapable of being shaken; I mean the rapid propagation of Christianity in the world, which cannot be accounted for, under all the circumstances, without miracles."

"Yes," he said, "but the evidence against miracles is stronger than any evidence can possibly be in their

favour. God has established certain laws to regulate the course of nature ; and that he should change or suspend his own laws is so improbable as to exceed credibility. In short, no evidence can prove such a thing. Let your evidence come as near as you please to demonstration itself, yet I consider it to be a certainty, on the other side, that God never has, and never will, alter those laws. Indeed such a proceeding would disturb all our knowledge of nature, and overturn the conclusions of all our experience." "If miracles were performed daily, or very often," I replied, "the effect might be as you describe ; but it would be too much to say, that a certain number of miracles having been performed in certain parts of the world, about 1800 years ago, therefore the knowledge and experience of the whole world, and of all subsequent ages, must be overturned by it. The very utmost that could be imagined is this ; that persons seeing a vast number of miracles continually, might begin to doubt what was nature and what was not. But, in truth, only the very weakest persons could be deceived for a moment. If we were now to see a man cure twenty or a hundred people in one day, of the most dreadful diseases, by merely touching them, would that at all disturb our ideas with respect to the processes of medicine ?"

Here I paused ; but Mr. Compton not speaking, I continued thus : " Besides, it is to be taken into the account, that the person performing the miracles has an errand to deliver from God ; and also that he performs the miracles expressly to prove his divine commission. Miracles are not to be supposed to be performed at random, and we know not why ; but immediately upon seeing a miracle, and our attention

together with our astonishment being aroused by it, we shall naturally look to the doer, to hear what he will also say to us ; and if what he says be worthy of God, we shall believe it to come from God, and that the miracle is the work of divine power." " Do you allow then," he inquired eagerly, " that real miracles may be performed by any other than a divine power?" " *That* is a question which I cannot settle," I said. " But to argue safely we must allow it. A miracle is something out of the common course of things, and beyond the power of man ; and what beings there may be between man and God, capable of performing miracles, it is impossible for us to conjecture. We know, however, from Scripture, of a whole class of beings superior in power to man and hostile to man, who probably can perform miracles. Scripture itself seems to insinuate that they can ; and moreover, that we may be deceived by their miracles, whether false or true. For this reason, therefore, when we see a miracle as we suppose, we must not be carried away by our astonishment, but attend to what the doer says. If the doer should tell us to worship the devil, we detect the miracle immediately, whether a real or a pretended one, to have the devil for its author ; but if the doctrine taught be for our improvement and happiness, we hail the messenger of God."

Here Mr. Compton interrupted me, before I had finished my explanation, with one of those quibbles, which, as Mr. Harrison well said, in the coxcomical world are reckoned irrefragable arguments. " I have often heard, Sir," he exclaimed rather triumphantly, " that the doctrines of the Gospel are proved by the miracles, and now you tell me that the miracles are proved

by the doctrines. Is not this what they call arguing in a circle, which never brings us to any just conclusion? The doctrines depend upon the miracles, and the miracles upon the doctrines, what end is there of this? And what supports them both? Or is not this the same as the world and the tortoise? The tortoise supports the world, but what supports the tortoise? Nothing." Thus he turned the argument about into different shapes, as if he never would be tired of it; and, no doubt, if he had been surrounded by his gay infidel companions, (but the house of sickness was not the place for *them*,) I should have been laughed to scorn. I cast a glance upon Mr. and Mrs. Harrison; they had put down their chocolate, and were sitting upon thorns; they probably disliked their brother's tone, but I fancied, besides, they were not masters of the question, and thence their uneasiness.

To re-assure them in an instant, I began my reply with saying, "Too many persons, I fear, have been deceived by that fallacy. It seems a perplexing difficulty, but it is soon unravelled. Divide doctrines into their two species, and the thing is done. Let me ask you, Mr. Compton, does not the Gospel contain moral rules, agreeable to our reason, and discoverable by it, as well as theological points, some of which are beyond our reason, and all of them purely matters of revelation?" He hesitated; so I said, "Take an example: 'Do unto others as you would wish that they should do unto *you*.' Is not this maxim to be found in the Gospel?" He assented. "Did we stand in need of a revelation to make this known to us?" "No," he replied. "Is it not agreeable to our reason?" He allowed it,

“ Is it not also discoverable by our reason, and the light of nature ?” “ To be sure it is,” he answered ; “ and it had been discovered long before the Gospel mentioned it.” “ Very well then,” I said, “ we will call, if you please, all doctrines of this kind moral precepts ; or, for the sake of brevity, precepts simply.” “ As you will,” he replied. “ Now,” I said, “ take an example of another sort of doctrine. ‘ I and my Father are one.’ This is in the Gospel, is it not ?” He granted it. “ Could we have known it without revelation ?” “ No, certainly,” he answered. “ Is it agreeable to our reason, or beyond it ?” “ Beyond it,” he replied, “ most unquestionably.” “ Now then,” I said, “ for all the doctrines of this kind, which are very numerous, let us reserve the term doctrines, and appropriate it to *them* alone. Have you any objection ?” “ None whatever,” he answered. “ So then,” I said, “ we have now agreed to denominate all the great propositions of Scripture by the two titles of precepts and doctrines, and the difference between them is manifest.” “ It is quite so,” he replied. “ Observe then,” I said. “ When it is asserted, that the doctrines are proved by the miracles, they mean by doctrines what we have this instant agreed to call doctrines ; namely, the pure theological dogmata, which are beyond our reason, and discoverable only by revelation ; and it is perfectly plain, that, unless the teacher of these doctrines performed miracles, they could not be known to be of divine origin. On the other hand, when it is asserted that the miracles are proved by the doctrines, by doctrines are meant precepts ; namely, those excellent moral rules for the government of human life which our reason is capable of discovering, which

human reason had partly discovered, and which the most exalted reason the most approves. Why these precepts are necessary to prove the miracles to be divine, arises from the supposition that miracles, true or false, but such as to deceive, may be performed by wicked beings. For if anything contradictory to these precepts be taught by the doer of the miracles, the miracles are detected at once. As our Saviour said, 'the tree is known by its fruits;' and again, 'if Satan be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?' Tell me then what the precepts are, and I will tell you what the doer of the miracle is. Upon the whole, therefore, you see, there is no vicious circle, as you imagined. This, in fact, is the order in which the transaction may be supposed to proceed. An extraordinary person appears in the world, in the most learned and enlightened age of it; uneducated himself, he preaches a system of ethics, so pure, so sublime, so calculated to promote the welfare and happiness of individuals, of families, and of nations, that all the accumulated reason of all mankind in all ages had not attained to anything equal; the same person performs mighty miracles. What must we think of him?" "Why, Sir," exclaimed Mr. Harrison with warmth, "that God is with him of a truth." "Undoubtedly," I said: "for such a system overturns the devil's kingdom, and therefore the devil could not work the miracles to establish that system. But mark the sequel. This extraordinary personage having excited your admiration, and won your love, by the beauty and perfection of his heavenly precepts; and by his works, having extorted from you the willing confession that his authority is divine, you are now

ripe for his doctrines ; you are now prepared to admit what you could only admit on divine authority : such a teacher cannot lie ; whatever he says is truth itself, and issues from the fountain of truth : though your reason, so delighted and satisfied before, may now be perplexed and dazzled, and unable to cope with the mighty difficulties of the things revealed ; yet you must submit your reluctant faculties, you must bow in humble silence, or you must break out into prayer, and say, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

I stopped here for want of breath, and from intensity of feeling ; being wrought up to a high solemn tone, beyond the standard of common talk, and big with the momentous import of the discussion. None of them interrupted the silence. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison had their eyes fixed on Mr. Compton, and seemed to expect that he should declare his sentiments ; but he uttered not a word. He appeared to be wrapt in thoughts which were not easy to him. It might be, that he was disturbed by the breaking up of his position, and by the consequent approximation towards the necessity of becoming a Christian. But he was not a penitent, nor weaned enough as yet from the vices of the world ; so that to adopt Christianity was an intolerable idea. He feared it, and, therefore, he did not yet desire it.

At length, having had time to reflect, I thought it better to attempt to fill up the parts of the argument, than to press him for an opinion upon it in his present state : I resumed my discourse, therefore, nearly as follows : " We have passed on so rapidly, that we have left several important things behind us. The excellency of the things taught decides the character

of the miracles, as we have already shown ; but then there is a reaction of the miracles upon the things taught, and we now perceive them to be directly sanctioned by the great God of heaven, and we acknowledge, of course, that they must be implicitly obeyed. Under any circumstances, the Gospel-precepts would be pronounced to be worthy of God ; but, taking them in the abstract, we could not know whether they came immediately from him. Being things discoverable by human reason, we could not tell whether they might not have been so discovered, whatever might be their superior excellence, and the humbleness of their authors ; and, therefore, we could not assign to them more than the highest human authority ; but, the preachers of them performing miracles, at once the authority becomes divine. For a test of the miracles, excellence was enough ; but for our government it was expedient to add divine authority ; and this was done by the miracles.

“ Then again, with respect to the doctrines, at least a great portion of them, there is a reaction there also. Take this as an example of what I mean : — ‘ God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ This is one of the doctrines which we could never have known but by revelation, and even when revealed to us, we understand very little more than the simple proposition. But this is by no means a dry, speculative, unoperative proposition ; and what is most striking about it, is the benevolence of it, which surpasses all human understanding. We can only receive it indeed, and believe it altogether, on the authority of the miracles ; but the clear, benevolent

object of it may be taken as a primary test of the miracles themselves. What a picture have we here of God's immense goodness and mercy towards a fallen part of his creation, that he spared his own Son from his bosom to redeem and save it! How gracious, unspeakably gracious, to make faith and trust in that Saviour the condition of rescuing us from eternal death, and restoring us to that everlasting life, which we had forfeited and lost. We are absorbed in wonder and gratitude, and are disposed to exclaim at once, this is divine; this proves the miracles to be of God.

“ Now, then, put the whole together. A man in outward appearance preaches most excellent precepts and most benevolent doctrines; and he performs miracles, which, in consequence, we pronounce divine. But, the preacher's divine commission being now established, we revert to the same precepts and doctrines, and pronounce *them* divine also. This is the short summation of the argument; pray tell me, Mr. Compton, whether, in your judgment of it, there lies any objection to it. Is the reasoning liable to the charge of being in a circle, or paralogistic? I throw myself upon your candour and ingenuousness for a real, unsophisticated opinion.” “ Why, then, Dr. Warton,” he said, “ as you press me so closely, I must confess, that you have put this matter in a light which is new to me, and, perhaps, the true one, if miracles were really performed. But all this is outstripping the main question. You assume those miracles throughout; whereas I denied in the very beginning that any evidence could prove a miracle. Without doubt, if miracles had been really performed, then they might have been applied to the purposes

which you mention, of showing that certain precepts had God's authority, and that certain doctrines were true doctrines, and to be believed as such." "It is true," I said, "we have not attacked that question directly, owing to your own impetuosity; but we have acted as pioneers, and have cleared away the approaches to it. A miracle, which is a departure from the established course of God's government, can only be justified, even according to my notions, by a most worthy and an extraordinary occasion; such as an errand from God to mankind would be. I ask you, could any errand be known to be from God without a miracle accompanying it?" "Yes," he answered, "the errand itself might show it." "Then," I said, "if any errand could show it, the Christian religion, *à fortiori*, would show it; for never was so noble and excellent an errand as that. But we have settled already, that the Christian precepts, excellent and noble as they may be, could not show it, because it is of their essence to be discoverable by human reason; and certainly the doctrines could not show it; because, although excellent and noble too, like the precepts, and well worthy of coming from God, and being such as can only come by revelation, yet still, the result of experience decides the matter incontestably, that it is difficult to persuade multitudes of mankind to receive them, as divine, even with the help of miracles; so much are many of them above and beyond our reason. In fact, I believe it is to get rid of these doctrines, that persons would get rid of the miracles; which is a tacit confession that only miracles could prove them. Therefore, *revolveris eodem*; how is the message to be shown to be from God? When God wished to

send a message to the Jews by Moses, that illustrious messenger very properly demanded a miraculous power for his credential; for he argued well, that without such a credential, the Jews would only disregard, or ridicule his pretensions, however gracious and honourable for them the message itself might be. Again, when God sent a message to Gideon, to order him to do something, for which he thought himself unqualified by his want of rank and ability, he would not be satisfied, that the message really came from God, until he saw a miracle. And this agrees with the common sense of mankind. I ask you, therefore, once more, to point out, if you can, any other method of discriminating God's ambassador than by a miracle.*

Mr. Compton appearing to be reluctant to commit himself, Mr. Harrison answered for him, that there was no other way imaginable; and that it was all in vain to talk, or think of any expedient, with the view of getting rid of miracles. "The case," he said, "is too manifest to admit of debate, or doubt." This piqued Mr. Compton, and urged him to advance what was extremely absurd for a man of his principles; namely, that the messenger might be described beforehand, and, consequently, known when he came, by his correspondence to the description. "This previous description would be a prophecy, would it not?" I asked. "It certainly would," he replied. "Then you allow," I asked again, "do you, Sir, such things as prophecies?" "No, indeed," he exclaimed, aware of the net in which he had incautiously entangled himself, "I allow nothing. I must have every thing proved legitimately. I have only stated a supposition now for the sake of discussing it."

This discouraged me ; but I proceeded to enquire, whether he considered a prophecy to be according to the course of nature, or within the sphere of human ability. " No," he answered, " I do not. For though some men have a wonderful talent of foreseeing events at a distance, yet it can never be reckoned, generally, a human talent." " Then a prophecy," I said, " is a species of miracle, is it not ?" " Why, to be sure," he replied, " you may call it so, if you please." " Oh !" I rejoined, " it matters not what I, or you, Mr. Compton, may be pleased to call it. A prophecy is a real miracle, in the true sense of the term ; it is out of the course of nature, and the power of man. And more especially to prefigure a person, who is to appear at a remote period, so exactly, as that he may be known at once when he does appear, seems to be one of the greatest of miracles. We, therefore, still want a criterion."

By this time, Mr. Compton had bethought himself, that there was no other resource for him, but to deny that God ever sent such errands to this world ; so he turned round upon me on the sudden, and said, " You have allowed, Dr. Warton, that errands and miracles go both together ; and that either of them without the other is not credible, or not supposable. Take away the errand, therefore, and the miracle falls to the ground of itself, being left without any support. And, I am sure, it appears to *me* one of the most unlikely things in the world, that God should trouble himself, or condescend so far, as to send any messages to us. We are not of consequence enough in the creation. This earth is but a molehill, and *we* ants upon it, in comparison with the infinite extent of God's whole dominion."

Thus, then, after a long conflict, a new battle was to be fought, which might last equally long, and terminate with equal apparent success. But it behoved me not to flinch; so, after a short pause, having girded myself with fresh armour, I put it to the proof:—"Your account of man, at all events," I said, "is very different from the scriptural account. Judge, when you have heard the latter, which is the noblest, and the most accurate, and the most desirable to embrace. When the great Creator had finished the rest of his works, wanting another creature to rule them all, and, as their Priest, to adore him in their name, he said, 'Let us make man in our own image after our likeness.' In the creation of other things, all is done with the tone of command, or with a mere volition. 'Let there be light; let there be a firmament; let the earth bring forth so and so.' But when man is to be made—a creature who is to be endued with reason and intelligence—the very image of the Maker,—he uses an expression which indicates deliberation and counsel; he consults with some other august beings, (the two remaining persons of the Trinity, no doubt,) of whom, as well as of himself, man was to be both the workmanship and the resemblance. By the mode, too, in which the body is related to have been formed, there is a striking mark of the pre-eminence of man. To mould the human body the divine workman, it should seem, takes the clay himself. He applies, we are told, his own hands to the senseless matter; and there grows up under them a form of exquisite, surpassing beauty; a wonderful specimen of what omniscience can plan, and omnipotence execute. But the production of the soul is still more astonishing; he

derives it not from the most subtile material substances—he breathes it from on high ; the soul is a particle of his own spiritual essence—a spark of his own ethereal flame, unextinguishable for ever. It is the soul, therefore, which reflects chiefly the bright image of the Maker—immaterial, immortal—possessing within herself the faculty of self-agency ; gifted with the noble powers of thinking, of reasoning, of willing ; the subject of moral responsibility—capable of righteousness and holiness in this transient world, and of aspiring beyond it to a state of everlasting permanency and perfection in her native heavens. All the matter in all the millions of suns and tens of millions of worlds which revolve about them—whatever beauty, whatever magnificence God has conferred upon it, is not equal to one single particle of mind. Such is the soul,—and thus were soul and body created ; and all the subsequent accounts of Scripture show, that God has never withdrawn his care from any of the works of his own hands ; that he superintends them by a vigilant, incessant providence ; that every soul of man more especially is infinitely precious in his sight ; and that his will is, that not one of them should perish. Hence, therefore, message after message to mankind—messages of love, of instruction, of warnings, of threatenings, of promises, of pardon, of reconciliation, of grace here, of glory hereafter. Thus speaks the Bible ; and does not every heart beat responsive to this gladsome history ? Where is the man who, so far from being refreshed and renovated, in his pilgrimage through life, by drinking deeply of the streams of this divine knowledge, would rather plunge blindfold into the dark, disconsolate system of conflicting

atoms—of a God, too inert and indolent, too fond of ease and repose, too much wrapt up in the silent, abstracted contemplation of himself and his own essence and pleasures, to create worlds, or to govern them? How different the God of the Bible, by whom every hair of our heads is numbered, and without whose knowledge and will not a sparrow falleth to the ground? But, it must disturb him, forsooth—this omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent Being—it must disturb him, and distract him, and overwhelm him, to bear so vast a load—to regulate so prodigious a multiplicity of things. Have you considered how much those infinite perfections infer? They confute the narrow notion of a God faint and weary with the burden of affairs. You are finite, and your works are in the proportion of finite to finite; but in the works of God the proportion is of infinite to infinite. Yes, you may still say, but it is all below his dignity. Not so thought the sublimest genius amongst men, who sung of God after another sort. ‘He giveth food to the young ravens which cry; he openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.’ There is an argument, however, which is short, and irresistible. If it was not below his dignity to create, it is not below it to preserve and govern his creation.”

Thus I ran on, and could have run on for ever, borne along and snatched away by the prolific magnificence of the topic; but still more, by a feeling of indignation, that men, who are taught, and encouraged, and inwardly urged to look so high—*erectos ad sidera tollere vultus*—should voluntarily debase themselves and their condition so low, as if they would be prone and grovelling, like the brute. After

I had paused, my mind still swelled with the idea ; and a minute or two elapsed, before I was aware that nobody was preparing to answer me. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison told me in private, afterwards, that they were silent, lest they might weaken what I had said. Mr. Compton I could not fathom. He was capable, indeed, of admiring lofty notions, because of his liberal education ; and I fancied, once or twice, that I saw a beam of light irradiating his care-worn countenance, and I almost expected him to exclaim, *dedo manus* ; but sin yet weighed him down ; and, as he might fear, that, if the Gospel were true, its punishments and not its rewards awaited him, he, perhaps, in his secret thoughts, preferred annihilation.

However, at length, to bring him to something more decisive, I said, " Your objection as to the trouble and condescension of the Deity in favour of man, and your ideas of the insignificance of man himself, are, I trust, materially weakened, if not entirely removed. It is true my answer has been derived chiefly from Scripture, but at all events it must be allowed, with respect to man, that on this globe there is no other creature in any way to be compared with him, or so worthy of the care of Providence. It must be allowed, moreover, that this globe itself is an important constituent portion of one great solar system, which embraces many millions of miles in the regions of space ; and that, if there were thousands or millions of such systems, or much larger ones, yet it is quite incredible that any one of them should be neglected by its Supreme Maker : when in the construction, and movements, and all the circumstances of them there is displayed, without doubt, as in ours, an astonishing skill of mechanics and geo-

metry ; striking marks, innumerable, of contrivance and design, and of final causes ; and a beauty, magnificence, order, and harmony of the parts, and of the whole, which bespeak the divine workman. If one such system were blotted at once out of the Universe, we might fancy that it would not be missed, and that no gap would be visible in the creation. But if one might be blotted out in this manner, and God not regard the loss, as being insignificant when compared with the remainder, then another and another may be blotted out with the same result ; and I do not see where this will end, but improving too much : namely, that God cares for none of these many systems, and not merely that he does not care for one or two out of the many. But, I presume, you will not go this length ; and therefore we must of necessity conclude that our own solar system is under his immediate superintending providence, and, consequently, every world also which is a part of that system—and, above all, what is most valuable in each world. And here, as we have said, in this planet of ours, man is the most valuable creature, for whose habitation and use, in fact, the planet itself was apparently made. Or do you think that God has placed more valuable creatures than men in the other planets, towards whom he exercises a due and constant regard ; and that this earth, although inhabited and possessed by so excellent a creature as man must be confessed to be, is still but a sort of moon to those other planets, or a mere counterpoise, to regulate their velocities, and to keep them in their appointed stations, and at their proper distances from the sun, and from each other ?”

The absurdity of this supposition drew forth from

my antagonist the only observation which he had hazarded for a long time. Amongst his own set, where there was no restraint, no necessity for deliberation, no fear of being convicted of ignorance, he was quick, I believe, in repartee, and by a smart sally of wit he could turn the laugh upon an opponent; but such a talent was useless here. He had tried it indeed, and it had failed. The respect which even the profligate feel for the sacredness of the clergyman's character; the charitable and wholly disinterested purpose for which I came to him; the gravity and solemnity of my manner at particular moments; the superior information which I possessed upon the subjects of our discussion; the tying him down to every sentiment and expression which he uttered, and the giving him an answer to everything, all these together produced a sort of awe and fear in him, lest he should either offend *me* or expose himself. He was therefore becoming very cautious, and in consequence he was often entirely mute. Here, however, he interposed, and allowed, that it would be a sad clumsy contrivance to make one world for the sake of lighting and balancing other worlds. To do so would be somewhat similar to what they tell us of the spleen in the human body, that it was only put there to pack up the space tight and clever. "But after all," he said, "I do not see why we may not consider the divine architect just the same as any human architect. The watchmaker, for instance, constructs a watch with wonderful skill and pains, and delivers it out of his hands when finished, and troubles himself no more about it. What is a world to God but as a watch to a watchmaker?"

