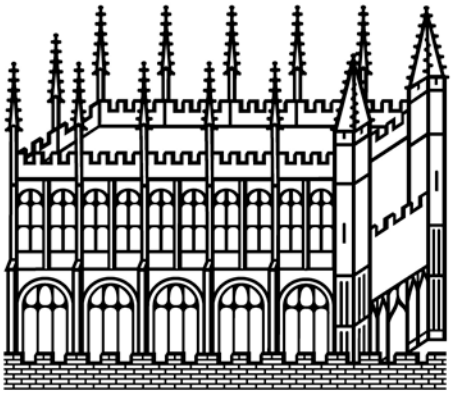

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MASON

ON SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

MELMOTH'S

GREAT IMPORTANCE OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE, CONSIDERED.

DODSLEY'S

ECONOMY OF HUMAN LIFE.

LONDON:

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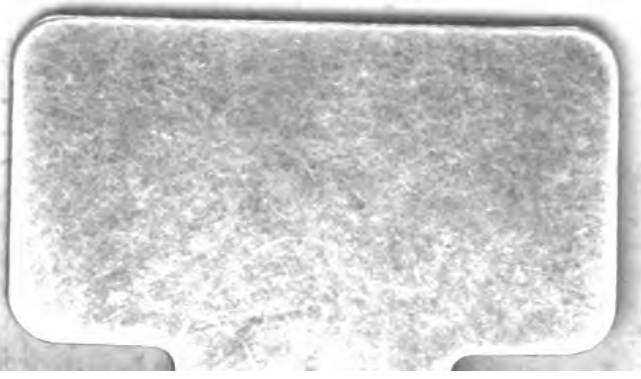

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T. Uwins. *C. Heath.*

"For our sakes he became poor."
Melmoth. Chap. 3.

MASON ON SELF KNOWLEDGE.

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A

TREATISE

ON

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

PART I.—CHAP. I.

The nature and importance of the Subject.

A DESIRE of knowledge is natural to all human minds. And nothing discovers the true quality and disposition of the mind more than the particular kind of knowledge it is most fond of.

Thus we see, that low and little minds are most delighted with the knowledge of trifles, as in children; an indolent mind, with that which serves only for amusement, or the entertainment of the fancy; a curious mind is best pleased with facts; a judicious, penetrating mind, with demonstration and mathematical science; a worldly mind esteems no knowledge like that of the world; but a wise and pious man, before all other kinds of knowledge, prefers that of God and his own soul.

But some kind of knowledge or other the mind is continually craving after, and after a farther proficiency in. And, by considering what kind of knowledge it most of all desires, its prevailing turn and temper may easily be known.

This desire of knowledge, like other affections

planted in our nature, will be very apt to lead us wrong, if it be not well regulated. When it is directed to improper objects, or pursued in an improper manner, it degenerates into a vain and criminal curiosity. A fatal instance of this in our first parents we have upon sacred record, the unhappy effects of which are but too visible in all.

Self-knowledge is the subject of the ensuing treatise; a subject, which the more I think of, the more important and extensive it appears: so important, that every branch of it seems absolutely necessary to the right government of the life and temper; and so extensive, that the nearer view we take of the several branches of it, more are still opening to the view, as necessarily connected with it as the other, like what we find in microscopical observations on natural objects. The better the glasses, and the nearer the scrutiny, the more wonders we explore; and the more surprising discoveries we make of certain properties, parts, or affections belonging to them, which were never before thought of. For, in order to a true self-knowledge, the human mind, with its various powers and operations, must be narrowly inspected, all its secret bendings and doublings displayed; otherwise our self-acquaintance will be but very partial and defective, and the heart, after all, will deceive us. So that, in treating this subject, there is no small danger, either of doing injury to it, by a slight and superficial inquest, on the one hand, or of running into a research too minute and philosophical for common use, on the other. These two extremes I shall keep in my eye, and endeavour to keep a middle course between them.

'Know thyself,' is one of the most useful and comprehensive precepts in the whole moral system.

And it is well known in how great a veneration this maxim was held by the ancients; and in how high esteem the duty of self-examination, as necessary to it.

Thales, the Milesian, is said to be the first author of it; who used to say, 'that for a man to know himself, is the hardest thing in the world.' It was afterward adopted by Chylon, the Lacedæmonian; and is one of those three precepts, which Pliny affirms to have been consecrated at Delphos in golden letters. It was afterward greatly admired, and frequently used by others, till at length it acquired the authority of a divine oracle, and was supposed to have been given originally by Apollo himself. Of which general opinion Cicero gives us this reason, 'because it hath such a weight of sense and wisdom in it, as appears too great to be attributed to any man.' And this opinion, of its coming originally from Apollo himself, perhaps was the reason that it was written, in golden capitals, over the door of his temple at Delphos.