“What object,” I inquired, “has the watch-maker in view when he makes a watch?” “To maintain himself, I have no doubt,” was his answer. “Most likely,” I said, “and therefore of course he does not care what becomes of it, when he has exchanged it for the things which he wants; for clothing, food, and lodging. Has God any wants of this kind, or of any other kind?” “None whatever,” he replied; “it would be absurd to think so.” “It would indeed,” I said. “But still he must have some object in making worlds, must he not? Does he make them, do you suppose, as children blow soap bubbles, to try their own dexterity: to gaze at them mounting into the air; to admire, for an instant, the pretty colours which they reflect, and then to laugh and exult when they burst and disappear?” “I allow,” he answered, “that he must have some object, and a worthier object than this; but what it may be I cannot conjecture.” “I will tell you then,” I said. “It is his desire of exercising his great attributes for the purpose of communicating pleasure and happiness. If he were the only being, as he is the greatest, he would still be infinitely happy in himself. But this solitary grandeur and self-sufficiency limit, or even supersede, the very energies which may well be supposed to constitute his happiness. Simply to be—wonderful as is the mode of his existence; necessary, that is, and underived, from all eternity—simply to be, even after this unspeakable mode, can never be all. Infinite goodness *must* and *will* diffuse itself around through infinite space; infinite wisdom will never cease to plan, nor infinite power to create, recipients of infinite love. Thus worlds arise, by the eternal fiat, replenished with crea-

tures capable of their suitable enjoyments, and some amongst the rest capable also of a moral government; and it is evident that in the government of these chiefly will the great glory of so incomparable a being be, first and last, most illustriously displayed. Every flower that sips the dew of heaven seems to lift up its head to heaven in token of gratitude and praise; every living creature that creeps upon the earth, or wings the air, or swims through the world of waters, by their sportive joy attest the sense of their Creator's bounty; but this is mere poetry, you will say; it is the rational creature only who is able to give an actual utterance to the sentiments of the whole creation; he alone, in this vast temple of the universe, can actually worship the God of it; he alone, indeed, has faculties, by which he may ascend to the knowledge of him, appreciate his manifold works of mercy, and above all, by obedience to his will, of his own free choice, and by no compulsory law of his nature, glorify him with his proper glory. But now, observe, we are returned to the point from which we set out. The whole of the divine will we can only ascertain by a revelation, and as God's chief glory arises from our conformity to that will, a revelation is *à priori* a most probable event, and consequently miracles are probable also, by which alone the revelation can be proved. But this may be put in a stronger light. Suppose the rational creature, by the abuse of his noble but dangerous privilege of free will, to have transgressed the boundaries originally assigned to him, and thus to have fallen under the just displeasure of his Maker—how is he to recover his lost estate? How is he to know, indeed, whether it be recover-

able or not? O what a worthy cause have we here for a revelation of love and mercy, and therefore for miracles to attest its truth, to raise the drooping spirit of the wretched, fallen being, and to assure him of his reconciliation to his God!"

Here I stopped, for I was greatly fatigued with speaking so much, and other engagements pressed for my departure. So to cut short at once all further discussion, I rose from my seat and said, "I shall be happy, Mr. Compton, to see you again. A great deal has passed between us, in this hasty discussion, which deserves, and may require, maturer reflection. Think it over, I earnestly entreat you, in the calm solitude of your own breast. Trace out the several steps of the argument through which we have travelled, and examine the ground on which we have trodden. If you discover a false step, or what may appear to *you* to be so, point it out to me when we next meet, and we will re-examine it together. There is a great stake upon this die." Then, having said this, before they were well aware, and with a view to escape the trouble and delay of ceremony, I snatched up my hat and cane, and was out of the room in a moment. I was really in a hurry; but I feel sometimes after conversations of this kind, as when I descend from the pulpit, that the small talk of common life is a sad falling off, and an intolerable frivolity.

My going away, however, so hastily, procured me a visit the next day from Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, who complimented me upon my eloquence, as they were pleased to call it, and upon the irresistible force of argument with which I had beaten Mr. Compton out of all his positions; and they told me that they

did not know how to thank me sufficiently for the great exertions which I had made to convince him, and for the cool temper and unwearied patience with which I had followed up the shifting current of the discussion, and had met him perpetually on his own new-chosen ground. But, what was of more consequence, they informed me that they were commissioned by Mr. Compton himself to apologize to me for any apparent want of civility in his conduct towards me, and to charge it upon the deplorable state of his health, which often tormented his body with pain, and disturbed his mind with care. To this they added, that, if the following day was fine, he intended to try a longer airing than usual, and invited me to accompany him, with the express view of renewing the conversation. "But what hope?" I inquired eagerly. "This invitation seems a favourable omen; it bespeaks a willingness to hear, at least, which God perchance may bless. Has any progress meanwhile been made?" "Believe me, Sir," said Mrs. Harrison, "this itself is no little progress; but much more, I trust, has been done. I was left alone with my brother when you went from us yesterday, Mr. Harrison having followed you, though without overtaking you, to the door. After a moment's pause, 'This Dr. Warton,' he exclaimed suddenly, 'is an expert man at his weapons, and pins me down so tightly that I cannot get loose. I shall be frightened when he begins those plausible questions again, which I no sooner answered than I found myself caught, and condemned out of my own mouth. But he was equally terrible to me when he spread his sails, and took a wider range; for, though I had only to listen, and might have listened with delight

if I had been an unconcerned auditor, yet feeling myself to be a principal character in the drama, and one very deeply interested and represented, too, throughout in a degraded light, and borne down by a furious torrent, these wretched cushions, I assure you, were never so uneasy to me before. He had greatly the advantage over me, my dear Charlotte, had he not? 'Yes, indeed, brother,' I answered, 'he had certainly; but it was no discredit to your talents, for in my opinion the cause which you endeavoured to maintain cannot be maintained by any talents. It is too unworthy both of God and of man.' 'But the Athanasian Creed,' he said, 'who would have surmised that I should have made so sorry a figure there? I never heard a single soul speak in defence of it before; I thought it the very quintessence of illiberality and absurdity, but I could not gainsay this same Dr. Warton. Well, Charlotte, leave me till dinner-time to myself. I will for once at least attend to his advice, and retrace the course of the argument, that I may see whether I granted anything which I ought to have denied, and the concession of which paved the way for his apparent victory.' 'Do, my dear brother,' I replied, 'and be sure to take care that you are impartial, and search for truth—for truth alone, and not for the triumph of any set of opinions.' The remainder of my story is short. He summoned me to his bed-chamber this morning, and, after saying that he had been thinking deeply and incessantly upon all the topics that arose in the discussion between himself and you, he dictated the message which I have just delivered." "Very well," I said, "I shall be at his service, and may God prosper the event." In this prayer they joined fervently, and so quitted the rectory.

The next morning was propitious to the plan of the extended drive, though not warm enough to admit of the carriage being thrown open. If this, indeed, had been done, we might have enjoyed the prospects better, but I do not see exactly how we could have conversed with due freedom, (especially as, when heated, I spoke sometimes in an elevated key,) without making the coachman and footman a party in the discussion. Mrs. Harrison alone was with us; for, Mr. Compton being so placed as to occupy one side of the carriage himself, there was room for two only on the other side, and it was his particular wish to have his sister with him. He considered his health upon the whole a little improved, and with that idea his spirits had risen in proportion; but I understood it to be the opinion of the medical men that his recovery was not to be expected; that he might linger for two or three months, or that his death might be soon and sudden. He had not the most distant notion himself that there was a limit fixed for him, so very short at the longest; when his disorder was violent he was immediately depressed and thought he should die, but a better night and a little freedom from pain, removed the troublesome impression, and revived the hopes of life.

Upon being clear of the houses and the pavement, when the usual things about his health, the weather, and the intended ride had been said, Mr. Compton remarked, that "the conclusion, at which we appeared in our late discussion to have arrived, depended upon a premise rather assumed than established. Miracles presupposed an errand from God to man; but the object of a divine errand must be to declare the divine will. Now, if the divine will be

discoverable by man himself by a due use of his own reason, there will be no necessity of a special errand." "No," I said; "but you must recollect, that precepts only, and not doctrines, are within the scope of human discovery. Granting, therefore, that all the most excellent precepts, as we have them in the Gospel, were actually discovered, and sufficiently made known to mankind, and universally acknowledged for the rule of life, all which is necessary besides the discovery, yet how are we to know the doctrines, which are not so discoverable, and which moreover it may be highly expedient or even necessary for us to know? In fact, these doctrines, we may well imagine, are the very occasion of God's errand. Do you think that God would send a message to us, and disturb the course of nature to bear witness to it, merely to tell us what we know, or might have known already!"

Here I paused for an answer, but Mr. Compton declined to give any, and said, "I am much obliged to you, Dr. Warton, for talking with me; but I must request of you not to pursue that system of questions upon questions. My health is not equal to the fatigue and anxiety of it; and I find myself sometimes entrapped by it unawares into concessions, of which I afterwards repent. I like best to hear you speak continuously, and to be enabled to view the whole argument at once." "We will see about it," I replied, "but at all events I must first trouble you so far as to ask you, whether truth be not the great object of our investigation, and such truth as is of unspeakable moment?" "It is certainly," he answered. "And does not every argument," I asked again, "consist of three propositions at the least, when fully drawn out; namely, the two premises and the con-

clusion?" He allowed it. "If then," I said, "I put the first premise to you in the form of a question, and you consent to it with your own mouth, and the second premise also be put and granted in a similar manner, can you have a more compendious or a more decisive and indisputable mode of arriving at self-conviction with respect to the conclusion, which is, perhaps, the very truth after which we are searching, and which we agree in considering of extreme importance?" "It may be the shortest mode," he replied, "and when a man has allowed the premises, he cannot easily, or with a good face, dispute the legitimate conclusion; but it would be more agreeable to me to know the whole journey which it is proposed to me to travel, before I take a single step. In short, I would not willingly take a single step, without knowing where it would place me, and what would be the second and the third step, and, above all, the last. As I said before, any other mode is too fatiguing and too anxious for me." "Which is easiest," I inquired, "to consider one insulated, unconnected proposition, or a chain of propositions consisting of many links?" He hesitated; but he was compelled to confess, that the single proposition was the easiest to consider. "Again," I inquired, "as to the man who is in search of truth, is he alarmed about any of the steps which may conduct him towards it, being so excellent a thing, and the very thing which he wants to find?" He was touched to the quick, and instead of answering, he exclaimed, "Oh, Dr. Warton, you are doing at this moment what I particularly deprecated." "Yes, yes," I said smiling; "these preliminaries must needs be settled in this very manner, and then we may afterwards

consider, whether the same, or any other mode shall be adopted, in the great debate which is to follow. Suppose, therefore, for a moment, a person having a monstrous, unaccountable antipathy to that mathematical truth of which I spoke, respecting the two lines, that continually approached and never met; what would be his conduct? When any simpler proposition, in the road to the more difficult one, which he holds in abhorrence, was proposed to him, would he not fatigue and rack his brain with thinking how that simpler proposition might bear upon the other, and torment himself with anxiety, lest, by allowing it, he might imperceptibly be committed to the allowing of the abominable one? Whereas, if he were simply a learner of mathematical truths, without any prejudice against any particular proposition, he would follow not only fearlessly, but also joyfully, wherever he might be led, from truth to truth, and refreshed and recruited by every new discovery. Is not this so?" It was impossible for him to deny it. "Much more, then," I said, "will it be so in morals and religion, which affect every man's present conduct and future prospects. If the inquirer is prejudiced against the conclusion, and thinks he has any interest in evading it, he will, of course, fatigue himself with anxiety about every proposition which may bring him a step nearer to it; but if not, he will never consider previously where any proposition, if accepted, may eventually lead him; nor will he be anxious about it: all that sort of fatigue and anxiety he will entirely escape; he will consider only whether the proposition be true, and he will act accordingly."

Here I paused. Mr. Compton was conscience-

stricken and speechless. He was too proud to confess or to deny his feelings; but if he had denied them, his countenance would have convicted him of a falsehood; to bring him to confess them seemed to *me* to be of the most essential consequence. So, turning to Mrs. Harrison, I said, "Join with me, my good Madam, in pressing Mr. Compton to lay open his whole bosom to us. We are precisely the persons to whom it would be most natural, most proper, and most safe to do it. You are his sister, whom, after a long estrangement, he has recalled to his affection; and he is assured of your tender care and solicitude for him. He cannot fear to entrust anything to *you*. I am his spiritual guardian, appointed by the laws of his country and the discipline of our holy church, to entreat, to advise, to admonish him, for his present and eternal welfare. But I cannot perform this office with due effect, with so many impediments in my way, which, perhaps, I might remove at once, if I knew his heart."

Mrs. Harrison was deeply affected; and could only weep. But her tears, perhaps, availed her more than any words could have done. Her brother was evidently moved, and took her by the hand, and tried to soothe her; but still no advance was yet made towards the purpose which I had in view. I resumed, therefore, and said, looking at Mr. Compton, "If the Christian religion be true, we *must* believe it at all events; and should there be anything unrepented of in our past life, which makes us dread it and cavil against it, *that* will not alter the fact or the consequence of its truth; nor would it profit us to die unconvinced; the fact and the consequence will remain the same. If, on the other

hand, the Christian religion be false, which, however, in the face of so much evidence can only be supposed for the sake of argument; yet what shall we have lost by embracing and obeying it? We shall have lived according to the best law of our nature, and we shall die with the most agreeable hopes; nor will the disappointment of those hopes occasion us a moment's pain—for we shall wake no more to be conscious of it."

Upon this, Mr. Compton, with great emotion, said to Mrs. Harrison, "Does Dr. Warton know, my dear sister, what sort of a life I have led?" "No doubt of it," she answered. "Being constantly resident in this parish, and mixing, as he does, with all ranks, he knows every thing of every body. You have nothing to conceal from him; why should you hesitate, therefore, to talk freely to him?" "If you are thoroughly acquainted with my circumstances, Dr. Warton," he said, turning towards me, but not venturing to meet my countenance front to front, "you will understand pretty well upon what principle I am acting. A person who has lived as I have, has no comfort but in the supposed falsehood of Christianity." "Pardon me, Mr. Compton," I replied, "there is no comfort for you but in the supposition of its truth." "How so, Sir?" he inquired hastily, and lifted his eyes from the floor, and encountered mine; and then reiterated his question, "how so, I beseech you?" "You confess yourself a sinner," I answered. "The Gospel, if true, is the religion of sinners; and it is its peculiar business, and professed object, to save all sinners who believe, embrace, and trust in it. This is precisely what you want; and it should, therefore, be the ground of

unutterable comfort to you to suppose Christianity true. But, if the Gospel be false, yet, as you cannot certainly know it to be so, there is no comfort for sinners, from the mere supposition of its falsehood; unless it be a comfort to them to think that perchance they may die, like the beasts which perish; and so be annihilated for ever!" "Well," he said, interrupting me before I had finished, "and is not *that* better than to think of being tormented for ever?" "Undoubtedly it is," I replied; "but still the rational soul, if there be any spark of nobleness about it, abhors annihilation, and would almost prefer to abide the risk of eternal punishment, in order to avoid the dreadful thought of being no more to all eternity. Is annihilation indeed your own choice; and is your love and desire of it the baneful cause of this *bellum usque ad internecionem*, this *πολεμος ἀσπονδος*, which you wage against Christianity?"

Mr. Compton fetched a deep sigh, and answered, "I am, perhaps, as capable as another of aspiring to immortality; and the idea of annihilation, in the abstract, spreads a gloomy horror over my imagination, the same as it does to all men of an ingenuous spirit. But I prefer it as the least evil of two. A blissful immortality I suppose myself incapable of obtaining; and, therefore, upon the supposition of Christianity being true, my lot can only be an immortality of woe. Is it any wonder, then, that I should fear to be convinced of the truth of a scheme, which threatens me with so many horrors? No, no; I do not court or love annihilation; I shudder at the thoughts of——" Here for a moment his utterance was suspended; but soon, by a sort of

convulsive energy, he finished the sentence, and ejaculated the tremendous monosyllable, "Hell."

Mrs. Harrison turned pale, and seemed ready to faint; and, therefore, to relieve her, I took up the conversation without a moment's delay. "Compose yourself, my good Sir," I said, "and let us try quietly to put this matter upon its right footing. We are straying, I think, from the exact question, and bringing things into debate which have nothing to do with it. Allow me to ask you this; will your wishing about anything in any particular way, or fearing about it in any particular way, or being convinced by probable arguments in any particular way, make the thing to be according to your wishes, your fears, or your conviction?" He granted that it would not. "Does it not often happen," I asked again, "that men wish, and fear, and are convinced, exactly in opposite ways about the same thing?" "Certainly," he said. "Then," I rejoined, "it is clear, that both cannot possibly be in the right." He allowed it. "There is, also," I said, "another thing to be taken into the account; that not only may a thing be true, which you have convinced yourself by probable arguments to be false; but also the fact, that other people are convinced by argument the contrary way, must tend to weaken your own conviction, and to create doubts in your mind as to the validity of it; from whence I would infer, that it is next to impossible for you to arrive at a firm unshaken conviction with respect to the falsehood of Christianity. You may think that the evidence against it preponderates over the evidence for it; but, as your own judgment has no exclusive

privilege of being in the right, and as the greatest of men in all ages, the Bacons, the Boyles, the Lockes, the Addisons, the Newtons, have come to the contrary conclusion, you *must* think also, that the chances in favour of its truth are strong against you ; and, consequently, you will never be able to bring yourself to so full a persuasion of what you wish as to enjoy perfect peace and tranquillity in your own breast. This I consider to be your case ; and on this idea I said, that there is no comfort for you but in the supposition of the truth of Christianity.”

This way of putting the question seemed to be new to him, and he was not prepared to answer at once ; so I resumed the argument in this manner. “ You wish to arrive at the conviction that Christianity is false. If you could do so, it might not accomplish your purpose nevertheless, which is to escape eternal punishment ; because, in spite of your conviction, Christianity may be true, and you may wake again in another world to prove it.” He trembled like an aspen-leaf ; but I continued thus :— “ I assert, however, in the next place, that you will never arrive at that conviction. There is something in your own breast that will never suffer it. God himself, I believe, will never suffer it. A doubt, at least, about it, will always torment you, when you recollect the possibility of your being mistaken ; the multitudes of great and good men, who have examined the subject and have been satisfied with it, living and dying in the faith of Christ ; and the prodigious weight of the evidence itself, which it is extremely difficult for any man to gainsay, or resist. May I ask, Mr. Compton, whether you are not, since these recent conversations with *me*, at a greater

distance than ever from the conviction which you wish to entertain?"

"I am indeed," he confessed in a moment, and without the slightest hesitation. "My suspicions of the truth of Christianity increase daily." "Then why kick against the pricks?" I said. "Let me conjure you to endeavour to convert those suspicions and all your fears, into hopes. You are labouring under an erroneous alarm, when you assume that there is no hope for you if Christianity be true. You have formed altogether a wrong idea of the Gospel if you think yourself, on account of your sins, without the pale of salvation, and reserved irreversibly for an immortality of woe. The Gospel preaches repentance for the remission of sins to all."

Here he interrupted me with a deep sigh, and exclaimed, "Ah! Dr. Warton, *there* is the difficulty; insuperable I fear by *me*. I cannot repent of my sins, and consequently I must not expect remission of them. My gloomy anticipations, therefore, are too well justified." "You cannot repent?" I said—"Granted; but what has that to do with the rejection of Christianity? Why, if there were no such religion as the Christian, if you were living by the light of nature alone, you would have thought repentance necessary, unless you reject a future state. Nay tell me candidly, were you not, in the beginning of our conversation this very day, on the point of arguing, that our own reason, without a revelation, would satisfy us of the necessity and of the efficacy of repentance? Your not being able to repent, therefore, is not a valid reason for hesitating to accept Christianity." "It is very true," he replied: "but knowing that repentance is the great doctrine of the Gospel, and

thinking that, if it could be proved to be the doctrine of nature and reason, we shall have no need of the Gospel, in that respect at least, I was prepared to argue thus." "Very well," I said. "To make a rational system, in which repentance shall be necessary and useful, you would have assumed, no doubt, a future state of retribution; and then repentance comes in, does it not, to avert the punishment which might otherwise have been inflicted in that future state?"

"That is the way in which I should have argued," he replied, "but it would be ridiculous to do so now, when I stand confessed a sinner, an impenitent, incorrigible sinner; or corrected only, as to the practice of sin, by the uncontrollable effects of my disease, not by any voluntary change of sentiment. No, no! A state of retribution is not a state of my choice, or a state for *me*; nor is repentance, which should be preparatory to it; although repentance and retribution may be a discovery of that natural light which I might have pretended to reckon sufficient for us." "Repentance," I said, "in the way in which it may be entirely useful to us, is not a discovery of nature; it is truly a Scripture doctrine. It is discoverable, indeed, by human reason, (not that human reason ever actually discovered it,) that the best thing which a wicked man can do, is to repent; so far nature may be supposed to dictate: but it is from Scripture alone that we learn the full extent of the efficacy of repentance, and why it is efficacious at all, namely, because of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. Then again, as to retribution, you know very well that the notions of the vulgar about it were mere fables and absurdities; you know, also, how the ancient philosophers disputed about a future state, and that they

had no clear conceptions of it,—no, not even the wisest amongst them; and very few amongst them, indeed, had any idea of things being set right in that state by a just apportionment of rewards and punishments. Socrates, perhaps, came nearest to it. It was finely said by him, that for a righteous man, whether living or dying, it must be well; and when he was pressed with the supposition, that in this life every possible calamity and injustice might befall his righteous man, he seems to insinuate, on that very ground, that another life was necessary to remedy the irregularities of this; to reward suffering virtue, and to punish successful vice. But, in truth, the whole business, in all its detail, is a matter of revelation. Deeply thinking men, like Socrates, might have caught some glimmerings of a reckoning to be made hereafter;—but of the awful day of a general judgment, the great Judge himself, the sentence which he will pronounce, and the everlasting rewards and punishments to follow it, of these they could have learnt nothing by reason and argument;—all these are purely doctrines of Scripture. But this is scarcely to our present purpose. You no longer consider it worth contending for, whether repentance and retribution be discoveries of nature, or of the Gospel; if retribution be to take place, and the sinner must be condemned without repentance, in whatever way he comes to the knowledge of it, repentance is his great sheet-anchor, and he must cling to it inseparably to escape the wreck of his immortal soul.”

“Aye, aye,” he exclaimed, “but I should not have allowed the immortality of the soul.” “No,” I said, “nor the being of a God either, for we must have come to that at last.” He blushed but continued.

“ Perhaps not, if I had persevered in the same sentiments with which I set out this morning ; and I should have probably argued, that, unless the immortality of the soul and the being of a God were established on the firmest grounds, nothing else could be admitted for a moment. Not that I do not myself think that there is a God, and that the soul is immortal, instinctively, as it were, when I reflect seriously upon it ; but I foolishly fancied that it would be some relief to my mind, if, when the question was argued, there should appear to be any failure of proof. But I yield so far ; the suspicion, I am sure, would for ever haunt me ; I will debate it therefore no more. There is a God ; and the soul, for *me*, shall be henceforth immortal, and consequently destined to be judged hereafter for its doings here. I grant this ; and therefore also, that, if possible, it must be cleansed by repentance from the stains with which this world may have defiled it. Repentance, then, I admit in theory, but I do not find how to practise it. At present my only sorrow is, that I can no longer pursue the enjoyments which constituted my former happiness ; and you will not deign, I presume, to call *this* repentance.”

“ No, indeed,” I said, “ I should betray you if I did ; the truth must not be concealed from you by *me*. *That* which you describe, is no godly sorrow, the fruit of real penitence ; it is a mere worldly sorrow—a sorrow which produces death and not life—which would destroy the soul to all eternity, instead of cleansing it for eternal happiness. But, strictly speaking, it is the blood of Christ only which cleanses from all sin. No repentance can undo, in any sense, what has once been done. In *Him*, therefore, must

you lay your foundation ; you must build upon that rock ; from faith towards *Him* must spring the true repentance, which is never to be repented of itself. This repentance, believe me, is no merely human work, and therefore as yet you have it not ; you seek it not from above, from whence alone it comes, by the instrumentality of the third person in the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, who, with the Father and the Son together, is one God. I told you that this doctrine was no idle speculation, and now you may begin to feel so yourself."

"I remember," he said, "what you asserted about this doctrine very well ; it appeared so exceedingly extraordinary to me, that I could not indeed readily forget it. But you laid, I think, the greatest stress upon the divinity of Jesus Christ, without the acknowledgment of which you affirmed that a man wishing to be a Christian could not stir a single step ; in short, that he would have no inducement to set about the task of repentance and reformation of life, because he could not know or suppose that any atonement for sin had been made. I cannot describe to you how difficult all this appears to me ; you must go back therefore, if you please, to these points : but I am prepared, I assure you, to listen to your explanations, or to debate the matter with you, in a very different spirit from what I had intended. Before, I trembled at the idea of believing such things ; now, I fear lest I may never be brought to believe them."

I glanced at Mrs. Harrison, and I imagined, by her look and gestures, that she was secretly thanking God for this wonderful change in the tone and sentiments of her brother, and imploring His aid for the great work which still remained. Much indeed

was done, but much was still to do, and could only be done by the divine help. I acknowledge that help already, for never did any conversation begin with so little prospect of success as on this day. In the very outset it was turned out of the channel in which the sceptic himself designed it to proceed, and took a much more fortunate range, as was proved by the event. But how to take advantage of the present favourable posture of things was the problem now to be solved, and before I had thought one single minute about it, the coach stopped. We had arrived without being aware of it on the ridge of a hill, which formed a natural terrace of a considerable length, from whence, on both sides, there was a rich, diversified prospect of the surrounding country. On the western side particularly, the scenery was strikingly magnificent; the declivity of the hill was clothed with a fine hanging wood down to the bottom, except that here and there some rugged rocks, in various picturesque forms, started out from amongst the trees, and filled the eye with surprise and delight. Below in the depths of the valley, a river was winding along, of ample dimensions, and all alive with sails. On its banks were countless villas glittering in the sun. Tracing the stream downwards, you saw it at the distance of some miles approaching the great town in our neighbourhood, the spires and towers of which were clearly discernible. Some blue hills, very remote, made the back-ground of the picture.

Such was the view from the carriage itself, well able to charm away every sorrow, and to disperse every gloom, but that of despair. Mr. Compton was very desirous that his sister, who was a stranger to it, should be conducted to various points not accessible

but on foot ; and that she should have time to admire everything. I took her, therefore, under my charge to the first seat, a little below the brow of the hill, where a glade, opened through the wood, let in the chief features of the landscape. Whilst we were seated there, Mr. Compton drove backwards and forwards on the greensward at the top.

Mrs. Harrison was sufficiently awake to the beauties of this enchanting scene ; but the state of her brother was nearest to her heart ; so, after a little delay, she said to me, “ Indeed, Dr. Warton, I flatter myself that we have advanced many steps to-day. I had a little glimmering of hope in my mind, when my brother made such an arrangement as to leave Mr. Harrison at home, for he feels towards him a degree of reserve which would prevent him from unbo-soming his real sentiments in his presence, on so momentous a subject as that of religion ; but the hope vanished, when he refused to answer your questions ; and then again was suddenly realised by the free, unexpected declaration of his opinions, and still more by his avowal of a determination to confer amicably with you, and to relinquish all cavilling in your future discussions on Christianity.” “ Very well, my dear Madam,” I replied ; “ but how are we now to proceed ?” “ We depend entirely upon your judgment and kindness,” she answered ; “ but he has himself pointed out some topics, which he wishes to understand, and which are, at the same time, of essential consequence to the faith and practice of every Christian ; you will, without doubt, be so good as to go on with the work which you have begun, and explain those topics to him.” “ By all means,” I said ; “ but what is to be the mode of explanation ? Will

he admit the Scriptures, and be satisfied with texts produced out of them? Or must we pursue a different method?" "I fear it will be necessary," she replied, "to pursue a different method?" "If he admits the Scriptures, his conviction will be an easy task to you." "I am not so sure of *that*," I said: "it will certainly be a most astonishing point gained; but he may dispute about the interpretation. Suppose he were to say, when pressed with a text, that different sects of religionists interpreted that text in different ways, and then argue, that it is impossible for him to know which is in the right?" "He will yield, I think, to *your* authority, Dr. Warton," she answered: "besides, you will be able to cite the text in the original language; and as my brother was educated at Oxford, and before that at a great school, I should hope that he had not so entirely forgotten his Greek, as to be incompetent to judge of your arguments." "If that be the case," I said, "we shall proceed smoothly and rapidly, so far as the interpretation is concerned. But to understand Christianity, and to be a Christian one's self, are almost as wide from each other as east from west. Whence is to come the Christian spirit? But I do not despair, with God's blessing." "I trust not," she replied; "so, if you please, we will quit this beautiful spot, after snatching another hasty view of it, and return to the object of our solicitude."

Upon this, she rose from the seat; and when I had told her to whom some of the most attractive residences belonged, we reascended the hill; and having soon met the carriage, we resumed our places in it, and the coachman was ordered to drive homewards. Something was said about the noble pros-

pects which we had just been viewing, and Mrs. Harrison thanked her brother for bringing her to see them ; but the more important matter, which had engaged us before, seemed still to be in possession of all our faculties. Mr. Compton himself was satisfied with making a very few inquiries, and was evidently anxious to revert to the former subject of conversation. I was ready to follow wherever he might choose to lead me, and I waited to see if he would propose anything ; but before he did so, Mrs. Harrison, alarmed at the waste of such precious moments, interrupted the painful silence, and prepared the way for the renewal of our religious discussions.

“ Well, my dear brother,” she said, “ I am longing to get back to the point at which we stopped upon our arrival at this beautiful scene. I find that I receive from these discussions an accession to my knowledge, and a confirmation of my faith. Will you mention, therefore, to Dr. Warton what chiefly presses upon your mind under the present circumstances ?” “ I am thinking about it,” was his answer ; “ and it appears to me, that it would clear the road for the reception of other things, if Dr. Warton would enlarge a little upon repentance. It is a dictate of nature, to a certain limit at least ; although I am aware that the main dependance of the heathens was upon sacrifice. If they offended their gods, they looked to sacrifice, I believe, and not to repentance, as the means of reconciliation with them. How they came to think of sacrifices, which seem quite out of the way, and to neglect repentance, which so slight an effort of reason might have taught them, I am totally at a loss to conjecture.

However, in the course of ages and the progress of discovery, which is the same in morals as in other things, we may naturally suppose that repentance would be discovered; and if a real reform took place in the lives of men, what more could be desired? What need of such a scheme as the Christian atonement, which appears to *me* inexplicable?"

"A plausible, if not a satisfactory, explanation may be found," I said, "for the several matters which you propose to me. With respect to sacrifice, the origin may be doubtful; but the rite itself seems to point very clearly to the doctrine of atonement. If men themselves were the inventors of sacrifice, it is hardly possible, one should think, but that they must have had a decided notion of atoning for their sins by the death of another animal in their own stead. By such a proceeding an acknowledgment might have been implied, that they deserved death in their own persons, but that they trusted to the mercy of their deities to accept the death of some less valuable living creature substituted for them. On the other hand, if sacrifice was an original injunction of God himself, there can be no doubt whatever of its being intended to accustom the minds of men, from the beginning, to the idea of an atonement; that they might be the better prepared to understand, and accept, the great atonement that was made, by the one sacrifice of Christ, once for all, for the sins of the whole world; when all other sacrifices were thenceforth to be abolished, and men were in future to put their trust in *that* alone. At all events, when God selected the Jews for a particular purpose, he adopted the rite of sacrifice; and the sacred authors tell us, that all the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, and

that of the Paschal Lamb especially, were but types and shadows of the sacrifice of Christ, to which alone they owed all their efficacy.

“ With respect to repentance, which you think so natural, if men fell into the way of sacrifice in preference to it, though you cannot account for sacrifice, you ought to conclude, that they were aware of some great difficulty, or some great defect in repentance, which occasioned them to neglect it. The difficulty might be, that they were reluctant to amend their lives ; and the defect, that repentance was no atonement. Whatever might be their future conduct, still they might expect to be punished for the past ; and consequently there was such a want of encouragement to abandon vice and pursue virtue, that few resorted to repentance, and still fewer proposed it as a remedy. But how different is the case under our holy religion ! Atonement is the very corner-stone of the whole building ; an atonement, too, not by the blood of bulls and goats, which had no value, except in consequence of God’s appointment and promise ; but by the blood of the Son of God, which had an inherent value of its own, inestimable and infinite, and was therefore adequate to purge away the sins of all mankind. On the strength of this atonement, however we may lament the past, yet if we obey God’s righteous laws in future, we need not fear. Another has been bruised for our iniquities ; the sins of us all were laid on *Him* ; and by his stripes we are healed. God is perfectly reconciled to us ; we may cast off the burdensome load of former guilt which weighed us to the ground, and begin a new career with unimpeded vigour and unincumbered hopes.

“ Upon the whole, the doctrine of an atonement seems to accord with the common sense of mankind ; and although, as I said early in the morning, they might have thought repentance the best method of proceeding in cases of sin, yet they could never have thought that even the most perfect repentance would undo the past, or, in other words, be a sufficient reason to induce the Deity to overlook it. A simple change of life does nothing towards the vindication of God’s violated laws ; the divine sanction is trampled upon with manifest impunity ; there is no punishment to operate as an example to others, or a penalty to the offenders themselves. This system, it is plain, would not do for human governors, and much less will it do for the great moral Governor of the universe. But by our Gospel system his justice is satisfied, and his wrath appeased ; and he can now, therefore, without any impeachment of his other attributes, exercise the lovely attribute of mercy. He can pardon upon repentance.”

When I had finished, Mrs. Harrison exclaimed immediately, not waiting for Mr. Compton to speak, “ Now, my good brother, how does this matter appear to you ? I confess at once for myself, that I never saw it so clearly before. Dr. Warton, you set out with telling us, that we were only to expect a plausible solution of the suggested difficulties ; at least you spoke with diffidence of your being able to give a satisfactory one : but to *me*, I assure you, this is quite satisfactory, and I think it must be so to *you*, brother.”

So much ingenuousness on the part of Mrs. Harrison appeared to produce a good effect on Mr. Compton, and he said, “ What you have advanced,

Dr. Warton, appears certainly to be well worthy of a most attentive consideration; but the Christian scheme would be more intelligible to *me*, if it were merely an abolition of the tedious and costly ceremonies of sacrifice; a confirmation of what nature prompted in respect to repentance; and the admission of it as the cancelling of the past. Then I would accept Jesus Christ for a person divinely commissioned to republish, in its best form, and with its greatest force, the whole law of nature, and more particularly the essential doctrine of the efficacy of repentance; to give mankind clearer and more consistent notions of a future state of rewards and punishments; and to bear witness to his own sincerity, and to the truth of what he preached, by his sufferings and death. This I can understand very well; when I go out of these bounds, I am like a man wading beyond his depth in some dark and fathomless ocean."

"Then," I said, "you would consider Jesus Christ (setting aside his divine mission) in the same light as you would Socrates, or rather, perhaps, as Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer; as a martyr, and not a Redeemer and Saviour?" "I would," he answered; "*that* is the easiest way of viewing the matter, and of explaining it." "It may seem so," I said, "at first sight, perhaps, and theoretically, if you leave the Scriptures out of the question. But have you thought at all how to get rid of the Scriptures, or of the particular passages which militate directly against your theory, or how to reconcile them with it?" "No, I have not," he confessed; "my theory is but just come into my imagination, in consequence of our recent conferences." "Well, then, I must tell

you," I said, "that the Gospel is totally irreconcilable with such a theory, nor could you make it otherwise by any cutting and slashing whatever. The doctrines and the history are so interwoven together, that you cannot separate them without destroying the whole. It is like the coat woven throughout from the top to the bottom without a seam; it is not to be parted; you may cast lots upon it, if you please, but you must take all or none."

Here I paused for his answer; and, after appearing to turn the matter over in his thoughts for a few moments, he said, "I am not disposed to debate with you to-day the genuineness of the Scriptures. That there was such a person as Jesus Christ; that he was the founder of the Christian religion; and that he was put to death by crucifixion, we know from heathen authors; and I believe that all the further information which we have about himself and his religion, in the vast variety of books that have been written upon the subject, is either fabulous or taken from the Scriptures themselves. At all events, I will admit them for the present, as the fountain head from which we must draw materials for argument." "To come to the point then at once," I said, "take that memorable text, which I have already quoted for another purpose; having mentioned it before, it suggests itself first to my mind now;—'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Now, what a number of particulars have we here, which are quite inexplicable on *your* supposition. First, Jesus Christ is not simply a man, like one of the prophets or martyrs. Secondly, he is the Son of God in so peculiar

and appropriate a sense as to be God's only begotten Son. Thirdly, it is necessary to believe in him, a distinction which none of the prophets or martyrs ever arrogated to themselves. Fourthly, the consequence of believing in him is two-fold ; an escape from perishing like the brutes, or from being punished eternally like the devils ; and the attainment of immortality, or of infinite bliss and glory. And fifthly, that God gave him to the world, because he loved the world in an extraordinary degree, and for the very purpose that the world might believe in him, and thus be saved from wrath and admitted into grace. Whether we comprehend these things or not, makes no difference now : this is the brief outline of the Christian religion, and you cannot square it to your theory. The single expression, that God gave him, leads inevitably to the most momentous conclusions — Gave him for what ? Undoubtedly, to die. And why to die ? That men may believe in him, you are expressly told. Yes ; and what is more, that their belief in him may purchase for them the astonishing gift of everlasting life. But what has their believing in him, as a person who died, to do with their own attainment of life ? Ah ! Mr. Compton, in what other way shall we attempt to explain this but as the rest of the Scriptures explain it ? Why, he died for *them* ; *his* death was the atonement for *their* sins ; and by their faith in him they are put into a capacity of reaping the benefits of that death, which are, freedom from guilt and punishment, and restoration to righteousness, happiness, and immortality."

After saying so much I stopped, as before, to ascertain whether he was satisfied, or not ; but before he had determined what his reply should be,

Mrs. Harrison interposed, and reminded us of the form in which our blessed Lord and Saviour had instituted the holy sacrament of his body and blood. "Upon presenting the bread, his words were, 'Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you;' and upon presenting the wine, his words were, 'This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins.'" "They are decisive," I said, "both that his being given implied his death, and that his death was a sacrifice—the shedding of his blood for the remission of sins marks the atonement incontestably; and it is the general doctrine of Scripture, that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission. What is your opinion of this, Mr. Compton?"

"That all the heathens," he answered, "trusted in their sacrifices, I have allowed already, and it cannot be denied; and the Jews also did the same. Now, might not Jesus Christ, being a Jew, have taken advantage of this feature in the Jewish law, and so represent his own death as to make it appear to accord with that law, as well as with the prejudices of the heathens?" "What?" I said; "before his death took place? If his partisans had done this after his death, he himself having given no hint of it during his life, the objection might have been worth considering. But in the way in which you put it, it is not tenable for a moment. Besides, the very supposition that he represented things differently from what they really were, insinuates that he was an impostor or an enthusiast; an impostor, if he knowingly stated an untruth; an enthusiast, if he ever fancied himself to be appointed as a sacrifice and atonement for the sins of mankind, whilst he had no claim to so

sublime an office. But his whole character, and all his actions, and all the rest of his doctrines, and every precept which he delivered, negative at once the insinuation of imposture and enthusiasm. He preached and was the pattern of every virtue; he performed miracles; he foretold future events; he foretold his own death, exactly as it occurred; and I must, therefore, believe that his death was what he represented it to be."

"Well, Dr. Warton," he said, "suppose we relinquish this charge for the present. I should be glad to know whether the oriental manner of speaking figuratively will not account for a great deal, without resorting to such difficult doctrines, which, in fact, rest upon the mere letter. In the institution of the sacrament, for instance, which my sister has just mentioned, you dispute against the Roman Catholics, for a figurative in preference to a literal meaning." Then, like a person pleased with a new thought, which he imagines will work wonders, he added, "I suspect, that if this figurative mode of speaking be well considered, it would enable us to solve, in a simple manner, much that is perplexing to the intellect, and revolting to our most deeply rooted feelings, if taken literally."

"It has been well considered long ago," I answered; "and with respect to the prophetic parts of the Bible, which are most figurative, it is not difficult to establish certain rules, by which the true meaning may be fixed. Sometimes the prophecy itself is afterwards explained, as our Saviour explained his parables; sometimes one part of a prophecy, which is dark, is explained by another part which is clear; sometimes, again, one whole obscure pro-

phesy is illustrated by others which are less so ; and there are various ways besides, which might be mentioned, if it were necessary to go fully into the subject. You may conceive, therefore, how the language of prophecy comes at length to be pretty well understood ; but with respect to the doctrines of the New Testament, the same modes are not so applicable. Indeed the expression is in general not figurative, but perfectly simple. I do not mean, however, that one thing does not help to explain another ; or that parts of a thing may not help to explain the whole ; but only that no general rules of interpretation can precisely be laid down. Take an example from what Mrs. Harrison suggested to us. Our Lord said, that no man could be saved without eating his flesh and drinking his blood ; and this appeared to many of his followers to be a doctrine so hard of digestion, that they absolutely abandoned him rather than embrace it. Yet he told them, in that particular case, that his words were not to be interpreted literally, although he did not then tell them what the true meaning was. And perhaps we should never have known it, if it had not been afterwards explained by the institution of the sacrament of the bread and wine, which he called his body and blood, and which he enjoined us all to eat and drink, in memory of his death, to the end of the world. Thus every difficulty arising from the figurative mode of expression might well be supposed to have been entirely cleared away. But the Roman Catholics were not willing to think so, and they will still have *that* to be literal, which he insinuated to be spiritual, or figurative ; and consequently, they invented, and continue to uphold, their doctrine of transubstantiation, to explain the words ‘ this is my

body,' and 'this is my blood.' Here, however, for the right explanation of *these* expressions, we may justly refer them to the innumerable similar forms of expression, which are undoubtedly figurative; 'I am the vine;' 'I am the gate,' and a thousand others. The meaning of these is evident at once; and I do not see why the meaning of the sacrament form should puzzle anybody more than they do.

"Take another instance of a doctrine which has been also previously mentioned; 'I and my Father are one.' Viewing this in the abstract, it might mean, first, I and my Father are one Person; but when we go to the original, and observe that the expression is *ἐν*, and not *εἰς*, we give up that interpretation at once. Next then it must mean, I and my Father are one thing; but in what sense one thing? There is some union between them undoubtedly; but whether a union of sentiment only, or of substance, and consequently of sentiment too, we cannot decide by this passage alone. If it be a union of substance which *we* of this church affirm, then the expression *ἐν* is literal; if it be a union of sentiment only, the expression is figurative; and we cannot decide the question, without a comparison of this passage with others, and, perhaps, not without a large view of the whole Gospel.

"You will perceive by these examples that your suggestion has been attended to, when the reason of the thing demands it, and when it is warranted by the rest of Scripture; but in the case of the doctrine of the atonement, the expressions seem to admit but of a single meaning, and *that* the literal one. Those expressions too are to be met with perpetually. The very word 'ransom' defies, I think, the possibility of per-

version, and settles the question for ever. 'He gave his life a ransom for many.' How can you, by any stretch of ingenuity, interpret this otherwise than that the death of Christ was in the stead of the death of others?"

"That is a very strong term, certainly," he replied in a tone of moderation, "nor do I know how to rebut your interpretation of it; but I cannot so easily reconcile myself to the doctrine, which, in its literal sense, it implies. After all, however, if a ransom were necessary, or expedient, might it not have been paid by a mere man, supposing him to be a man of perfect justice, and one who fulfilled the whole moral law of virtue and goodness?" "Unfortunately," I said, "your scheme abounds with insuperable difficulties. First, where will you find such a man? The world never produced a phoenix of that sort; and there is an end of the matter. But, secondly, if you could find such a person, how would his life or death operate as an atonement for others? Will you adopt the Roman Catholic notion, and assume, that he might perform works of supererogation, and so leave behind him an abundant stock of merit, out of which the deficiency of all others may be supplied for ever? No, no; this is too ridiculous. I ask you, is not every man, in every situation in which he may be placed, under a sort of moral obligation, to act according to the most perfect law of his nature, or according to the best light which he enjoys?" He allowed it. "Can he then," I asked again, "do more than his duty, or more than is proper and right for himself?" "I believe," he answered, "that I must grant he cannot." "Well, then," I said, "his power of making an atonement

for others is quite out of the question. It vanishes at once, and we are compelled to resort to some one, who is more than man; to some one, who, possessing indeed the human nature, and executing in that nature, by the help of a divine Spirit residing within him, every particle of the moral law of righteousness, has something far greater and better to offer for the fallen race of mankind, to propitiate an offended God, and to reconcile Him to them; even the transcendent, unspeakable merit of a Being, who, having himself the form of God, hesitated not to empty himself of all his eternal splendour and glory, to hide himself under a poor degraded vesture of mortal flesh, and to submit to pain, and ignominy, and death; thus becoming a sacrifice infinite in value, and commensurate with the infinite extent of sin. O what an argument for love, and obedience, on our parts! O what a pattern of condescension and humility for *us* to imitate in our conduct to our fellow-creatures! But, above all, what a lesson of awe and fear! How forcibly calculated to inspire us with a thorough hatred and abhorrence of sin; that monstrous evil, which God would not, or could not pardon, without a sacrifice, so wonderfully, so incomparably great!"