And why this excellent precept should not be held in as high esteem in the Christian world, as it was in the heathen, is hard to conceive. Human nature is the same now as it was then; the heart as deceitful, and the necessity of watching, knowing, and keeping it, the same. Nor are we less assured that this precept is divine: nay, we have a much greater assurance of this than they had. They supposed it came down from heaven; we know it did. What they conjectured, we are sure of. For this sacred oracle is dictated to us in a manifold light, and explained to us in various views, by the Holy Spirit, in that revelation which God hath been pleased to give us, as our guide to duty and happiness; by which, 'as in a glass, we may

survey ourselves, and know what manner of persons we are.'

This discovers ourselves to us, pierces into the inmost recesses of the mind, strips off every disguise, lays open the inward part, makes a strict scrutiny into the very soul and spirit, and critically 'judges of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' It shews us with what exactness and care we are to search and try our spirits, examine ourselves, and watch our ways, and keep our hearts, in order to acquire this important self-science; which it often calls us to do. 'Examine yourselves; prove your own selves; know you not yourselves? Let a man examine himself;' 1 Cor. xi. 28. Our Saviour upbraids his disciples with their self-ignorance, in not 'knowing what manner of spirits they were of;' Luke ix. 55. And saith the apostle, 'If a man (through self-ignorance) thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not another;' Gal. vi. 3, 4. Here we are commanded, instead of judging others, to judge ourselves; and to avoid the inexcusable rashness of condemning others for the very crimes we ourselves are guilty of; Rom. ii. 1. 21, 22, which a self-ignorant man is very apt to do; nay, to be more offended at a small blemish in another's character, than at a greater in his own; which folly, self-ignorance, and hypocrisy, our Saviour, with just severity, animadverts upon, Matt. vii. 3—5.

And what stress was laid upon this under the Old Testament dispensation appears sufficiently from those expressions:—'Keep thy heart with all diligence;' Prov. iv. 23. 'Commune with your own heart;' Psal. iv. 4. 'Search me, O God,

and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts;' Psal. cxxxix. 23. 'Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart;' Psal. xxvi. 2. 'Let us search and try our ways;' Lam. iii. 4. 'Recollect, recollect yourselves, O nation not desired;' Zeph. ii. 1. And all this is necessary to that self-acquaintance, which is the only proper basis of solid peace.

Were mankind but more generally convinced of the importance and necessity of this self-knowledge, and possessed with a due esteem for it; did they but know the true way to attain it; and, under a proper sense of its excellence, and the fatal effects of self-ignorance, did they but make it their business and study every day to cultivate it; how soon should we find a happy alteration in the manners and spirits of men! But the misery of it is, men will not *think*; will not employ their thoughts in good earnest about the things which most of all deserve and demand them. By which unaccountable indolence, obstinacy, and aversion to self-reflection, they are led, blindfold and insensibly, into the most dangerous paths of infidelity and wickedness, as the Jews were heretofore; of whose amazing ingratitude and apostacy God himself assigns this single cause, 'My people do not consider;' Isa. i. 3.

Self-knowledge is that acquaintance with ourselves, which shews us what we are, and do, and ought to be, and do, in order to our living comfortably and usefully here, and happily hereafter. The means of it is self-examination; the end of it self-government, and self-fruition. It principally consists in the knowledge of our souls; which is attained by a particular attention to their various powers, capacities, passions, inclinations, opera-

tions, state, happiness, and temper. For a man's soul is properly himself; Matt. xvi. 26. The body is but the house, the soul is the tenant that inhabits it; the body is the instrument, the soul the artist that directs it.

This science, which is to be the subject of the ensuing treatise, hath these three peculiar properties in it, which distinguish it from, and render it preferable to, all others. (1.) 'It is equally attainable by all.' It requires no strength of memory, no force of genius, no depth of penetration, as many other sciences do, to come at a tolerable acquaintance with them; which therefore renders them inaccessible by the greatest part of mankind. Nor is it placed out of their reach, through a want of opportunity, and proper assistance and direction how to acquire it, as many other parts of learning are. Every one of a common capacity hath the opportunity and ability to acquire it, if he will but recollect his rambling thoughts, turn them in upon himself, watch the motions of his heart, and compare them with his rule.—(2.) 'It is of equal importance to all, and of the highest importance to every one.' Other sciences are suited to the various conditions of life: some more necessary to some, others to others. But this equally concerns every one that hath an immortal soul, whose final happiness he desires and seeks.—(3.) 'Other knowledge is very apt to make a man vain; this always keeps him humble.' Nay, it is always for want of this knowledge that men are vain of that they have. 'Knowledge puffeth up;' 1 Cor. viii. 1. A small degree of knowledge often hath this effect on weak minds. And the reason why greater attainments in it have not so generally the same effect, is, because they open and enlarge the views of the mind

so far, as to let into it, at the same time, a good degree of self-knowledge; for the more true knowledge a man hath, the more sensible he is of the want of it; which keeps him humble.