Just at this moment the carriage stopped at the Rectory, and so, without waiting for any reply, I jumped out, and left them.

§ 2.—*Mr. Compton, Mr. Langstone, &c.*

REFLECTING afterwards upon this long conversation, when I was sitting quietly at home in the course of the same day, I could not but flatter myself, that, upon the whole, great good had been done. That he was convinced upon all the branches of the subject which we had discussed, I was far from thinking; but that his mind was satisfied upon some points, and his opinions shaken upon others, I had no doubt whatever. With respect to a real, practical repentance, I did not yet expect it. More pain and suffering, and less chance of returning to the world, seemed necessary to wean him from it in a sufficient degree to make a solid basis for an effectual change of his heart and affections. But things, I trusted, were in the right train, if it might please God to prolong his life for a certain period. A sudden death, however, was to be feared; and a sudden death would probably ruin every thing. Under all these circumstances, therefore, delay was dangerous, and most sedulously to be avoided; yet events could not be hastened, nor opportunities be created at will.

With these impressions I called very early in the afternoon of the following day. Mrs. Harrison was gone out, but Mr. Harrison, for whom I next inquired, informed me that Mr. Compton, after a restless night, had got up late, and was laid as usual on the sofa, and had no spirits to attempt anything else. Orders, however, had been given that no visitors should be denied admittance to him; so Mr. Harrison, without scruple, conducted me to him at once; but he was unable to satisfy my cu-

riosity as to the results of yesterday. Mr. Compton, he said, had been very silent and thoughtful during the whole evening after his return from the drive, and had made no remark, even to his sister, upon the conversation which had passed, although she tried often to lead him to it. Yet it was evident that he was full of it, and that his mind was deeply at work upon the grave matters which had been debated between us. Nor had night and solitude, as far as Mr. Harrison could ascertain, afforded any truce to his troubled thoughts.

Being hastily informed of these particulars as we ascended the staircase, I expressed my fears upon first seeing him, lest yesterday's ride might have been too much for his strength; but he assured me that he had felt no unusual fatigue in consequence of it, and that, as for sleepless nights, they were his almost constant companions: "and I hope," he said, "that I have profited by the last, in mind at least, if not in body." Upon this I was all attention to hear what account he would give of himself, and without doubt he would have proceeded to gratify my eager desire of getting to the bottom of his feelings, had not a servant at this very moment announced the name of Mr. Langstone. "Where is he?" cried Mr. Compton. "He is on horseback at the door," answered the servant; "and he bade me say, Sir, that he wished very much to see you." "By all means, then, bring him up," said Mr. Compton. "But what shall we do with *you*, Dr. Warton?" he added, when the servant had disappeared. "Mr. Langstone is rather brisk in his manners, and, I fear, has no respect for the clergy, to whose society he has been entirely unaccustomed; and he will

probably assail me with many an arrow out of his quiver of raillery, if he should discover that I have talked so much of late with one of that cloth. Will you call another time, or will you step into the adjoining room, and wait till he goes?" "I will stay where I am," I replied, "if you will allow me. I am curious to see this redoubted knight, and perhaps I shall break a lance with him. I know his character full well, and I must prevent him, if I can, from doing you mischief."

Mr. Compton was in a terrible fright when he heard my determination; but before he could attempt to change it, Mr. Langstone entered, and exclaimed, as he rapidly approached the sofa, "Well, Compton, how are you, my good fellow? Better, I hope, and likely to be amongst us again soon. But where is Laura, '*amata nobis, quantum amabitur nulla?*'" Mr. Compton held out his hand, but said nothing. He was vexed, as I supposed, that I should discover with what sort of persons, and how, he had spent his days; but he evidently feared still more lest he should be covered with shame, when his weakness in admitting a clergyman to converse with him on matters of religion should become known to this blunt and profligate votary of pleasure. And that Mr. Langstone would both blab everything, and find out everything, he had little doubt; so heedless was he of character, and so likely to pester him with questions about Laura, and his present plans, and what not.

Mr. Langstone grasped Mr. Compton's hand, and exclaimed again, "What, man, not a word to greet me after two months' absence? Not a word about yourself? No Laura, as in the good old times?"

At last the sick man said, "Oh, Langstone, I have been very ill! The game was nearly up, and the lamps put out! I totter still on the brink of the grave!" "Come, come," cried the other, "cheer up, man! you will not die this bout, I warrant you." Then suddenly turning round, and seeing Mr. Harrison and me, who had risen upon his entrance, and had not reseated ourselves, "What," he said, "are these your doctors? why, I believe, I have dropped in upon you in the midst of a consultation. Well, gentlemen, what is your opinion of my friend's case?" He would have run on, but seeing us look very grave, he stopped short in his career, and Mr. Compton immediately said, pointing to each of us in succession, "That is Mr. Harrison, my brother-in-law, and this is Dr. Warton." Upon this Mr. Langstone bowed slightly to Mr. Harrison, and when I was prepared for the same civility, he drawled out in the attitude of one thinking, "Dr. Warton? Why, is not Dr. Warton the parson of your parish, whom we used to—— I beg his pardon; the rector I should have called him." "Oh! it does not matter, Sir," I said, smiling; "if you look into Blackstone, you will find that parson is the more honourable title." And then addressing myself to Mr. Compton, I told him that his friend Mr. Langstone seemed to expect to find an M. D. rather than a D. D. by his side; but that there were times, perhaps, when the D. D. might be the most useful, although I hoped that in his case the M. D. might be useful too.

Mr. Compton shook his head, and said, "Well, well: sit down all of you. What will become of *me* is very doubtful. But I must introduce you, Langstone, to Dr. Warton. If he were not present, I

would describe him to you." "You have often done it," exclaimed Langstone sneeringly, and interrupting him. "Which description am I to abide by, that of Compton well, or that of Compton sick? That of the courageous or that of the timorous Compton? That of the enemy or that of the slave to superstition?" This was a difficult attack for Mr. Compton to parry. It disconcerted and abashed him, and the more so, because he had been every moment in expectation of it, and he was yet too much of a novice in the ways of religion to withstand even a single sarcasm. The seed had fallen upon ground which lacked moisture and depth of soil, and therefore was too likely to wither away upon the first attack of heat.

With the hope of being able to throw a shield before him, I interposed and said, "It is no wonder, if men see things with a different eye in sickness and in health; nor does it follow that the courage which health inspires, is a wise courage, or the fear which is inspired by sickness a foolish fear. Another thing, too, I have generally observed—that the enemies of true religion are the greatest slaves to superstition. Have you none of these, Mr. Langstone, amongst your own acquaintance? Mr. Compton, I dare say, has ridiculed me often under other circumstances. I beg he will make no excuses about it. His change of conduct is the best apology; and I trust that he will have no cause to regret, but every cause to rejoice, in that change. If his fears have wrought upon him, I admire and applaud his present fears more than his former courage. I will venture to use a strong term: his former courage was nothing but fool-hardihood. The ap-

proach of death is terrible to all. What must it be to one who knows not whither he is going? It has pleased God, merciful in the midst of severity, to shew Mr. Compton his irresistible power, without striking him to the ground; and Mr. Compton has the wisdom to look to the hand which inflicts the blow with awe and fear; and to reflect within himself, and to advise with persons of supposed competence (with the parson, if you will), upon the steps which are to be taken by one in his precarious condition. It is too desperate a plunge to be made blindfold. So thought Lord Rochester—one of the wittiest and most profligate of men, whilst his courage, as you call it, supported him; but, at length, when assailed by the King of Terrors, a willing, and a patient, and a humble listener to the arguments and the counsels of a Christian bishop.”

Thus I spoke, with very little idea of producing any good effect upon Mr. Langstone, but with the greatest of doing good to Mr. Compton; into whom I endeavoured to infuse right sentiments by a side-wind, as it were, and by assuming that he acted on the principles which I conceived to be proper for him. He made no remark; nor did Mr. Langstone at once. All he did at first was to stare with astonishment; sometimes at *me*, sometimes at Mr. Compton, sometimes at Mr. Harrison. But very soon suspecting by our countenances, I suppose, that we were all in earnest, and all of the same opinion, he exclaimed, “Upon my honour, Dr. Warton, it makes no difference to *you*, I perceive, whether you are in or out of your pulpit, or with or without your surplice. You can preach equally well in any place, and in any garb. But as you mention

that fellow Rochester—that most cowardly of all poltroons, that base betrayer and belier of his own principles, of the principles of his whole life—I must tell you, that Compton and I have long ago made up our minds about his character; and that we thoroughly despise him, mean wretch as he was!”

The acrimony and the malignity with which Mr. Langstone uttered this philippic against Lord Rochester are quite indescribable. He almost gnashed his teeth with rage; and whilst the storm lasted, none of us attempted to speak: but having had its vent, it soon subsided; and he resumed in a milder tone, “No, no, Sir! we shall not imitate this hero of yours, whom the men of your black cloth are so fond of quoting; we are made of firmer stuff—I and Compton; we have none of those womanish fears.” “God only knows,” I said, with a solemnity which thrilled the sick man—“God only knows,” I reiterated the momentous truth, “who shall be indulged and blessed with the opportunity of imitating Lord Rochester! They who wish for it, may wish for it too late; they who seek after it, may seek too late; and they who disdain the thought of it, must abide the perilous issue. It is throwing the dice for their lives; or rather, I should say, for their souls!” Then relaxing into a different tone, I continued thus: “But why, Mr. Langstone, should you make so sure of Mr. Compton’s opinions on this point? A wise man changes his opinions according to circumstances, and as new light breaks in upon him. May not Mr. Compton, therefore, think differently now of Lord Rochester from what he did formerly, in the same manner, as it is plain by your seeing me here, that he thinks differently of *me*?” “Nothing is too

absurd to happen," he cried indignantly; "why Compton has you here by his side, he can best explain. Neither he nor I had any personal dislike to you, Dr. Warton; for we had no acquaintance with you whatever. It is the genus, not the individual, against which we bear arms, and would emancipate mankind, if we could, from their leading-strings. I tell you this fairly and openly; I am not a man of concealment. O, what mischiefs has Christianity produced in the world! and the clergy alone bolster it up from falling! They have bestridden us, and kept us in disgraceful subjection for ages. But with respect to Rochester, the foolish story about him pretends to tell us, that the prophecies, forsooth, converted him. Truly, if it were so, the man's intellect must have been turned topsy-turvy, as I rather indeed suspect; for never was there such a farrago of nonsense as those self-styled prophecies. I and Compton examined them together, Dr. Warton; and I know he agrees with me, that they are a heap of confusion, a mass of unintelligible, unconnected, incoherent rhapsodies—darker than the darkest oracles of the heathens themselves. If Rochester's conversion arose from these, Compton, I am confident, can never agree with him, or stoop to the same degradation." Thus he went on, in his own peculiar, dogmatical style, unused to contradiction, and expecting to bear down all before him.

"I am afraid, Mr. Langstone," I said coolly, in reply, "that you have not given yourself sufficient time to study the prophecies. May I be permitted to ask, whether you understand the original language in which they were written?" "What, the Hebrew? Not I, indeed," he answered petulantly. "But," I

asked again, "you have read, I presume, some or all of the great commentators, who have explained the prophecies?" "I read those musty folios and quartos!" he replied, as before. "No, in truth, I have not been guilty of such a waste of my eyes and my time, which have been better employed." "Well, Mr. Langstone," I said, "but you have looked at least into Lowth's translation of Isaiah, which is neither musty by age, nor ponderous in size, for it may be had in the convenient and inviting shape of an octavo?" He now became seriously angry upon being convicted of having taken no pains to understand what he had so harshly condemned; and he, therefore, asserted, with the greater positiveness and obstinacy, that "it would be the most absurd thing imaginable to sit down to study *that* which no study could render intelligible." "But Lowth," I said, "and many of the other translators and commentators were men of immense learning, and prodigious talents, were they not?" "They may be," he replied, "for what I know to the contrary. One thing I am sure of, that I shall never trouble myself to discover their blunders." "Well," I said, "whether they blundered or not, at least they must have supposed that the prophecies were capable of being made intelligible, by the help of translations, of notes, of commentaries, of criticisms, of paraphrases, of dissertations. Do not their very labours prove this?" "It matters not one hair what they supposed," he answered impatiently; "I stick to plain common sense, out of which I shall never be argued. Besides, was not Lowth advanced to the rank and wealth of a bishop? His evidence, therefore, is interested, and must be set aside. I suspect there are few of his

cloth who would not attempt to prove that black is white for the sake of a bishopric." "Set him aside, then," I said, "at once and without scruple, as well as all the rest of his fraternity. But there was one Newton, who wrote a dissertation upon the prophecies; not the eminent bishop of that name, who also wrote upon the same subject, but a much more eminent man—indeed the most eminent, perhaps, whom the world had seen, Sir Isaac I mean: that illustrious mathematician, who dived into the depth of Nature, and ascended victorious up to Nature's God; a layman too; no candidate for rich pluralities, or bishoprics; simple-minded, like a child, but in power of reasoning, mighty as a giant; in grasp of intellect sublime as an angel; what shall we do with *him*? Shall we set *him* aside also, as a hypocrite, or an idiot; or shall we not rather bow, as to a superior being, who bent the whole force of his vast and comprehensive genius to the explanation of the works and the word of God alike?"

Mr. Langstone not seeming to know exactly how to dispose of Newton, Mr. Compton interposed and said, "We who stand up for reason, Langstone, must take care to have reason on our side, and not to go against her. We cannot, therefore, deny the great authority of Newton; who must have thought the prophecies capable of being explained, and also of high consequence, or he would never have interrupted his mathematical pursuits, which brought him so much glory, for the sake of attending to those prophecies. But certainly, Dr. Warton, upon a cursory view of them, they did appear to *me*, as my friend Langstone has just stated, very obscure, very incoherent, and generally unintelligible. However, there is no won-

der that men attached to Christianity, whether from laudable or blameable motives, should attempt to explain them ; for Christianity cannot stand without them." "Very true," exclaimed Mr. Langstone, somewhat relieved by the latter part of Mr. Compton's speech : "this accounts perfectly for all the misplaced labours of so many bigots ; but the prophecies are lame legs for any thing to stand upon." "It is the more marvellous, then," I said, "that Christianity has stood so long upon such a rotten foundation, and seems likely to stand to the end of time. But how do you assert that Christianity cannot stand without the prophecies, Mr. Compton?" "I mean," he answered, "that the evidence of prophecy, be it what it may, is relied upon as one of the strongest." "A revelation from God," I said, "abstractedly speaking, requires not to be attested by evidence of any particular sort. All that is absolutely necessary is, that it should be attested by sufficient evidence of some sort or other. Now, miracles do this for Christianity ; and, therefore, all other evidences, and prophecies amongst the rest, might appear to be *ex abundanti*, and supererogatory ; and, consequently, not worthy of all that learning and talent which have been expended upon them. But the fact is, that Jesus Christ himself appealed to the prophecies in proof of his being the Messiah, and therefore we are bound to search the prophecies, to try his pretensions by his own test, and to see whether his appeal be founded in truth. If he had claimed to be simply a divine Messenger, miracles would have been enough for him ; but he claimed to be the Messiah, a particular divine Messenger, supposed to be promised and described in the prophecies ; and, therefore, we must of

necessity look into those prophecies, to ascertain whether he corresponds to the description there given of the Messiah, or not; and if we find no traces of him there, then, indeed, his religion cannot stand. It is important to understand this matter rightly, and therefore I have tried to place it on the proper footing."

Mr. Harrison had been hitherto silent, but at this point of the discussion he interfered very opportunely, and said, "I am sure we ought all of us to be much obliged to Dr. Warton, for his clear account of the only way in which the prophecies become an essential evidence of Christianity. I confess, at all events, however, for myself, that the subject had not struck me precisely in this light before, and I am glad to be better informed. But, then, now comes the great question, whether there are, indeed, to be found in the prophecies intelligible traces of such a person as Jesus Christ actually was, in all the leading circumstances of his history; or whether every thing in those prophecies relating to the Jewish Messiah be not so vague, and indefinite, and obscure, as to defy such an application, without being wrested and tortured unreasonably for the very purpose. I am aware that the best and the greatest of men, of the laity as well as of the clergy, have decided for themselves in the first affirmative; and to *their* authority I most willingly submit myself, being incompetent, with my own unassisted powers, to enter deeply enough into the investigation; and Mr. Langstone must excuse me, if I say, that I think his charges against the prophecies, thrown out at random, and in the absence of all proof of sufficient inquiry, are by no means weighty enough to be set

in the scale against the combined, accumulated judgment of the very soundest judges in the world. But nevertheless, I presume you will allow, Dr. Warton, that the prophecies are dark and obscure ; and if so, I should be gratified with hearing how you account for it."

This quiet and discreet way of arguing the question, and of asking for further information, was admirably adapted to Mr. Compton's situation, and conducted him gently to the point where we wished to lead him ; but it did not appear that Mr. Langstone's abrupt, and hasty, and decisive asseverations against Christianity were any impediment to us. Mr. Compton was conscious, no doubt, that he had been used to speak in the same manner himself, and he knew also with what little grounds of reason he had done so. Besides, he was probably now shocked in some degree at Mr. Langstone's trenchant, ungentlemanly tone, which would have passed unnoticed before, in the midst of their revels, or, perhaps, would have obtained his applause. It was by such violence of assertion and declamation that they formerly upheld one another in their infidel sentiments ; and it was not at the gaming-table, or in the company of such as Laura, that they were likely to acquire the softer tones of polished life. Yet he would not go so far as to check him pointedly. In fact, he was struggling between the false shame of being called an apostate from opinions which he had maintained with the same vehemence as Mr. Langstone, and the better conviction which began at length to take hold of his mind. The conflict was not yet finished, but as he had withstood the first brunt of it, the final issue was the less to be feared.

As for Mr. Langstone himself, I could not easily account to my own mind why he remained a moment longer with us, when he saw that two of the party had no value whatever for his authority ; and when he had also some reason to suspect that even his bosom friend, Mr. Compton, did not prize it as he had formerly done. It was manifest, that none of us would admit any thing upon his mere *ipse dixit*, or mistake bold calumniations for sound arguments ; and that we should try every sentence which he might utter, not by the uncertain rule of his own passions and prejudices, or by the false logic of his school, but by the sure criterion of truth. But it is a rare thing for a man of his stamp to submit to such trammels. Mr. Compton had done it reluctantly ; although chastened by affliction, and alarmed by the fear of death, and pressed by his sister, for whom he had a great regard, to confer with the parish-priest upon the evidences and doctrines of the Gospel. It might be that Mr. Langstone considered himself bound to await the termination of a discussion which he alone had provoked ; or that he might still entertain the hope to avert by some lucky turn the disgrace which impended over his fraternity, if Mr. Compton should desert them ; or, perhaps, his confidence was not a whit abated by the moderate rebukes which he had yet received ; or, after all, he might only stay, because he wished for an opportunity of being alone with Mr. Compton, and of sifting him with respect to his future intentions, and the rumoured changes in his mode of life.

Be this as it may, my own line was obvious before me. It was evidently my business to bear, without shrinking, whatever might arise ; to be calm and

patient under the reproaches that might be cast upon my profession and office, and not to return any personal disrespect shown to myself. I had now involved myself with Mr. Compton, and appeared to be in the way of obtaining some great advantage, which it would be very impolitic to sacrifice, or put to the hazard, from the want of exercising a certain degree of forbearance towards his friend, or from thinking that conceit, ill-humour, and petulance should be met and resisted with a similar spirit.

These reflections flashed across my mind before I replied to Mr. Harrison's proposition; but they occupied a few moments only, so that the pause was scarcely sensible, and then I said, "You consider the prophecies to be obscure, Mr. Harrison; and Mr. Langstone has pronounced the same opinion in the strongest terms. You have heard no doubt of Porphyry." "I have," said Mr. Harrison. "He was an early and inveterate enemy to Christianity." "Yes," added Mr. Langstone, "and he was a man of no mean ability; keen and shrewd, with an eye to pierce through every deceit and disguise. Flourishing too, as he did, in remote antiquity, he saw the beginnings closer at hand, and could, therefore, survey things with more accuracy. His opinion is of the greatest weight." Having thus quietly permitted Mr. Langstone to run himself down by his own impetuosity, I resumed and said, "Very well; Porphyry may be all, and more than you tell me; but, what is to our present purpose, he differed from you *toto cælo* with respect to the prophecies. Instead of thinking them dark, and obscure, and indefinite, on the very contrary, he thought them so clear and precise in their application, especially those of Daniel,

that he courageously maintained, against the utmost possible certainty itself, that they were written subsequently to the events which they pretend to foretel." "And pray, Dr. Warton," interposed Mr. Langstone, "how is it so certain that they were not written after the events, as Porphyry so ingeniously supposed?"

Here was a happy and admirable specimen of the turnings, and windings, and rapid transitions of a sceptic and free-thinker. In a moment he left his former position, without blushing, to shift for itself, and eagerly caught at something else which held out the shadow of a more favourable issue. However, I met him on his new ground, and told him, without being discomposed, that it was certain; first, because the whole of the Old Testament was known to have been translated into the Greek language, by order of one of the Ptolemies, about two hundred years before the Christian era, which version we now possess under the name of the Septuagint; and, secondly, because the prophecies were always in the custody of the Jews, who, being hostile to Christianity, would never admit any thing to be foisted into them which might favour it. Then I said, "Observe now how completely Porphyry is at variance with *you*. He brought forward this strangest and most untenable of all charges against the prophecies, in order to get rid at once of the argument from prophecy; and his charge is founded upon their supposed clearness, whereas you affirm that they are so obscure as to be quite unintelligible. But the fact is, that the truth, as is generally the case, lies between the two extremes, namely, that they are not so obscure as to be unintelligible after the events, nor so clear as to be intelligible before them. I do not mean that there

will not always be room for dispute in a variety of ways, and, in the case of some particular prophecies, even as to their fulfilment; but I say this, that prophecy accomplishes its object, if it be clear enough beforehand to excite hopes and expectations of fulfilment, and clear enough afterwards to satisfy unprejudiced minds that the fulfilment has really taken place. A certain degree of obscurity, meanwhile, is absolutely necessary beforehand to the accomplishment of this object, for you will not, I presume, contend, that it should be manifest at once, upon the delivery of the prophecy, exactly what the event is to be, and precisely when it is to occur, and what are all the instruments to be employed in bringing it about. This you would not expect, nor therefore complain of the want of it. You could only debate about the degree, and what degree of obscurity should still remain, if any at all should remain after the fulfilment of the prophecy, may admit of debate also; but certainly if no obscurity were to remain, faith would be at an end. We should have perfect demonstration instead of the highest probability; and therefore we should be entirely without any pretence of desert of any sort in believing, or rather we should be like those who have believed because they have seen, and have therefore no promise of any blessing attached to their conduct."

I expected to have been interrupted again and again during this long explanation; but Mr. Langstone had been rather disconcerted, and his keen edge perhaps somewhat blunted, by his having praised Porphyry so warmly, without being aware that his evidence was to be turned against him. However he was silent even when I had finished, and waited, I

suppose, for some better opportunity of attacking me. Mr. Harrison, I saw plainly, was prepared to approve and commend, most probably with sincerity, but at all events diplomatically, with a view to the benefit of Mr. Compton; but before he began what he intended to say, Mr. Compton himself replied to me. "Your theory, Dr. Warton," he said, "must needs be allowed to be a probable one. If what are called the prophecies be really prophecies, no doubt there should be such a mixture of clearness and obscurity about them as you mention, in order to effect the purpose for which they must be supposed to be intended. But, in point of fact, is this the case? Can it be satisfactorily made out by history or any well-known circumstances?" "It can," I answered; "in consequence of these very prophecies, which, if we were to read cursorily and partially, without any knowledge of the Hebrew language, and without the help of commentators, we might be tempted to pronounce an indigested mass of crudities (setting aside, however, for the present, the astonishing magnificence and sublimity of numerous particular passages); in consequence, I repeat it, of these very prophecies, the Jews did actually expect some extraordinary person to appear amongst them; and, what is more, they were in expectation of him about the time when Jesus Christ appeared. This is no *ipse dixit* of mine, invented for the occasion; it is attested by the Scriptures and by profane authors. And this expectation was not confined to the Jews, but extended to other nations, through the medium, no doubt, of the Jewish Scriptures. Tacitus and Suetonius mention the expectation as prevailing throughout the East from ancient times. '*Percrebuit toto Oriente vetus opinio.*'

You wish for facts ; what stronger fact can you have than this, that the Jews, on the ground of this expectation, undertook that desperate war against the Romans, which ended in the destruction of their city and temple, and in their own dispersion throughout the world ? For this irrefragable evidence I refer you to the Roman authors whom I have already mentioned, and to the Jew Josephus, not one of whom ever became a Christian. Be the prophecies then as obscure as they may, they were clear enough to raise the expectation which was designed, but not so clear as to prevent the possibility, when the Messiah came, of all cavilling and disputing about his being the person intended by those prophecies. To *me*, indeed, it seems astonishing, that the Jews should ever have doubted about it at all ; but the explanation of this fact, relied upon by learned men, cannot but be satisfactory to those who examine it. However, at this distance of time, we possess an advantage in estimating the question which the Jews of the Messiah's time could not have, namely, the establishment of the Christian religion, which proves incontestably that Jesus was the Christ."

"Certainly," said Mr. Harrison, "as the prophecies all along represent the Messiah to be the author of a new covenant founded upon the old one, and as Jesus Christ, claiming to be that Messiah, and accompanied with miraculous powers, promulgated a religion, which, against all human probabilities, soon established itself in the world, and exists in great veneration at this day, and seems to be diffusing itself more and more daily ; this is a fact, which is a wonderful evidence of the truth of his pretensions." Here Mr. Langstone, interrupting

him, exclaimed sarcastically, "Then Mahomet, most likely, is another Messiah, for he too was the founder of a new religion, which is widely received, and highly venerated by its own votaries; and, by-the-by, I now remember, that the Jews themselves talk of two Messiahs, a triumphant, and a suffering Messiah; and surely Mahomet may be truly called the triumphant one, for he triumphed by the sword, as well as by arguments, over the religion established by the other, and subdued many nations which supported it. What think you, Dr. Warton, of this impromptu theory of mine?" "I will not condemn it," I said, "because it is an impromptu, although I am in the habit of admiring the slow-grown fruits of meditation more than the hasty births of a random thought; but it is plain that your theory does not accord with Mr. Harrison's conditions, much less with all the conditions which might have been justly proposed. Mahomet was no Jew himself, and never claimed to be the Messiah of the Jews, and set up no pretence to miraculous powers, and propagated a religion which had many human probabilities in its favour, although in its establishment it was still wonderful enough, I allow. Then, as to the two Messiahs, that is a mere invention of the Jews to palliate their infidelity. The triumphant and the suffering Messiah are one and the same person, and never before were such opposite and even contradictory characters united together in so extraordinary a manner. None but a prophet could have conceived anything like it—at least none who wished to draw a character to agree with nature; and a prophet only could foreknow that a person fulfilling such a character, in all its parts, would hereafter exist.

And, on the other hand, this strangeness of the character made it the more difficult, nay, made it impossible, I might say, for an impostor to claim it with success. A man cannot at will both triumph and suffer, as the prophecies portray the fortunes of the Messiah; and accordingly we find, that all but one, who claimed that illustrious title, suffered, indeed, in some sense or other, but never triumphed in any sense. They suffered, I say; for in general they were discomfited and slain; but they did not suffer as the blessed Jesus suffered, and as Isaiah, in his 53rd chapter, foretold that he would suffer. Without doubt, Mr. Langstone, you have read that memorable chapter, which beyond all the other prophecies had such a surprising effect upon Lord Rochester, and which, I should think, would convince any man who had not resolvedly shut himself up against all conviction, and barred and barricadoed all the avenues by which conviction might gain an entrance into his understanding and affections. Here is a prophecy too which must be granted to be clear enough, after the event; and the more obscure it might be before the event, so much the more wonderful is it, and with so much the more force does it extort conviction from us. For it was obscure only because it spoke of one who was to suffer, not for himself but for others, painfully, ignominiously, and fatally, and yet to rise triumphantly over those sufferings, and to be a prosperous and a glorious conqueror; and to found a peculiar and mighty kingdom, which should endure through all ages. The imagination of the poet, glancing from probable to improbable, from possible to impossible, had never pictured to itself anything half so heterogeneous; but the

prophet, inspired with a divine spirit, sketched an outline which our crucified Redeemer and Lord fulfilled to a tittle. The study of this converted the Earl of Rochester; let Mr. Langstone study it, and he will be converted too, if he be made of human stuff, however firm that stuff may be."

Being warmed with my subject, I could not sufficiently mark the effect which this speech produced, and an incident prevented me, at that moment, from ascertaining it by anything which they might have been disposed to say in answer to me. My eye, indeed, being fixed upon Mr. Langstone during the latter part of my speech, it did not escape me that he betrayed considerable uneasiness; but, Mrs. Harrison coming in upon the instant, all our attention was immediately directed towards her, and in a few minutes afterwards, as soon as it was decent, Mr. Langstone proposed to go. However, Mr. Compton would not permit it, but said, "Sister, do take the trouble to order up something to eat, for we are all hungry, I dare say, with talking; and Langstone with riding and talking too." At once the bell was rung, the directions were given, Mr. Langstone's horses were quietly put up in the stable, and a cold collation was set out by the side of Mr. Compton's sofa. We all now sat down to it, and the debate, fresh as it was, seemed to be entirely forgotten.

Whilst we were eating, nothing of any consequence occurred; but scarcely had we ceased, when Mrs. Harrison, who was anxious, no doubt, as usual, about her brother, and curious to know what had passed in conversation between us, and alarmed, perhaps, as to the effect of Mr. Langstone's visit (for she was

well acquainted with his character), addressed her brother thus: "You were all hungry with talking, you said, my dear brother: pray what was the subject upon which you talked so much?—I fear I have lost a great deal of information by my absence." "Perhaps so," he replied; "the subject at least would have pleased you: we were talking about the prophecies—whether they were clear, or obscure, or what they were; and Dr. Warton has stated to us, very justly, I think, that, upon the supposition of their being genuine, a mixture of clearness and obscurity was essentially necessary." "Yes," I said, "speaking generally, and with respect to one whole large class of the prophecies; for, besides the reasons which I have yet assigned for the expediency, and indeed necessity, of a certain degree of obscurity, the Jews, being under a preparatory dispensation, which was to last till it had performed its object, and till the world was ripe for Christianity, which was to be erected upon its foundations, could not be permitted to see clearly to the end of that dispensation, under which they were still to live for so many ages, and thus, perhaps, to compel the Deity to accomplish his designs by violence, rather than by the natural operations of the free will of men. But there are other prophecies which needed no previous obscurity; and, in point of fact, they were as clear beforehand as they were afterwards; only that there was a sort of condition annexed to them, and by the terms in which they were expressed, it seems as if they might be fulfilled, or not, according to circumstances. The prophetic threats of punishment upon the Jews are a splendid instance of this. It depended upon their own conduct whether those threats should be executed

or not; but the threats themselves were perfectly clear, and awful has been their accomplishment. Who can resist so irresistible an evidence? When you see a Jew, you see a miracle—a perpetual, standing, daily miracle—to prove the truth of Christianity. For it was the rejection of *Him* who was to resemble Moses, and promulgate a new covenant—and whom they were commanded by Moses to obey, under pain of the most terrible chastisements—it was the rejection and crucifixion of *Him* which was followed, with no tardy step, by those very chastisements themselves. Astonishing, indeed, they might seem beforehand, and very reluctant, no doubt, would the Jews be to admit that God would so utterly cast off his people; but the threatenings have been executed, in their clear, plain sense, to the very letter, and in every tittle. So, then, such prophecies were clear as might properly be clear, and such were obscure as ought to be obscure; but the event has made them all equally clear, or at least sufficiently clear to those who have eyes, and are willing to see with them. In truth, this is a tremendous consideration—that God will judicially inflict blindness upon those who are not willing to see, and so suffer them to delude themselves to their own destruction.”

The solemnity with which I delivered this scriptural warning appeared to impose a temporary silence upon them all. Mr. Langstone seemed, besides, to be repressed by the presence of a virtuous woman, and no longer disposed to be flippant or dogmatical. At length Mr. Compton said, that the prophecies deserved, undoubtedly, to be well weighed; and that there was an extraordinary character about them, both of matter and of style. “Nor do I think,” he

added, "that their obscurity resembles the obscurity of the heathen oracles, which were often so constructed as to be capable of being accomplished in opposite ways." "No," I said; "we never meet with anything like that given to Cræsus—that if he crossed the Halys, he would destroy a great kingdom, which would have been equally fulfilled by defeat or victory. In short, the object was totally different, and they do not admit of comparison in any respect. The fulfilment of an insulated heathen oracle proved only the dexterity of *him* who framed it; but the fulfilment of scripture-prophecy, which is one great, connected system, reaching through many ages, and pointing to one vast object, worthy of the divine care and mercy, proves infinite wisdom, and the interference of God himself. It was well said, therefore, that if men will not believe Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe, though one rise from the dead."

Here Mr. Langstone was tempted to interpose, and he exclaimed rather eagerly, "Let *me* have the latter evidence, however, Dr. Warton: if one rose from the dead, *that* would be an evidence indeed;—the most determined sceptic, a very Academic philosopher, could not argue against it. But it never happens: the stories of such things are the mere fables of superstitious old women, or of men who are like them, too absurd to be credited for an instant. And I must say (this he spoke with an affected gravity), that it appears to *me* to be rather singular, that an evidence the most convincing of all should be denied to us; this looks very odd, and is quite unaccountable."

There was a malice in this observation, which, I

presume, was so ill-concealed as to be visible to all. Without noticing it, however, in an open manner, I said, "Well, Mr. Langstone, but how is this? Do you really mean to assert that no one ever rose from the dead to prove to us the truth of Christianity?" The form of this question occasioned him to hesitate a little before he answered it; but soon, with almost his usual boldness, he replied, "There is no such thing; I have examined all the accounts of apparitions and ghosts, and such trash, not excepting the famous tale of the Cock-lane ghost; and I pronounce them all to be the tricks of impostors, or the dreams of dotards." "But there is one account," I resumed coolly, "which is better authenticated than the rest." "What is that?" he inquired hastily and incredulously. "Jesus Christ," I answered, "was sent, first from heaven to persuade us, and when that was not sufficient, he was sent to us afterwards from the dead. Here is the very evidence which you prize so highly—unique, and incontrovertible—superior to all the cavilling of an Academic himself. What do you object to this, Mr. Langstone?"

At first he was somewhat disconcerted, but, after revolving the matter in his thoughts a moment or two, he exclaimed, "No, no, Dr. Warton; that will never do; that is a sort of *petitio principii*. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the supposed facts of the Gospel, and can never be adduced to prove the Gospel itself. No, no; what I require is, the return from the dead of some one whom we know, to assure us that there is an existence after this, and that all which the Gospels tell us about a future state of rewards and punishments is true."

“ And must this appearance of one from the dead,” I inquired, “ be vouchsafed to every individual person, or how ?” He saw the absurdity into which he was ready to fall ; so he replied cautiously, “ No, no, not to every single human being ; for that would be endless ; but to various persons at various times.” “ Very well,” I said, “ and how then were the rest of mankind to be convinced ? Must they be content with an inferior evidence, or what ?” This pressed him hardly, and he was compelled, after much hesitation, to confess, that they must needs take it upon testimony. “ If, then, we are reduced,” I said, “ to such a necessity, that an infinite number of persons must be content with the testimony of witnesses to certain facts, why may we not all of us be satisfied, and once for all, with the testimony of witnesses to the one great fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead ? Nor is there any *petitio principii* in my way of stating the argument. Jesus, when alive, preached certain doctrines ; they to whom he preached would not believe ; he came to them again from the dead, to confirm those doctrines by so supernatural a fact. This is what I understand you to insist upon. Now I also, from my pulpit, preach the doctrines of the Gospel ; you doubt about their truth, from the alleged insufficiency of the evidence ; therefore, I come to you from the dead, to give you what you call the strongest and most irrefragable evidence of their truth ; and in that case you profess at least that you would believe ; but others, a great many others, must receive the matter on your single authority. I ask, then, whether it would not be better, and, therefore, wiser in the Deity, so to ordain it, that we should all of us acquiesce in the original evidence of the fact of Christ’s resurrection,

rather than that one age or community should trust to the evidence of one Mr. Langstone, and another to another, and succeeding ages or communities to succeeding Mr. Langstones for ever?"

It would have been so glaringly and ridiculously absurd to prefer this latter expedient, as a general mode of proceeding, that even Mr. Langstone would not venture to argue it. A short pause therefore ensued, and I had an opportunity of looking round. A smile was playing upon the countenances of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison; if good manners would have permitted them, or the natural gravity of their own dispositions, they would probably have laughed outright. Mr. Compton, though ill at ease, absolutely did so; and at length exclaimed, "This will not do, Langstone; we cannot maintain it; it has no solid base. Dr. Warton has touched it with his spear, and it crumbles to atoms." "Yes," cried Mr. Langstone, somewhat petulantly, and manifestly vexed, that my authority should be set up above his own, by his quondam partner in profligacy and infidelity, "but the pretended fact of the resurrection of Jesus is so remote—so lost in distant antiquity—who but the most credulous will believe it now? Is not the strength of the testimony of witnesses diminished in proportion to the number of the links in the chain through which it is derived?" "Then," I said, "at a certain period it would amount to nothing. For, being continually lessened, it must at length become less than the least which can be assigned, and which in practice is nought. Thus all our belief of ancient facts would be completely destroyed, and history unavailable to the improvement of mankind. This cannot be; your argument, Mr. Langstone, applies, not to tes-

timony in general, but to oral tradition in particular. *That*, indeed, is weakened, as you say, every day; and the facts only so reported are very soon utterly forgotten. But written memorials stand upon a different footing, and if their authority was good at first, it is good for ever afterwards; and perhaps increased, instead of diminished, by the lapse of time, in consequence of a thousand circumstances which may arise collaterally to strengthen it. But the original authority will be better and better, in proportion as they who record the facts were nearer and nearer to the occurrence of the facts themselves, and had superior means of information. By this canon, therefore, the authority of the four Gospels can scarcely be exceeded in weight. Matthew and John were absolutely eye-witnesses. Mark was probably the same; but at all events he was the constant companion of one who certainly was. And Luke shall speak for himself." Then suddenly rising from my seat at the table, I seized a Bible, which I had espied with pleasure, upon my first entrance, lying upon a small table in a corner of the room, and returning with equal speed, and opening at St. Luke's Gospel, I read aloud the four introductory verses, and immediately afterwards resumed the argument.

"You observe," I said, "what St. Luke asserts—namely, that he had a perfect understanding of all things from the first. Upon the whole, therefore, the testimony of these four Evangelists is the very best that can possibly be had; and it is confirmed in every way by everything else which bears upon it; it stands unimpeached and unimpeachable. Your sceptics and freethinkers, indeed, may set it aside at

once, and without examination, by a single *ipse dixit*, or stroke of the pen ; but it must be allowed, I trow, that their authority, under such circumstances, is less than nothing—on the negative side of the line of zero ; much less to be put into the balance against the mighty, overwhelming authority of men of all ages, prodigious in talent, in learning, in virtue—the splendid luminaries of their respective generations—men, too, who probed this very testimony to the bottom, were satisfied with it, and fastened their faith and hopes upon it. In comparison with this, the other kicks the beam.”

Mr. Langstone and Mr. Compton not seeming disposed to say anything in answer to me, Mr. Harrison, to carry on the discussion, inquired whether it was clearly made out by the learned, that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were really the authors of the Gospels ascribed to them ; and whether those Gospels had come down to us in a pure, unadulterated form. “ It happens,” he said, “ that I have not examined this question for myself, but have hitherto taken it upon trust ; I should like to know, therefore, something more positive about it ; and it is of importance in the present stage of our debate.” “ Yes, certainly,” cried Mr. Langstone, eager to second anything which implied a doubt about the foundations of Christianity ; “ unless this can be made out to our perfect satisfaction, the resurrection, and every other fact, fall to the ground at once. How is this, Dr. Warton ? There are plenty of gospels, besides these four, which you are pleased to call forgeries : but wherefore ? Why may not these be the forgeries, and those others genuine ? Or rather, are they not all forgeries. There are enough, I

believe, of absurdities, and inconsistencies, and contradictions in them all to overturn them all. Pray explain this, Dr. Warton."

Thus he ran on with somewhat of his former flippancy; and thus I answered him, subduing my indignation as well as I could, and endeavouring to preserve the superiority of calmness over intemperance, but with a little mixture of *badinage*, and of gentle whipping, now and then, to keep him in awe, and to frighten him into good manners: "Fie, fie, Mr. Langstone," I said; "why set me to do a thing for you, which you may do so easily for yourself, any fine morning that you will? There is Lardner, for instance; he wrote upon this subject in about a dozen paltry octavo volumes; and what are they to your freethinker, who is always indefatigable in his investigations, and cannot sleep, unless he has dived to the very bottom of things, and solved every difficulty? Besides, these octavos are so charming, that you will wish them to be folios; or perhaps they will tempt you for the sake of becoming a perfect master of this question, to betake yourself to the real folios themselves—a hundred or more, I warrant you; the old Fathers, I mean, without whose help you must be content, after all, to go upon trust, or to grope in the dark. Well, all these have been conned over, again and again, by men skilful in the ancient languages, beginning their researches with the apostolic ages, and carrying them down through several of the early centuries; and thus after the most laborious industry, and the maturest deliberation, and the most scrutinising criticism, and an illustrious display of all the powers and resources of the most gigantic learning, was the

canon of scripture settled. But Mr. Langstone will unsettle it at once, and without any trouble, by a mere quære—may not the four Gospels be forgeries? I will ask *you* Mr. Harrison, can anything more be done that has not been done towards the complete disposing of this question?"

"It seems impossible," answered Mr. Harrison. "Every production of antiquity bearing upon these Gospels has, you say, been thoroughly sifted." "It has," I rejoined, "and many more than now exist." "Any man, then," he said, "who should attempt to go through the inquiry again, would have smaller means of settling the question." "Yes," I replied, "smaller, certainly, but amply sufficient to satisfy the most scrupulous mind, and to occupy the longest life." "And the epitome of the whole investigation is to be found in Lardner; is it not?" he enquired. "It is," I said. "Then I will look into him," he continued, "just to acquaint myself with the mode of the investigation." "You will do well," I said; "but almost any of the books, much shorter ones, upon the canon of Scripture, would, I think, serve your purpose, although, in saying this, I would not be supposed to discourage larger inquiries. And as to the other point which you started, the purity of Scripture; it need only be mentioned, to satisfy any ingenuous person, that since the invention of printing, the wilful corruption of the text has been impossible; and that before, the power of comparing manuscripts with each other, and with the translations of them into different languages, and the vigilant, mutual watch of contending sects, made it extremely difficult to alter or interpolate anything without immediate detection. In short, everything

of that sort, which was either attempted or accomplished, and every variety of reading, which has ever existed in any manuscript, are perfectly well known to the critics, and actually appear, for the general inspection, in the great and elaborate editions of the Scriptures. What more, then, can you now at this day expect, or could you ever have?"

"Nothing, certainly," replied Mr. Harrison; "and I must say for myself, with the most unfeigned pleasure, that I am entirely at ease upon the subject. I thank you, Dr. Warton, a thousand times." "Very well, then," I said; "if these collateral questions are thought to be sufficiently settled, we come back to the original one with the more decided certainty; and we cannot but acknowledge, not only that the fact of Christ's resurrection, attested by such witnesses as we have described, is a more forcible and convincing evidence of the truth of Christianity, than the appearance of one from the dead to different persons at different times, but also than such an appearance to every individual of every time." "*That* is a strong assertion, indeed, Dr. Warton," said Mr. Compton; "I was disposed to go with you before, but I cannot now. So far I am well aware, that the appearance of one from the dead to every individual is by no means to be expected as a general system. As Langstone very truly said, it would be endless. I am aware, also, from what has passed between us in conversation, that it may not suit the purposes of the Deity to afford us all universally the best evidence which may be possible; but that he may wish to try our tempers and dispositions, whether we will believe upon sufficient evidence; upon the same evidence that we believe other facts of importance to

us. One thing more I willingly concede, that the humour or caprice of particular persons is not to be indulged, as a matter of course, with that evidence, which may either really be, or which they themselves may choose to call, the strongest. But, then, I should still think with Langstone, that the appearance of one from the dead, theoretically speaking, is such an evidence as it would be impossible to controvert; and, although you see that I do not go his length in pronouncing it *singular* and *odd*, that this especial evidence is denied us, yet I cannot but regret the total want of it in every case, and upon every occasion whatever. These are my sentiments, Dr. Warton, which I hope I have made intelligible; but I will not shut my ears against conviction."

I could with difficulty restrain my joy, when I heard this speech. It delighted me in every way. It was full of candour, and visibly bespoke a surprising change of opinion and feeling. But what pleased me most was the desire, which I thought I saw in it, of carrying Mr. Langstone with him through all the consequences which might ensue to himself. There was an evident management in what he said, with a view to his friend, of some sort or other. I interpreted it in the view which I have mentioned, and hailed it as the harbinger of certain good. At the same time he had mistaken my position. I had contrasted the general evidence of Christ's resurrection with a general system of appearances from the dead; but he contrasted it with particular appearances to particular persons, now and then, upon extraordinary occasions, and, as it seemed, for their own conviction alone. In my way of putting it, it struck me then, that a general system of

appearance to every individual of every time would come to nothing, and be a waste of miraculous interferences; and I think the same now. But *his* position was exceedingly plausible and well worthy of consideration; and it seemed besides to be of great consequence to me to overthrow it, if I could. I knew, upon the whole, that it was wrong; but I by no means knew whether I should be able to prove it to be so to his satisfaction. Were this done, the result might be, not only that he would look solely, and as a matter of necessity, to those great universal evidences which God has provided for the whole race of mankind, but also that he would abandon altogether the vain notion, which he now entertained, of the certainty or even probability that a particular appearance would be useful to himself.

“Well, then,” I said, after a short pause, and without taking any notice of the variation which he had introduced, “We will see about it. But it will be of no avail to argue it as a naked, abstract, theoretical question, whether this or that evidence is the strongest. We will take it up practically, and as scripture puts it: ‘If they believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe, although one rose from the dead.’ It is supposed, therefore, that all the other evidence has been already examined, and rejected as insufficient; and the question is, whether the same persons, who have done this, are likely to be convinced by the apparition of one sent to them from the grave. Our Lord said they were not; at least he has so represented it in his most interesting and instructive parable of Dives and Lazarus.”

“Yes,” exclaimed Mr. Langstone with vehemence, and interrupting me; “but his own history, which

you call authentic, is against him. For it is there stated, that one of his own disciples, who had seen all his miracles, and had been told beforehand, that after death he would rise again; and was now told, that he was actually risen, and that he had appeared to those very persons who mentioned the fact to him; could not, however, be prevailed upon to yield to any testimony, or to any evidence but to that of his own eyes; and the story goes on to say, that this evidence was given to him, and that he believed in consequence of it. This, I think, is what you have already alluded to, Dr. Warton; and you insinuated that the case of this doubting disciple, who afterwards believed, because he saw, was a case without merit; so I suppose, the greater a man's credulity, the more orthodox and the more meritorious his faith. But without stopping to show the absurdity of this, or to remark upon the inconsistencies of your Scriptures; what I quote the story for is by way of an *argumentum ad hominem* to yourself, Dr. Warton. You, at least, must allow, that here was a man, whom nothing else convinced, convinced by an apparition; and why should you pronounce the same thing improbable now? I protest, I do not see how I could resist that evidence myself. But there is no danger of such a trial. What is there to reappear? The bodies of the dead crumble into dust, as we all know; and the spirits which animated them, vanishing together, will never again disturb others, nor be disturbed themselves.

Illis dura quies oculos, et ferreus urget
Somnus; in æternam clauduntur lumina noctem."

These two fine lines of his Epicurean Virgil he

pronounced with an astonishing declamatory energy, and they were both preceded and followed by a malicious Sardonian smile. I admired the poetry before, whilst I deprecated and detested the thought; but now the verses themselves, thus cited and thus applied, grated with an odious sound upon my ears. I was startled too, at so bold an avowal of so base an opinion, and I paused to recover myself; and such, I silently thought, in his own phrase, such is Langstone well, but what will be Langstone sick? Such is the courageous Langstone; will not he too be timorous when he stands on the verge of the two worlds?

Mrs. Harrison, I perceived, was deeply shocked, and she seemed to be doubting within herself whether she should fly, as from a pestilence, or remain and risk the danger of another similar effusion of impious materialism. If she had gone, she would undoubtedly have left us all in an "admired confusion," and she wished most probably to hear out the debate, trusting to *me* that I should preserve the superiority in it, and that the conceit and arrogance of this audacious sceptic would yet be humbled. She knew, unquestionably, that men existed, who, by the adoption of such ignoble opinions, voluntarily degraded themselves to a level with the brutes; she suspected that her brother was once such a man; but her ears had never before been wounded with an open declaration that such a man stood confessed in her presence; and she thought too, perhaps, that her own presence, and the presence of a clergyman, ought to have restrained him. However, she remained; but, after a single glance of disapprobation and disdain, she studiously averted her eyes, during

the rest of the conversation, from an object so painful and disgusting to her.

To Mr. Harrison, as far as I could conjecture, what had happened was but little surprising, and to Mr. Compton not at all. On the contrary, the wonder of Mr. Compton must have been that Mr. Langstone had not proceeded throughout in the same strain of violence with which he began; and when that was not the case, he had been disposed, I thought, to interpret the subdued tone of his friend, as a real relaxation of his hostility to the Gospel; but he was now, I presume, sufficiently undeceived, and so, if possible, to prevent further mischief, and to keep up the decencies of life as well as he could, he cried out with uneasiness, "Come, come, Langstone, you are encumbering the question before us with other matter; I want to hear what Dr. Warton will say upon that question. —Never fear, he will be ready for you on any ground that you may choose when the proper time arrives; but the present question was raised by yourself, Langstone, and therefore you should not disturb the discussion of it by the introduction of other subjects." "Oh! by no means," replied Mr. Langstone, "I had no such intention. Let Dr. Warton try his strength. I will listen to him patiently."

"Well, then, Mr. Langstone," I said, "as you ended with a quotation from Virgil, I will begin with one:

*Sunt geminæ Somni portæ; quarum altera fertur
Cornea, quâ veris facilis datur exitus Umbris:
Altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto;
Sed falsa ad cœlum mittunt insomnia Manes.*

And I ask you this first; how will you know whether

your supposed apparition of a dead man from the other world comes to you through the gate of ivory or the gate of horn? How will you know whether it be a true ghost, or the mere empty illusion of a dream?" "Oh! pardon me, Dr. Warton," he replied hastily, "I have nothing to do with dreams. To be influenced by dreams is the very height of folly and weakness; that is not my failing. I must be wide awake, or the ghost will do nothing with *me*." "So you shall then," I said, "but many men dream, do they not, even when awake?" "Why, that is true enough," he answered sarcastically; "the dreams of waking superstition are endless, and most absurd." "Be it so," I said. "It is not unlikely that you are acquainted, as I am, with persons who affirm, without the slightest doubt upon the subject in their own minds, and apparently beyond the possibility of being convinced to the contrary, that they have seen with their open eyes the strangest visions imaginable, which you know immediately by internal evidence to be false." "I have certainly met with more than one person of that description in the course of my life," he replied. "But I presume you did not believe their stories," I said. "No, indeed," he answered; "I laughed at their absurdity, and nonsense." "Should you have expected them to believe *you*," I asked, "if you had related similar stories of yourself to *them*?" "Nor that either," he replied, "unless they were infatuated." "Well, then," I asked again, "and would you not try to account for the mistakes of those deluded people, by saying that they must certainly have been dreaming in their sleep, although they thought themselves wide awake? Or, if they were

really awake, yet that their fancies were still but a dream? Their agitated minds, perhaps, were dwelling perpetually upon some peculiar notions, until they embodied them into shapes, which danced before their eyes with all the semblance of realities. Would you not explain the matter in one or other of these ways?" He granted that he should. "And all sober-minded persons," I said, "would explain in the same way, would they not, any similar supernatural visions which you might tell them had occurred to yourself?" He allowed it. "Very well, then," I said, "this being universally the case, however we might at first have been convinced of the reality of these visions, and obstinately bent upon believing them, should we not at length begin to distrust ourselves? One man laughs and ridicules us, another argues and disputes with us, a third accounts ingeniously for our delusions. Can we stand out against all this for ever? Will not our own belief be gradually weakened, and at last extinguished?" "It seems likely enough," he answered, "speaking generally; but if I were the person, as I am pretty confident that I shall always be master of my own senses, I think I could distinguish sufficiently by the circumstances whether the vision were a true one or not; a ghost, suppose, or only a phantom of the brain." "A ghost would probably speak to you, would it not?" I inquired. "I presume so," he replied; "for, if it had any rational object, the object must be explained by words." "Undoubtedly," I said, "and the words spoken might be an excellent clue to direct you in forming your judgment about the ghost itself, whether it were a true or a false apparition, whether it came from God or from the

devil ; might they not ?” “ Possibly they might,” he answered. “ You being always in possession of your sober senses,” I said, “ if the ghost were to utter something amazingly nonsensical, would you not pronounce at once that it was a false ghost, although you might be broad awake ?” “ I would certainly,” he replied, laughing. “ And,” I said, “ if it ordered you to do something which would drive you out of society, and disgrace your name for ever, would you not pronounce it to be a false ghost ; or, if it were a real one, that it came from the Father of lies and all mischief ?” “ If there were any such being,” he answered dubiously, “ I might, perhaps, say so.” “ Well,” I continued, “ and suppose the ghost, resembling a dead person of your acquaintance who disbelieved the immortality of the soul should address you in this manner, ‘ Mr. Langstone !’ he comes upon a grave errand, and therefore we must make him speak with a correspondent becoming gravity ; ‘ Mr. Langstone.’ Probably, indeed, to rivet your attention to him, he will repeat your name three times, in the true ghostlike style, and with a hollow sepulchral tone, ‘ Mr. Langstone,—Mr. Langstone,—Mr. Langstone.’ ”

Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, with all their sense of dignity and good manners, could hardly restrain a laugh. Mr. Compton, without any scruple, laughed aloud. Mr. Langstone himself, bit his lips for vexation. It was quite a novelty to him to be the object of raillery ; being like *Æsop*, *derisor aliorum*, *non ipse deridendus*. So he jumped up from his chair, and exclaimed, angrily, that he would be gone, if we wished to do any thing else but to argue. “ Nay, nay,” said Mr. Compton, pacifying him ;

“this is Dr. Warton’s good-humoured, facetious way of putting his supposition; you have had your own jokes, without any obstruction whatever; and therefore you are bound by the law of reciprocity, not to spoil his wit by interrupting him. No, no, Langstone; sit down again; I am all impatience to hear the ghost’s speech.”

This did not much mend the matter; however, he resumed his seat; because, I believe, he would have found it a very awkward thing to walk across the room to the door with the laugh against him. “Well, then,” I began again, “if Mr. Langstone does not admire this solemn exordium, perhaps he would as little admire the body of the speech, and still less the peroration; so I will put it all in one word. The ghost comes to assure you, Mr. Langstone, that you have an immortal soul.” “Does he indeed?” exclaimed Mr. Langstone, irritated, and starting up once more; “then I will not believe him.” He uttered this in a most determined tone, but sat down again.

“I thought so,” I said quietly; “but pray tell me, were there not persons before the Christian æra, who reasoned themselves into a belief of the immortality of the soul.” He could not deny it. “And is not the immortality of the soul,” I asked again, “one of the doctrines of Christianity?” It was impossible for him to say otherwise. “And which is most easy to believe,” I asked thirdly, “the whole of Christianity, or this one doctrine which is a part of it?” This question he refused to answer, and crying out petulantly, that he was wearied with answering question after question to no purpose, he desired me to answer it myself according to my own pleasure. “I

will then," I said, "and the obvious answer is, that it is easier to believe a part than the whole, which necessarily embraces the part and other things. And now we may draw the conclusion from these premises, which is equally obvious, namely, that Mr. Langstone would not believe in the Christian religion, although one rose from the dead."

Upon this, not being able to endure his unpleasant situation any longer, he got up in good earnest, and, as he took leave of Mr. Compton and the rest of us, he endeavoured to conceal his chagrin with a laugh, and said, "Very well; as Dr. Warton has now settled the matter to his satisfaction, I may be excused; so good morning to you all." This he accompanied with a very low, affected bow. Mr. Compton called out that he should wait till his horses were ready, and at the same time desired his sister to ring the bell. This she did, but Mr. Langstone was gone, and no sooner was the door shut after him than she exclaimed, "Oh! my dear brother, I am so glad that he has left us! I can now breathe again with freedom; but I shall abominate that chair (pointing to the chair on which Mr. Langstone had sat) as long as I can distinguish it from the rest." "Yes," said Mr. Harrison, "and with all his positive, dictatorial temper, and with all his fluency and impetuosity of speech, he is so shallow too. He really never seems to me to penetrate beneath the surface, or to see to the end of anything, so that it is no wonder that he is entangled and confuted immediately." Then thinking, perhaps, that what he had said was not complimentary to *me*, he added instantly, "At the same time, Dr. Warton, I am fully aware, and acknowledge with gratitude, the admirable manner in which you conducted the whole conversation. Indeed, if it

might not look like flattery, I should express in very strong terms my great surprise at the readiness and facility with which you meet and overthrow every position adverse to Christianity." "It is very true," interposed Mr. Compton; "you put me in mind, Dr. Warton, of the ingenious description of the Dialectic and Rhetoric, and I perceive that you can contend in the manner of both. Your short, pithy, pungent, home-thrust questions are the hand with the fingers closed—the fist, as we call it; and your lengthened disputations, whether in attack or defence, whether to explain or to illustrate, are the hand with all its fingers expanded and apart."

I was by no means displeased with these commendations, although not entitled to so large a measure. If their opinion of me had been but a low one, I should scarcely have been able to effect anything important, especially with such a man as Mr. Compton, with whom authority went a great way. I thought it right, however, to put the matter on its true footing; so I said, "Oh! spare me, gentlemen! There is nothing at all really surprising in what I do! If you recollect that these are the subjects upon which I am constantly reading, and thinking, and talking, and writing, and preaching, all your wonder will cease in a moment. But to have done with this, I wish to know, with regard to the last point that we were upon when Mr. Langstone deserted us, whether you still think that anything would be gained by appearances from the dead?" "I am not quite satisfied about it," he answered. "The argument terminated too abruptly for me." "So far I presume you see," I said, "that there would be a difficulty in deciding whether it were a true appearance or an illusion, and if a true one, whether it came for a good

or for a bad purpose. Then it must be supposed, (indeed we assumed it,) that if it were a true one, and came for a good purpose, it would be to persuade us of something against which we were so strongly prejudiced as to have rejected the suitable evidence of it. Immediately, therefore, I have no doubt, we should be up in arms against the poor ghost; we should be disposed to pronounce the whole thing a fancy of the brain, or perhaps the pious fraud of some officious friend to cheat us into Christianity, or a change of life, or what not? Let it be granted, however, that, in spite of all such endeavours to escape from the impression of the reality of the ghost, the impression will still cling to us and haunt us, and we consult, in our distress, such a man as Mr. Langstone, a man of the same principles, pursuits, and prejudices as ourselves. Oh! what a battery would be opened upon us of argument and raillery! What laughs, what jokes, what jeers, what sarcasms, would not be launched against us! what appeals would not be made to our consistency, to our courage, to our pride! In short, he must be an extraordinary man, I think, who should obey the ghost against his own inclinations, and in despite of all the ridicule that would be heaped upon him. You remember, no doubt, the story of Lord Lyttelton's ghost, and the attempt to divert his mind from the thoughts of the death that was foreboded, by putting the clock forward to the fatal hour. It struck; and, at once released from all his fears, he exclaimed in a transport of joy 'I have cheated the ghost!' This illustrates what has been said; and, upon the whole, it appears to *me* that a maxim, which we might well have admitted on our Lord's

authority alone, is now sufficiently proved by reason and by fact; namely, that they who do not believe Moses and the prophets will not believe although one rose from the dead."

"In truth it seems so," said Mr. Compton, "and, therefore, we will finish the discussion here. I am sure we have detained you unmercifully, Dr. Warton. I expected to have talked upon other subjects; but Langstone led us to the prophecies, and then to this idle speculation about ghosts. However, it has been useful to me, very useful." "I am glad of it," I said, as I got up to go, "and we shall have time, I hope, for the other subjects, with God's leave." "I hope so," he replied, and reached out his hand, which having pressed, I left him.

§ 3.—*Mr. Compton, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison.*

AFTER this long conversation, a week elapsed before I saw Mr. Compton again. Mr. Harrison was with me, on the following day, to report the satisfactory progress which appeared to have been made, and to entreat me to pursue my own good work, whenever I could spare time for it from my other employments. I was as willing to do this as he could possibly wish, and I was particularly encouraged to proceed by a circumstance which he mentioned to me. Mr. Compton, it seems, had written to Mr. Langstone, without the least delay, and whilst the subject was fresh in his mind, in such a manner and in such terms as to prove, at least, his own sincerity, whatever effect might be produced

upon his friend. This letter Mr. Compton had shown to his sister, and she was highly delighted with it. Amongst other things it reminded Mr. Langstone with what facility all the opinions which he had advanced had been overthrown; and it took occasion from thence to insinuate the probability, that every other opinion of his, inimical to the Christian religion, might be overthrown with equal facility. For, in fact, these opinions had been taken up on bad authority, as Mr. Compton too well knew by his own sad experience; and, therefore, he exhorted his friend to substitute, as he himself was about to do, for Bolingbroke, and Voltaire, and Hume, and Gibbon, the writers of a better school.

Well, I arranged with Mr. Harrison to be at Mr. Compton's the next day; but before the appointed hour arrived, I was stopped by a message, which informed me that Mr. Compton had been seized during the night with another attack of paralysis; from which, however, it was thought by the medical men, that he would certainly recover, and it was therefore recommended to me to await the result. I did so, and, at length, after the interval which I have already mentioned, the disease having abated, and Mr. Compton himself having expressed a great desire to see me, I lost no time in going to him. I expected to find a great alteration in him in every way. This second seizure by the same disorder would convince him, I supposed, that he could not be much longer an inhabitant of this world; and that it was necessary for him, therefore, to set seriously to work to prepare himself for the next. At all events, I was now determined to let him know the worst.

I was received by Mr. Harrison, who conducted

me immediately upstairs, and tapped gently at Mr. Compton's door. Mrs. Harrison was within; and I understood that this was a concerted signal for her to dismiss the attendants by another door, and to admit *me* alone. However, I found nobody in the room but herself and the sick man.

He was sitting in his bed, supported by pillows, so as to be nearly upright. With his right hand, the only one not paralysed, he held up a pocket-handkerchief to the left side of his face, to conceal, as I thought, the distortion of it. Fortunately, I was prepared before hand to expect to see some derangement of his natural features, which is always an affecting spectacle; but he was probably not aware that I knew of it, and so tried to hide it; yet he might be sure that it would not escape my observation, if I continued with him many minutes. Ah! I said to myself, he still clings to the world, and to outward appearances, and is not sensible of their vanity.

As I approached the bed, his lips quivered, and tears started from his eyes, and all that I saw of his countenance betrayed great agitation and uneasiness of mind. It was pale, as from loss of appetite, unquiet rest, and mental trouble. His sister wept in silence. My sympathy was awakened, but I could do nothing to console him. I could not grasp his hand without disturbing and perhaps distressing him; to speak was not at present within my power. After the first piteous glance, however, when he ceased to look at me, I became gradually re-assured, and at length, began the conversation in the following manner:—

“I am sorry, Sir, very sorry, to see you in so

much affliction." "I knew you would," he said immediately, interrupting me, and expressing himself with tolerable firmness, and without any hesitation or indistinctness of speech, which I was glad to observe. "Yes," I resumed, "it is a painful thing to see any person in pain and distress. We cannot conquer that feeling at once; no, nor at all. Perhaps it does us honour. Yet the slightest reflection teaches us, that these evils of sickness and calamity are calculated and intended to produce good. As I walked towards your house, I watched some large, dark, black clouds, which were suspended in the air over my head, and threatened every moment a tempestuous downfall. On a sudden the sun, which was behind one of them, shot his beams obliquely on the rest, and immediately all their skirts and edges were lit up with a golden light. The thought struck me in an instant, that this was applicable to your case, Mr. Compton. Your sufferings have been long and great, after an uninterrupted enjoyment of health and worldly prosperity. The cloud that still hangs over you is large, and dark, and black enough." "It is indeed," he said. "Yes," I resumed again; "but it is bordered by a robe of glorious light; nay, the light breaks through it in every direction. The design, and the use of your calamities are as manifest as the calamities themselves, and the mercy of God shines out in the midst of them with a visible lustre. What were you, I ask, six months ago? What are you, I ask, now? You have yourself, indeed, already told me what your former life has been, and how conscious you were that it was totally at variance with revelation. But it was contrary to reason too, the only remaining guide. At least it could not be the

proper life of a man destined to immortality ; *that* is as clear as the sun at noon-day. No ; and I will go further ; it could not be the proper life of a man doomed to terminate his existence in this world. They, who would shamelessly maintain such a position, are but little removed from the brute beast. In fact, they put themselves voluntarily upon a level with him, and so they say, as he might, if he were endued with speech, ‘ Let us eat and drink ; for tomorrow we die,’ and our existence is at an end for ever. What ! Is this the language and the sentiment of a *man* ? Of a being, whether immortal or not, yet gifted with the highest powers of reason and imagination ; capable certainly of the greatest actions, and the noblest aspirations ? No, no ; a rational creature must acknowledge that he ought to be governed by reason in all circumstances alike, whether death terminate his whole existence or not. Such a life, therefore, as is led by loose men of the world cannot be justified upon any supposition.”

Thus I was running on, and seemed almost to have forgotten my main point ; but here the sick man himself exclaimed with earnestness, and dropped his hand from his face, “ It is too true, Sir ; I see it now, and I wonder it so long escaped me. But what am I at this moment, that I should feel more comfortable with myself ? ” “ You are come to yourself,” I said, “ which is a mighty change. This sickness, ordained in mercy, snapped your mistaken habits and your erroneous career asunder. It compelled you to reflect : it brought home to you the conviction, that your life hung upon a thread, at the will of another ; it forced upon you the thought of an hereafter, into which you might be plunged in a

single instant, unawares, and unprepared; you looked round for support against this tremendous idea; you remodelled your family, upon virtuous principles; you came to God's house of prayer; you searched the holy Scriptures; you inquired into the evidences of Christianity. Am I not right in calling this a mighty change? Six months ago did this seem possible? Could it have happened without adversity? If God himself had not touched the hard rock, these waters of sorrow would never have flowed: he deserves your love, therefore, for he has first loved *you*; and this correction is the proof of his love."

"Would that it might be so," he said; "but, without doubt, if there be a God, he is necessarily endued with all perfection; and in whatever he does he will seek the glory of his own nature, and not the gratification of any temporary passion. Nor will he ever exercise one attribute to the exclusion of another; except, perhaps, justice, when he has tried mercy in vain. And this is the thought which still alarms me, lest, in my own case, he has inflicted these calamities upon me judicially, and with no view to any further mercy." "The great scene of God's justice," I replied, "will be the next world. In this world, whilst we continue in it, our trial and probation will also continue; and, consequently, until the very moment of our departure from it, we are capable of amendment. I speak generally; I do not mean to assert that God never inflicts punishment judicially in this world. On the contrary, we sometimes see men struck down in the midst of their vices, without any possibility of profiting by the blow. *That*, perhaps, may be called a judicial pu-

nishment ; but I myself believe, that even such persons are snatched away in mercy ; in mercy to others, that so signal an interference of providence may operate as a warning ; and in mercy to themselves, because God foresees, that, if their lives were prolonged, they would abuse the indulgence, and pluck down upon themselves a heavier damnation."

He shuddered at the word with which I concluded my sentence ; but, before I could proceed, he inquired despondingly, whether it were not probable, both from reason and Scripture, that God had appointed a term, or limit, beyond which all the avenues to mercy are closed against us. "Is not God himself," he said, "represented, in one of the Psalms, as swearing in his wrath, that certain men shall never enter into his rest?" "He is," I answered. "The denunciation is addressed to the Jews in the wilderness, and regards the temporal possession of the promised land of Canaan. It has nothing to do with their final salvation ; although, indeed, it might reasonably be feared, that the same crimes which rendered them unworthy of a temporal rest in Canaan, might render them unworthy also of an eternal rest in heaven. But then there is this hope on the other hand, that so striking a punishment as that of shutting them up in a barren desert, till they were all cut off by death, might have filled many of them with deep contrition and remorse, and so they might have done what they could, and the best which they knew, individually, if not nationally, to reconcile themselves to their offended God. This, however, could not reverse the temporal sentence ; but it might affect the final one. St. Paul undoubtedly applies this text to all Christians ; and, therefore, in

their case, rest can only mean the eternal rest in heaven, which is prepared for the righteous. And how does the apostle intend to admonish us? Why, that as God excluded the Jews from Canaan on account of their sins, so will he also exclude unrighteous Christians from heaven, of which Canaan was the type. This being the case, therefore, and life being uncertain, he further admonishes us to cast out betimes the evil heart of unbelief, and not to prolong the day of our repentance, but to seize upon the present moment, which alone is in our own power; and it is implied that the present moment is always in our power. We know nothing therefore of any period of God's mercy, or of any condition of sinners, after which he will no longer strive with them, but withdraw his Holy Spirit altogether. If there be such a period and such a condition, yet he has nowhere revealed them; and therefore it is impossible for us, and foolish, to conjecture about them. But one thing is certain, that they, from whom the Spirit is withdrawn, will plunge deeper and deeper into sin, if they are permitted to live. Every thought of theirs will be evil continually. You may use this test, therefore, for yourself; and you may derive from it the mighty comfort of being assured, that, if there be any such fatal limit, *you* have not yet passed it; on the contrary, that you have receded from it. So wonderful has been the divine goodness towards you, that you have been able to retrace some of your steps; and, I doubt not, the same goodness is now waiting upon you to be still further gracious. You have reason for hope, but none for despair!"

"Ah!" said the sick man mournfully; "but may

not my case be like the case of Esau, who found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears? Such, I think, are the words of St. Paul. I met with them this very morning, and they have made a painful impression upon my spirits." Upon saying this he wept aloud as Esau had done, and his sister withdrew from the bedside to hide her grief. "You have mistaken this text," I replied immediately, to re-assure them both; "you have mistaken it entirely. I will explain it presently." Then I followed Mrs. Harrison to the window, and recommended to her to retire into the adjoining room to compose herself. She was aware, I believe, that I might have some particular wish for her absence, and so she obeyed at once, telling me that, if I wanted her, she should be within the hearing of my voice.

This being arranged, I returned to my post, and sat down on a chair, close by the side of the sick-bed. In a moment Mr. Compton exclaimed, "Oh! what an excellent woman is my sister, Dr. Warton! How kind and tender-hearted! When I think of her as a wife, too, I see and deplore my own loss. The great error of my life strikes me the more forcibly, and under my present circumstances adds a poignancy to my feelings which is acute and piercing indeed! Ah! Dr. Warton, I too might have had such a wife, perhaps, to watch over me with affectionate care and anxiety in my distress; and children to surround my bed, and lament their father. Oh! what folly, what madness—it touches me now, it sinks to my very heart! You do not know enough of my case, Dr. Warton, to see the astonishing folly and madness of it."

Here his sobs interrupted him, and he did indeed exemplify the history of Esau. No tears or sobs could now recover the blessing which he had sacrificed for the sake of a present indulgence. It was gone, irreparably, for ever! I pitied him; but still, as I doubted whether he had any conception of the guilt as well as of the folly and madness of the sin to which he had alluded, I thought it would be unseasonable to attempt as yet to soothe his sorrow; so, remembering those beautiful lines of Milton upon wedded love and indiscriminate sensuality, I repeated them to him, and afterwards some others, which are put into the angel's mouth to reprove Adam for the undue and passionate expressions which he used in speaking of his connubial happiness. It occurred to me that I might thus, perhaps, gradually prepare him for another and more essential view of his condition.

“ You have admired, no doubt, before,” I said, “ but now you feel to your very inmost sense, my good Sir, what the divine poet says :

Hail, wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring—
By thee adulterous lust was driven from men
Among the bestial herds to range; by thee,
Founded, in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother first were known.
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets,
Whose bed is undefiled—
Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,
Reigns here and revels; not in the bought smile
Of harlots, loveless, joyless, unendear'd,
Casual fruition —————

“ Yes, yes,” cried out the sick man, “ I see now

my error and calamity, and my degradation too. It is true enough, promiscuous lust befits only the bestial herds. It is impure, irrational, unjust, and faithless. Guilt and shame only are its offspring. The delight is momentary and vanishes." "Yes," I said, "it vanishes, but it leaves a sting behind—

—————'medio de fonte leporum

Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat.'

Hear Milton again, what he said to Adam about this delight:—

————— think the same vouchsafed

To cattle and each beast; which would not be

To them made common and divulged, if aught

Therein enjoyed were worthy to subdue

The soul of man, or passion in him move.

In loving thou dost well, in passion not,

Wherein true love consists not; love refines

The thoughts, and heart enlarges; hath his seat

In reason;—is the scale

By which to heavenly love thou may'st ascend,

Not sunk in carnal pleasure."

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed, "I despise myself now thoroughly; it is base, and below a man. This is my deliberate judgment, Dr. Warton, not, as you might think, the constrained profession of one cut off for ever from every enjoyment. My misery, indeed, has brought me first to the knowledge of it, but thanks to my misery for disclosing this knowledge to me, and for leading me to view my conduct in its true light, as it really is abstractedly in itself, ugly and hideous." "Aye," I said, "and if it be ugly and hideous in your own eyes, what must it be in the eyes of God, Mr. Compton?" "Detestable, Sir, and abominable!" he answered in an instant, and with an unusual fervor. "Ah! Dr. Warton, I have

argued, (but I will argue so no more,) I have argued at the midnight ball of harlots, and when ill-disguised under the wanton mask, that the gratification of those brutal passions is not criminal; that Nature herself bids us reach forth our hands, and taste the fruits of pleasure which she has liberally provided for us; and that none but the morose cynic, the stern lawgiver, and the pensioned preacher, would endeavour to counteract her simple dictates. I tremble when I reflect that such false and hollow arguments have too often succeeded; but the promised fruits have turned out to be gall and wormwood in the end, if not to the actual taste. Such they are now to *me*."

"Yes, indeed," I rejoined, "it is very likely, and I am glad, for your own sake, that it is so. But how shall the evils done to society, to families, and to individuals, by such reasonings, and by actions correspondent to such reasonings, how, I say, shall those evils be repaired? We ourselves, by God's wonderful mercy, are spared perhaps to see the horror of our own principles and conduct, and to repent from the very heart; but who knows this of all the numbers that may have been corrupted by our example? How few are they who have the opportunity of being improved by our recantation! Like waves upon the agitated surface of a pool of water, which spread around in wider and wider circles, so does the evil of our bad example diffuse itself daily and hourly, and we have no longer any control over it. Nor does it cease to operate through the medium of others even when we die. In truth, it still proceeds when we ourselves lie mouldering in our graves, and the accumulated sum, no doubt, will be charged in part to

us hereafter. We cannot reckon it up in imagination even, and we shall be amazed when it stands in array against us; but God has noted it in his book from time to time, and there it must remain, if God so choose, unobliterated till the final account."

Mr. Compton was deeply touched with this picture of the evil done to society by a bad example; and I might have been disposed to stop, but recollecting how salutary his grief might be to him, I went on almost immediately in the same strain. "Think also," I said, "of the misery brought upon private families, and upon the poor victim herself! Brought up in innocence, we have robbed her of that jewel. The delight and the stay of her parents, we have spoiled them of their chief comfort and support, and have brought down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Having sacrificed herself to our seductive flatteries, we have cast her off to scorn and a deeper profligacy, when we have satiated ourselves with her violated and ruined beauty. We have done this, perhaps, and without remorse we have hunted out fresh victims of our lust with a similar result. But what will they say to us when we all stand together before the last, unerring, impartial, inflexible tribunal? Will not the parents demand their daughter of us, pure and innocent as they would have always wished her to be? Will not she herself exclaim, pointing at us with an extreme anguish, 'There are they who polluted my body and soul with sin;' and will she not without ceasing invoke almighty vengeance upon our heads?"

My own feelings were so much awakened by these representations that I paused for a little relief; and then, turning towards the sick man, from whom I

had studiously averted my countenance during this latter speech, that I might express myself with the greater energy, I observed that his face was covered with his handkerchief, and that he was sinking upon his pillows. Without delay I rang a bell which was upon a table near me, and immediately Mrs. Harrison entered by one door, and a nurse by the other. "Mr. Compton seems faint," I exclaimed; so they flew to his help, and some hartshorn having been applied to his nose, he soon shewed symptoms of recovery. However, Mrs. Harrison beckoned me to withdraw, and I went accordingly into the adjoining room, where I found Mr. Harrison in some anxiety. "There is no danger," I said, "Mr. Compton is getting better again. He would have fainted, perhaps, if the hartshorn had not instantly relieved him." "I was afraid," replied Mr. Harrison, "of another paralytic attack." "No," I rejoined, "there was nothing of that sort. He was over affected, I believe, with the picture which I drew of the results of vicious indulgence;" and then I related the substance of what had passed between us.

"Aye, aye, indeed," cried Mr. Harrison, "there is no wonder that he vibrated to that chord. Your supposition was no supposition to him; facts, facts, Dr. Warton, now speak home to him as loud as thunder. A dark stain, I fear, will rest upon his memory; and it will require floods of tears to wash out his own guilt. I am glad that you have probed this wound, and that he has himself shewn so much sorrow." "I knew nothing," I said, "of any particular story; but I had a general notion what the habits of his life had been, and it seems likely now that he will never have any other means of shewing the sincerity

of his repentance but by the abundance of his grief. Therefore I tried to awaken him by pretending to arraign him at the bar above. But pray, Sir, go into the chamber, and bring me word again how matters proceed; and whether he will bear to see me once more. To leave him thus would be unsatisfactory."

Mr. Harrison went as I desired, and soon returned with a request from Mr. Compton, that I would come back to him. I did so, and found him as at the first; his sister supporting him, and the nurse having disappeared. Immediately he said, "Dr. Warton, you have compelled me to abhor myself, and to tremble still more than ever for my future lot. A fortnight ago my heart was stubborn and obdurate, and sorrow for sin could not obtain admission there. It was in my head, but did not reach my heart. Now, indeed, it is no longer speculative but practical. Yet there is no merit in it to avail me anything. Here I am, my strength is laid in the dust, my nearest friends can scarcely recognize my features, another blow and I am gone. What is now, then, the value of all my past pleasures? The memory only remains, and the memory is a scorpion! Sorrow, therefore, in my case, is a sort of necessary consequence: it is no virtue, it is not repentance, it is a punishment; for any good, it is like the tears of Esau, too late and unavailable."

The matter and the manner of this speech were pathetic in the extreme. Mrs. Harrison's tears, as she hung over her brother, dropped upon him. I bore up much better than I could have expected, and replied with sufficient firmness, "God forbid that we should attempt to limit his mercy! His invitations to repentance are full and universal, without qualifi-

cations and without bounds, and the examples of forgiveness are co-extensive. The true penitent, the spirit which humbles itself under correction, may look upward and revive. You remind me of the text about Esau. I told you before that you misconstrued it, and so in truth you do. Esau profanely despised the blessing of his birthright, and sold it to another. It is said therefore, in our translation, (but the translation is inaccurate,) that he found no place of repentance, although he sought it carefully with tears. The real meaning is, that, with all his tears, flowing as they did from his heart, he could not change the mind and determination of his father. His father had spoken prophetically by the impulse of the Holy Spirit. He could not repent or retract what he had said. The blessing was immutably attached to Jacob. But though of a spiritual character, it was still but a temporal blessing, and the loss of it did not doom Esau of necessity to an eternal condemnation. Yet the story is a lesson and admonition to *us* with respect to the great spiritual blessings reserved for us in heaven. If we make light of them, and barter them away for present sinful indulgences, it is very true God will place them beyond our reach, and we ourselves shall be found amongst those who will weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth in vain. All this, as you say, will be our punishment. It will work no change, no repentance, in the great ruler of the world. Our trial will be over, because our life will be over also. But whilst there is life there is hope."

Here I paused, and Mr. Compton, too, was silent, —ruminating deeply, as it appeared, upon the argu-

ment suggested to him. At length I resumed—
“Yes, I say, whilst our life is prolonged, there is hope of our salvation: unless, indeed, we have apostatized from the faith of the Gospel; unless we have denied the great Redeemer who bought us; unless we account the blood of his covenant profane and useless. If this were so, then, it is true, to whatever extent our life might be prolonged, and however sincere and afflicting our repentance, there would be no hope for us. No repentance built upon foundations of our own invention, upon human reason or natural light, none, in short, but that which rests in Jesus Christ, and in *him* crucified, will arrest the decree which our sins provoke. God the Father will not be approached but through God the Son. There is but one mediator between God and man capable of adjusting the differences between them; namely, the God-man, one who partook of the nature of both, and was therefore qualified to transact for both; one who was commissioned by God the Father, and to be accepted with submissive gratitude by *us*; one who might not only intercede for us by supplication and prayer, as mere man could do, but plead for us in the fulness of his Godhead, and say, ‘I have paid down the whole stipulated ransom for sinners; I have exemplified, by my sufferings, the divine severity against sin, and have satisfied all his demands; I have sealed and ratified the promise of forgiveness with my own blood: be it now fulfilled; accept for my sake, almighty Father, accept the sacrifices of a troubled spirit, in which thy nature delights; despise not the sighings of a broken and contrite heart, which ascend to thee in my name. I am in *thee*, and thou art in

me ; and let every poor penitent upon earth be one with *us.*'”

I was not able, nor, had I been able, should I have been disposed to attempt to add anything to this. Nor was it necessary. In a moment, in an extacy of feeling, the sick man exclaimed, reaching forth his hand in haste, which I grasped with equal eagerness, “ Ah ! I believe, Dr. Warton ; I believe—and may God strengthen my belief ! But pray for me, pray for me, I beseech you ! ” The tears burst into my eyes, but immediately I loosed his hand, and was upon my knees. Mrs. Harrison, with her face covered, did the same. In this situation, before anything was said, Hr. Harrison came in, impatient at our absence, and was soon, without uttering a word, in the same posture with the rest of us. Then be-
thinking myself in what I might be most likely not to fail, and what might also fit for the present circumstances, I drew my prayer-book from my pocket, and opening at the Communion-service, I read the penitential psalm, with the omissions and alterations which have been described on other occasions, afterwards the longer prayer in the same service, then the Lord's prayer, and, lastly, the benediction of St. Paul.

So I rose, and wished to be gone ; neither caring to have my own feelings observed, nor to observe the feelings of others. But Mr. Compton arrested my step, and inquired if he might be permitted to receive the Sacrament. “ Yes,” I answered, “ when you will.” “ To-morrow, then,” he said, “ at this time, let it be.” “ It shall,” I replied, “ if God will ; ” and then I hastened away. Mrs. Harrison remained unmoved in the same attitude of prayer,

and her face hid; Mr. Harrison followed me to the door, and there he pressed my hand, but could not articulate a sentence. Thus closed this interesting, this consolatory scene; and thus, I silently prayed, may God often bless and reward the feeble endeavours of his appointed servants!

Before the day was over, a note arrived from Mrs. Harrison, to apologize for having permitted me to depart without her thanks. Her sensations, she said, were so complicated, that she could not describe them, and unhappily they had deprived her for many minutes of all power of attending to proprieties of behaviour. But she knew that I did not look for any such poor recompense as that of ceremonious, or even of real gratitude. What would be my fullest and most delightful recompense I already had; namely, the certain consciousness, that her beloved, but unfortunate, brother was fast acquiring by my means the temper and disposition of a Christian. So she expressed herself. The next day I kept my appointment. The due preparations had been made for the administration of the Sacrament in the sick-chamber; but the intended communicants were not assembled. Mr. Compton was placed as yesterday, and I saw distinctly that his features were much restored towards their natural appearance. On the whole he pronounced himself better in every way. There were with him Mr. Harrison and a nurse; but as the rest appeared to be slow in coming, he motioned the nurse away, and began to converse with me on one of those subjects which now chiefly occupied his serious thoughts.

“I have been meditating, Dr. Warton,” he said, “upon the holiness of God. It is a sublime, and a

fearful speculation.” “It is,” I replied. “We may get some notions of it by metaphysical reasonings; but those notions will be astonishingly enlarged and elevated by Scripture. The descriptions of it there are magnificent in the extreme, and, of course, when we compare ourselves with such a standard, we shrink back with awe and alarm. When we are told, that the Heavens themselves are not clean in God’s sight; that he charges even his angels with folly; that the very purest spirits which encircle his throne veil their faces with their wings, and cannot behold the dazzling purity of their Maker—we have an apt image of *him* whose name is Holy: whom the cherubim and seraphim incessantly laud and magnify in their songs with the preamble of Holy, Holy, Holy; and the rest of whose perfections, however ineffable and inconceivable, are so much eclipsed by this, that it is on the throne of his holiness he delights to sit—in his holiness he speaks—by his holiness he swears. But then, as you say, the idea is the more terrific, when we reflect upon ourselves, and conclude, as we must of necessity, that such a Being is of purer eyes than to tolerate the sight of any the least stain of iniquity in his rational creatures.”

“It is too true,” he said; “and, therefore, whoever wrote that particular Psalm, it was a proper reflection of the author, that if God should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, we could none of us abide it.” “No, indeed,” I answered; “the very purest actions of the very best of human beings would be but *splendida peccata* in his estimation; they would look only like failings white-washed over, in comparison with his holiness. The eye of the world

might see no flaw in them ; the eye of the doer himself, turned inwards, but purblind with self-love, might discover no blot ; but every flaw, and every blot stands out and glares in the perfect mirror of the divine excellence. If the mixed motives of men were analyzed, there would be found lurking amongst them too much of human frailty—too much desire of vain glory to corrupt what otherwise might have been sound and untainted ; so that their actions will never endure the scrutiny of an infinite holiness. If this be so, then, what are we to think when we come to facts ? What becomes of our arrogant assumptions, when we recollect, that the great mass of us do not merely fall short of being blameless, but are absolutely sinners ? Nor is this the whole of our case. Everything proceeding from an impure fountain must be impure itself. This is our misfortune. There is an original uncleanness about us, which the Holy One cannot behold with complacency ; and which, when it has shown itself in the production of its proper fruits of actual sin, he must of necessity hate and loathe. Where are we now, then, and what shall we do ? Shall we dare, with this gross, tainted flesh about us, to approach *him*, a pure spirit, that inhabiteth eternity—that dwelleth in the high and holy place ?”

“ Ah !” exclaimed Mr. Compton, “ I understand it now. We cannot treat with *him*, nor he with *us*. We want somebody to smooth and facilitate the approaches for us ; somebody, call him what you will, to mediate between the two parties ; to intercede in behalf of the inferior, and to advocate a cause which would otherwise be hopeless.” “ True,” I said, delighted that he had solved the difficulty himself ;

“ this seems a simple proposition ; but who is there in the whole universe of things equal to such a task ? Who is there with authority to undertake it,—with love enough for mankind in their fallen, corrupt, and ruined state, to desire their recovery from it, and to labour for their restoration ?” “ I presume,” he replied immediately, “ that if men had been left to themselves, they could not have found anybody. How, indeed, should they set about it at all ? How could they be brought to concur in one person ; and how could they know that God would accept his office ? Indeed they were dreadfully ignorant about God himself. The probability is, therefore, that they would never once have thought of such a matter.” “ Oh ! pardon me,” I said, “ they were always thinking about it. A mediator may well be called the desire of all nations. The want of this was the prolific cause of all those inferior deities and innumerable sacrifices amongst the heathens. These were intended to approximate them to the great Being, the universal Lord of all. Every nation had its peculiar mediator ; nay, almost every individual ; as the Papists, absurdly now, have each their patron-saint. But one man at least in the whole world was wise enough to see the folly of such a system—I mean Socrates—who said that men would never have any certainty with respect to this great want, until some one should be sent down from heaven to teach them.”

“ Yes,” replied Mr. Compton, “ there he was undoubtedly right. It is manifest, for many cogent reasons, that the first proposition must come from above.” “ Clearly,” I said, delighted again that he had himself suggested such a thought ; “ if men had

been better acquainted with God than they really were, yet it must have been left to *him*, as the Sovereign, to declare, whether he would pardon sinners on any conditions : and if so, then on what conditions ; and whom he would ordain to the important office of making those conditions known, and of carrying them into effect." " This is quite reasonable," he answered ; " and so far the Scripture-scheme agrees with the conclusions of our reason. But now explain to me, if it be possible, why so exalted a person as the Son of God is chosen to this office. Here I have great difficulties. I admit and believe the fact ; but I cannot understand the cause."

" There is no need," I said ; " but still a very satisfactory cause may be assigned. Are you aware, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was the great Agent in the creation of all things ?" " I was always aware," he replied, " that it was supposed to be so stated in Scripture ; and I knew of the famous text, in the beginning of John, which is generally adduced to prove it. But I confess the whole thing appeared to me so incredible, that I never examined the question for myself. Supposing it, however, to be so, how does his being the Creator account for all the rest ?" " You shall hear what I think about it presently," I said ; " but first it may be useful to you, if I were to repeat the splendid passage of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians. After calling Jesus Christ the image of the invisible God, he goes on in this manner : ' By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ; all things were created by him, and for him ; and he is before

all things, and by him all things consist.' This is sublime, it must be allowed; but is it not also full enough, and plain enough, to satisfy the most scrupulous, who admit the Scriptures at least, that Christ made the worlds and man?" "Without all doubt," he answered. "Well then," I said, "now hear the sequel; 'This same is the head of the body, the Church, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.'" "A most striking passage, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Compton. "It asserts or implies, I think, every office that divines ascribe to Christ." "It does," I said, "and, what is more, it connects them together. But tell me; have not they, who make things, generally the most care concerning them?" "So it should seem probable," he replied. "And if the thing made," I said, "were so wonderful, so excellent, so noble a creature as man, do you suppose that the Maker would care the less about him, or the more, in proportion to the distinguished blessings and qualities which he bestowed upon him?" "The more certainly," he answered. "Do parents," I asked, "appear to you to care what becomes of their children?" "Intensely," he replied. "And the more intensely, perhaps," I said, "the more perfect and excellent they themselves, the parents, are?" "I should imagine so," was his answer. "And if their children fall into danger, or distress," I inquired, "do not the bowels of their parents absolutely yearn over them; and are not all their affections and powers let loose at once, whether to pity, to succour, or to re-

store them?" "No doubt of it," was his reply. "Well then," I said, "Christ made man; and how divine the work was, we know by the ruins of it which remain, although so dreadfully defaced. What wonder, then, that he should compassionate the workmanship of his own hands, so noble a creature, fallen from the high estate in which his bounty had placed him, and in danger of an eternal misery? Could he look on, and not be moved? Could he be moved, and not attempt to save his own offspring? Could he suffer the most glorious part of his dominion to be lost, without wishing and endeavouring to recover it? Hence, then, he becomes, he who was the Creator becomes, reasonably and naturally, the Mediator, the Intercessor, the Advocate, the Redeemer, the Saviour of mankind. Who so likely, who so proper, to undertake and fulfil all these offices for them, as he who made them at the first, and has preserved them ever since by his providence? And observe, the same person shall at last be our Judge. Well, therefore, may they, who accept him under all those offices, anticipate mercy, and they, who despise or reject him, judgment without mercy."

Mr. Compton trembled, but made no answer; and at this instant his sister entered, with several servants, and enquired if I would permit them to partake of the Lord's Supper in company with their master. "By all means," I answered. "It is a very favourable opportunity. They have been for a long time the inmates of a sick house: this, I should expect, must have awakened in their minds serious thoughts with regard to themselves. We are none of us sure at any time beyond the single pulse which beats; but the constant sight of a death-bed prevents us

from disguising this fact from ourselves, and urges us forcibly to prepare for that destiny which awaits us all. However, they must ask themselves this question, before I put it to them in the course of the solemn service : whether they are at peace with their fellow-men, as they would be at peace with their God ; and whether they grieve for their past sins, and hate them so far as to resolve henceforth, to the best of their power, to walk in newness of life." " I have examined them, Sir," said Mr. Harrison, " as to all these points, and their answers are very satisfactory." " Very well, then," I replied ; " they may partake of this private Sacrament ; but I advise them to receive the Sacrament publicly in the church, upon the first occasion that offers, and, indeed, to establish themselves in the regular practice of it. God loves the celebration of his ordinances in the appointed places ; but where it cannot be done, as in the case before us, we trust that he will graciously accept the will for the deed."

After this I administered the holy rite ; and a remarkable circumstance occurred, which at first alarmed me, as being a deviation from strict order ; but it appeared to produce a good effect, and therefore I did not interrupt it. When I presented the wine to the sick man, he held the cup in his hand for a few moments, and then addressed the other communicants as follows :—

" I am glad to see so many of you present, upon an occasion which is deeply awful to myself, and may be very useful to *you*. The greater part of you know only my calamities ; there are but two who have been long enough in my service to be personally acquainted with the habits of my former life, before I was roused

from my security by this severe but merciful blow. I intreat them to pardon me for the bad example which I have set them; and I hope, that both they, and the rest of you, will all be admonished to your profit by so sad a spectacle. I have sinned—I confess it—basely and heinously; I have done deeds——”

We were waiting in breathless expectation for the conclusion of the sentence. He began it with energy; but the recollection, I presume, of the deeds themselves—black, no doubt, and corroding the conscience—suddenly oppressed his voice, and denied utterance to anything but sighs. In an instant, every eye that was upon him shed tears of sympathy. At length he was aware of it, and by a great effort resumed his speech.

“I will not wound your feelings, nor waste your time, by a particular enumeration of my sins, or by aggravating the enormity of them. I will reserve that duty for my own conscience, for the great God above, and for the minister of Christ, if he require it of me. But, believe me, amongst the various errors and sins of my life, I am deeply sorry for my neglect of this holy sacrament. I have partaken of it but twice only; once very properly, but, alas! without any due effect. It was by the side of my excellent mother’s death-bed. Would that I had obeyed all her counsels, which her departed goodness and wisdom should have sanctified to my ears! Perhaps she observes me now from her sainted sphere, and——”

Here he stopped again in the bitterness of his soul. All our tears redoubled; his sister sobbed aloud; but soon once more he resumed, and finished. “The other occasion, upon which I took the Sacrament, was not a worthy one. It was a mere form, and to

comply with the laws of my country, when I wished to become a magistrate. Perhaps she is wrong in imposing the necessity of so sacred and awful a ceremony ; but at all events I myself was wrong in taking the Sacrament with worldly views. It is not unlikely that my motives may be mistaken now. Some one may surmise, that I am constrained by the fear of death. The fear of death has been wholesome to me, I allow ; and I thank God for giving me the two warnings which I have had. But I am under no apprehensions of immediate death. On the contrary, the doctors throw out hopes of life, and you yourselves see how much better I am to-day. I receive this Sacrament, therefore, deliberately, and not in haste ; from conviction, not from alarm ; with gratitude, and warmth of affection, not with a cold thanklessness ; with hope, and not in despair. I receive it, with a firm resolution to neglect it no more, and with a humble prayer that God may bless it to my present and everlasting welfare."

This being said, he emptied the cup, and returned it to me ; so I performed what remained of the ceremony, and took my leave, expressing my wish aloud, that the sick man might be left as quiet as possible, to meditate upon the solemn scene which had just been acted, and to realize some of its immediate benefits. It was his own wish too, he said ; so we all retired but a single nurse, who remained to watch over his solitude.

On my way home I met Mr. Cornwall, whom I have described in the dialogues upon religious melancholy. He turned back with me ; and observing, I suppose, an unusual gravity and thoughtfulness in my manner, and perhaps a redness about my eyes,

he inquired, if I had been employed in visiting any sick person under extraordinary circumstances. "Do you know," I said, "the inhabitant of that house?" pointing to Mr. Compton's. "No," he replied; "my residence here has been yet too short. But I have always remarked a great stir about it, and lately very often the carriages of physicians; and I intended, when the thing came into my head, to ask you what was the matter, and who was the sick person." "I will tell you now, then," I said; "but you must use your discretion in repeating the story. It is a proper one for the ear of every clergyman, and it may do good to many others besides. But it would not be proper for *me* to go hawking it about at present." "No, indeed," he answered: "I understand you perfectly."

"Well, then," I said, "I have just witnessed a most gratifying spectacle! I have seen the complete triumph of our holy religion over a seared conscience, and a hardened heart; I found a man a sceptic; I have left him a Christian." This prelude awakened, as might be supposed, his curiosity; and I now gave him, in as compressed a form as I could, Mr. Compton's history, and the heads of my conversations with him. But before I concluded, we had arrived at the rectory; and as he would not release me, until he knew the whole outline, we made several circuits of the shrubbery; and then, upon leaving me, he exclaimed, '*Macte esto!*' His ideas of the possible usefulness of a parish priest were highly enlarged, and his zeal kindled to undertake the same arduous duties. In point of fact, in no long time afterwards, he settled himself in a large and populous parish, like my own, where there was a vast deal to be done; but where, unlike mine, there was no adequate emolu-

ment. He laboured hard in the vineyard ; his health failed him, and his spirits were almost broken ; so that he was compelled to abandon his charge to another. I record this as a lesson for the younger clergy. It is fit that they should have an exalted conception and a thorough sense of the importance and the responsibility of their profession and office ; but at the same time they should previously count the cost, and make a due estimate of their bodily strength, and of what I would call their force and power of nerve ; so as not to discourage themselves and ruin their future prospects by the hazard of a failure in the attempt to do too much. This was the result which threatened Mr. Cornwall ; but happily for himself and others his health improved, and he is now content to do good within a smaller sphere of action.

In the afternoon of the following day I visited Mr. Compton again. He had given directions, that if I called I should be brought to his chamber at once. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison were with him there. He was well enough to have been lifted from his bed, and placed in a large easy chair, where he sat wrapt up in flannels, and supported with pillows. I should have inferred, from the more cheerful air and relaxation of his features, that he imagined the bitterness of death to be past ; but to my first simple observation upon his improved appearance, he answered, immediately, shaking his head, and contracting his brow, " I have no dependance upon it whatever. I may live, certainly ; but since my second attack, which was almost as unexpected as the first, my expectations of life have been much diminished. The present calm does not deceive me. No, Dr. Warton, it is not so much the freedom from pain, and the

recovery of a little strength, and this change of situation and posture, which have improved my appearance; as the disburdening of my conscience, the practice of repentance, the belief of the Christian religion, the knowledge of some of the reasons upon which it is founded, and the partaking of the holy Sacrament yesterday. These are the several things, which, by their combined influence, have produced the effect which you perceive, and upon which you congratulate me. But even in these respects I have much to do; and I am well aware how humble I ought to be."

All this was admirable, and it was impossible not to be delighted with it. "Very well, then," I said, "you have now proved by your own experience, that the practice of repentance, so painful to the imagination, is not so painful in the act; or, at least, that it is attended at every step with the consolation, the comfort, and the revival of the broken spirit. It is not like the sorrow which ensues upon the loss of worldly things, and sinks the man down to the confines of the grave, having no support, and no hope; it is a sort of holy sorrow; it has a cleansing power derived from the merits and promises of the Saviour; it restores the man to himself; it settles him in a peace and tranquillity unknown before; amidst storms and tempests without, it introduces a sunshine into his own breast; it encourages him to repose on the Mediator, and to look up through *him* to a reconciled God. This is the process, Mr. Compton, through which you yourself have gone; difficult and painful, and almost impossible, when contemplated from a distant point; but satisfactory in every step, and most happy in the whole result."

“Yes, indeed,” he replied, “and the Sacrament has crowned the rest. In the way in which I have taken it I consider myself as having acknowledged one main truth of Christianity, that Christ died for the sins of the world. I understand it to be a memorial of his death through all ages; and I understand the receiving of it to be a public testimony that we are in covenant with him. By baptism we entered into that covenant; by this Sacrament, I presume, we keep up the recollection, and put in our claim to the benefit of it.” “You are quite right,” I said; “but besides the general benefits of the Christian covenant, there are particular and immediate benefits, without doubt, arising to all who partake worthily. It is impossible to think, that Christ is himself present in this Sacrament, without some peculiar blessing attending it.” “But how is that?” he inquired. “Is the presence of Christ anything more than a strong figure for his influence and efficacy?” “Yes,” I said, “he is really present, but not bodily; neither by the conversion of the bread into his bodily substance, which is called transubstantiation, nor by the union of his body with the bread which is called consubstantiation; his presence is after a spiritual manner.”

Here Mr. Harrison interposed, and observed, that he thought this doctrine was not expressed with sufficient caution or clearness in our excellent Catechism. “You might suppose,” he said, “that we of the church of England were Transubstantialists, like the Roman Catholics; or Consubstantialists, like the Lutherans.” “Let us see,” I resumed; “we will examine the passage itself;” and I opened a prayer-book, which was lying on a table near us. “This,

no doubt, is what you mean. It is asserted here, that the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." "Yes," he replied, "that is precisely the thing to which I allude, and which I consider to be too strongly expressed." "The form of expression," I said, "is very properly the same with that which our Saviour himself adopted; and it is explained in the same manner; namely, in a spiritual sense. For, look here—the passage to which you object is an answer to this question; what is the inward part of the Lord's Supper, or the thing signified? Observe, it has been already stated, that there are two parts in each Sacrament; one outward, and the other inward; and that the inward part is a spiritual grace. It is manifest, therefore, that, by taking and receiving the body and blood of Christ, the Catechism means nothing more than this inward spiritual grace." "It is very true," replied Mr. Harrison; "when we take the whole together, the sense of one passage is limited by the sense of another." "So it is," I said; "and as, besides what is clear and open to all in this Sacrament, there is a divine mystery concealed under it, nothing would have been more ill-judged than to cast off Christ's own form, which he himself insinuated to have a spiritual meaning, and to substitute another, which should convey merely our limited and partial ideas of it. In short, whatever Christ himself meant, when he said, that it was necessary for us to eat his flesh, and drink his blood; whatever he meant, when he presented the bread and said, 'This is my body;' and when he presented the wine, and said, 'This is my blood;' we, by adhering to his expressions,

include the whole ; and by partaking faithfully, we may hope to enjoy every portion of the mysterious spiritual benefit."

Mr. Harrison having declared his satisfaction in this explanation, I addressed myself again to Mr. Compton. "It seems, then," I said, "that, besides the general benefits to be expected from an obedience to the dying command of our Saviour, and from so positive a profession, as we make at the altar, of devoting ourselves to his service, and from the sacred act of acknowledging the inestimable value of his death, and our trust in it as an atonement for sin, and for our own sins in particular ; besides all this, there is something else, which is more, I think, than a mere figure ; some invisible union, perhaps, which takes place between himself and *us*, to our sanctification ; some seed, as it were, implanted within us, which tends thenceforward to the production of the rich fruits of righteousness and holiness of life. And this, I apprehend, is effected by the intervention of the Holy Ghost, whom I formerly represented to you as bearing a most important part in the great business of our salvation. In fact, Scripture so states the matter, that without the help of the Holy Ghost we cannot take a single step towards that glorious end ; and it is by this his spirit that Jesus Christ, as the God-man, is present, and acts everywhere. So far as his divine nature solely is concerned, he is everywhere, and at all times present personally, like God the Father ; but in his mixed nature, by which he is chiefly related to *us*, he himself resides in heaven, at the right hand of the paternal majesty, and his spirit is his representative here upon earth."

"Would it not be a simpler and more intelligible

notion," inquired Mr. Compton, "if we were to consider the Holy Ghost as a quality rather than a distinct person, or as the spirit of God, in the same manner that the soul is the spirit of man?" "It is purely a matter of revelation," I answered, "and therefore we must take it precisely as it is revealed. But we should gain nothing in point of intelligibility by the notions which you suggest, and we should lose in other respects. If the Holy Ghost were to God what the soul is to man, we must change all our plainest ideas of God himself, whom we suppose to be one pure, unmixed, and unmodified spirit; and if he were merely a quality, how could he act at all? No, nothing can be clearer than that the Paraclete, the Comforter, as Christ calls him, is a person distinct from the Father and the Son, but so connected with them as to proceed from both. The origin of the Son, we are told, is by some mode of generation totally unknown and inconceivable by us; yet such, no doubt, as to occasion that peculiar relation which is expressed by Father and Son. Of the origin of the Holy Ghost we know nothing; except that, whatever may be meant by his proceeding from the other two, it was from all eternity. And this circumstance of his being eternal, together with the other things ascribed to him in Scripture, compel us to make him a partaker of the Godhead. The work assigned to him in promoting our sanctification and salvation requires the powers of the Godhead, and therefore it is of deep importance to us to know and believe that he has them. We rely upon him with an unshaken confidence, because we are assured that his power and inclination to save us are concurrent, and the same with those of the

Father and the Son. And to obtain his mighty aid we have only to pray for it and to use it. This is the practical part of the doctrine, which is open to the meanest understanding, and wants no metaphysical or fanatical interpretation."

"Yes," said Mr. Compton, "I perceive all that very clearly. There is a simple mode of viewing these matters, which is adapted to the general understanding and necessities of mankind; and there is another which may occupy the highest thoughts of the highest genius." "So it is," I replied, "but, unfortunately, many men in different ages have run wild in their high speculations, and thence arose the expediency of creeds to fix the boundaries of those speculations. The safe thing is, to adopt this rule of Scripture—'the secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and our children for ever.'"

In this sentiment they all appeared to acquiesce, so, after a short pause, being desirous to go, I proposed that we should kneel down, and join together in a short prayer. This being readily assented to, I took the 103rd Psalm for my basis, and altered, and added, as it suited my ideas of the present emergency. The effect, apparently, was such as I might have wished. I then pronounced the Lord's Prayer, and the benediction; which being finished, I rose and departed. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison would have accompanied me, but I did not permit them.

I hasten now to the close of my conversations with Mr. Compton. I have recorded everything of chief importance which passed between us, and which does not interfere with other dialogues. It happens indeed, perpetually, that the same subjects

are discussed with different persons, but I record each of the discussions only once, unless there be something peculiar in the beginning or termination of them, which throws a new light upon the subjects themselves; and unless also, the different attainments of the different persons not being adapted to the same modes of argument or explanation, I think it expedient, in pursuit of my main object, to show my younger brethren of the clergy how I endeavoured to arrive at the same end.

After the last conversation I saw Mr. Compton several times, and talked with him as usual. His faith and repentance appeared to me to be both of them lively and sincere, and I was glad to perceive no tendency whatever to fanaticism about him either in his language or conduct. The language, indeed, of fanaticism, which betrays itself in an instant to those who know anything of it, he had never learnt or heard, and it does not come naturally to anybody. His conduct always discovered a proper self-humiliation, and a true distrust of himself. Because he had undergone an entire change of heart and sentiment, he did not, therefore, assure himself of his indefeasible salvation, or arrogantly assume that he was sealed for heaven. He looked back upon his past life, and was abased in his own eyes; and he looked forward, not indeed without the hope of a modest diffidence, but still with much of its fear and trembling. Perfect love casteth out fear, and he was inclined to love with all his heart; but he had yet had no experience in the ways of God; his condition was but the beginning of wisdom, and therefore it was very properly accompanied with a wholesome fear. Of this feeling I greatly approved. I am shocked, and

my blood almost runs cold within me, when I hear, as I too often do, of the greatest of sinners, with no time for solid repentance, quitting the world with all the religious assurance of the greatest of saints; dying, in short, in the worst of causes as if they died in the very best. Even the thief upon the cross was humble, and acknowledged his own baseness. Never could I court the vain applause of having worked up the minds and imagination of the profligate to a feeling of security with respect to another world. It is a bad example for others, it is deeply hazardous for themselves. The conviction of the certainty of salvation is not salvation itself, it may be a most dangerous downfall.

During this interval Mr. Compton busied himself, I believe, in works of charity. He had been too selfish before, and had spent his whole income upon his private indulgences. Now he employed his sister to look for persons in distress, and to relieve them; and he subscribed liberally to all the benevolent institutions of the parish. But his career of doing good was short. One night, his female nurse only being in attendance upon him, came the third paralytic attack, which ended fatally.

I was sent for early in the morning. He was lying in his bed upon his back with his eyes closed. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison were standing by; the former in deep thought, the latter in tears. I spoke—his lips moved, but he could not articulate anything. I pressed his hand gently; he grasped mine with strength without loosing it. "It pleases God," I said aloud, "to preserve his understanding to him in this great extremity. Let us seize the precious moment, and spend it in prayer." He understood me,

and let go my hand. Immediately we were all upon our knees, and I read the prayer appointed for those who have small hope of recovery. When it was finished I rose and took his hand again ; and, putting my face close to his, I asked him if he had heard and comprehended me. I thought that he answered " yes," but he gave me a sufficient sign by pressing my hand with vigour, and still retaining it. I asked again if he was firm in the faith of Jesus Christ ; again he pressed my hand, and then loosed it. I concluded that any more questions would only disturb his last moments, so I pronounced over him the benediction at the end of the Visitation-service, and prepared to go. Indeed I could do no more. Hesitating a little, at length I went without being noticed ; Mr. and Mrs. Harrison still remaining upon their knees.

In three hours I returned, expecting to hear that all was over. He was alive, and I was desired to go upstairs. Very soon, as I mounted them, I heard a dreadful noise, which it is difficult to describe. It resembled most the snorting of a furious horse. I started at first, but finding it to be repeated at regular intervals, I too well understood what it was. The door into the sick-chamber, at the top of the staircase, was wide open. I passed rapidly by it, but I had a glimpse of the dying man as he lay in the same position as before, with his nostrils distended and his mouth gaping. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison were in the sitting-room. She was on her knees, and her husband was supporting her. The sight had been too appalling for them, and they had retired here ; but they were not out of reach of the noise which had scared everybody else away.

At first I was disposed to endeavour to console Mrs. Harrison, but upon reflection I only said, "I will read the commendatory prayer." "He is quite insensible," replied Mr. Harrison. "I suppose so," I rejoined, "but I will read it for our own use. Stay where you are, I will go by myself into the apartment of death. You will hear me from hence."

Thus, without waiting for an answer, I stepped softly into the adjoining chamber, but the rolling of thunder over our heads would not have awaked Mr. Compton now. I came to the side of his bed, knelt down, and performed as well as I could the painful duty. The noise continued equally terrific; but every gasp seemed as if it would be the last. His mouth foamed, and there was nobody to cleanse it. Fortunately his eyes were already closed. I descended the stairs, but the terrible noise pursued me till the door was shut upon me. In imagination I heard it afterwards wherever I went during the day.

On the following day, and not before, Mr. Compton died. It was a bitter interval to every person in the house. No one had the courage to approach him in this tremendous struggle of the soul to escape from the body. But at length she departed, and all was peace.



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