And now, reader, whoever thou art, whatever be thy character, station, or distinction in life, if thou art afraid to look into thine heart, and hast no inclination to self-acquaintance, read no farther, lay aside this book; for thou wilt find nothing here that will flatter thy self-esteem, but, perhaps, something that may abate it. But, if thou art desirous to cultivate this important kind of knowledge, and to live no longer a stranger to thyself, proceed; and keep thy eye open to thine own image, with whatever unexpected deformity it may present itself to thee; and patiently attend, whilst, by divine assistance, I endeavour to lay open thine own heart to thee, and lead thee to the true knowledge of thyself, in the following chapters.

CHAP. II.

The several branches of Self-Knowledge. We must know what sort of creatures we are, and what we shall be.

I. THAT we may have a more distinct and orderly view of this subject, I shall here consider the several branches of self-knowledge, or some of the chief particulars wherein it consists. Whereby, perhaps, it will appear to be a more copious and comprehensive science than we imagine. And,

(1.) To know ourselves, is 'to know and seriously consider what sort of creatures we are, and what we shall be.'

1. 'What we are.'

Man is a complex being, τριμερης υποστασις, a *tripartite person*, or, a compound creature, made up of three distinct parts, *viz.* the *body*, which is the earthy or mortal part of him; the *soul*, which is the animal or sensitive part; and the *spirit*, or *mind*, which is the rational and immortal part. Each of these three parts have their respective offices assigned them; and a man then acts becoming himself, when he keeps them duly employed in their proper functions, and preserves their natural subordination. But it is not enough to know this merely as a point of speculation; we must pursue and revolve the thought, and urge the consideration to all the purposes of a practical self-knowledge.

We are not all body, nor mere animal creatures. We find we have a more noble nature than the inanimate or brutal part of the creation. We can not only move and act freely, but we observe in ourselves a capacity of reflection, study, and forecast, and various mental operations, which irrational minds discover no symptoms of. Our souls, therefore, must be of a more excellent nature than theirs; and, from the power of thought with which they are endowed, they are proved to be immaterial substances, and consequently, in their own nature, capable of immortality. And that they are actually immortal, or will never die, the sacred Scriptures do abundantly testify. Let us, then, hereupon seriously recollect ourselves in the following soliloquy:

'O my soul, look back but a few years, and thou wast nothing! And how didst thou spring out of that nothing? Thou couldst not make thyself; that is quite impossible. Most certain it is, that *that* almighty, self-existent, and eternal Power which made the world, made thee also out of nothing,

called thee into being when thou wast not; gave thee those reasoning and reflecting faculties, which thou art now employing in searching out the end and happiness of thy nature. It was he, O my soul, that made thee intelligent and immortal. It was he that placed thee in this body, as in a prison; where thy capacities are cramped, thy desires debased, and thy liberty lost. It was he that sent thee into this world, which, by all circumstances, appears to be a state of short discipline and trial. And wherefore did he place thee here, when he might have made thee a more free, unconfined, and happy spirit? But check that thought; it looks like a too presumptuous curiosity. A more needful and important inquiry is, What did he place thee here for? And what doth he expect from thee whilst thou art here? What part hath he allotted me to act on the stage of human life, where he, angels, and men, are spectators of my behaviour? The part he hath given me to act here is, doubtless, a very important one, because it is for eternity. And what is it, but to live up to the dignity of my rational and intellectual nature, and as becomes a creature born for immortality?

'And tell me, O my soul (for as I am now about to cultivate a better acquaintance with thee, to whom I have been too long a stranger, I must try thee, and put many a close question to thee), tell me, I say, whilst thou confinest thy desires to sensual gratifications, wherein dost thou differ from the beasts that perish? Captivated by bodily appetites, dost thou not act beneath thyself? Dost thou not put thyself upon a level with the lower class of beings, which were made to serve thee; offer an indignity to thyself, and despise the works of thy Maker's hands? O remember thy heavenly ex-

tract; remember thou art a spirit! Check, then, the solicitations of the flesh; and dare to do nothing that may diminish thy native excellence, dishonour thy high original, or degrade thy noble nature. But let me still urge it. Consider (I say), O my soul, that thou art an immortal spirit. Thy body dies; but thou, *thou* must live for ever, and thine eternity must take its tincture from the manner of thy behaviour, and the habits thou contractest, during this thy short copartnership with flesh and blood. O! do nothing now, but what thou mayest, with pleasure, look back upon a million of ages hence! For know, O my soul, that thy self-consciousness and reflecting faculties will not leave thee with thy body; but will follow thee after death, and be the instrument of unspeakable pleasure or torment to thee in that separate state of existence.'

2. In order to a full acquaintance with ourselves, we must endeavour to know not only what we are, but what we shall be.

And O! what different creatures shall we soon be, from what we now are! Let us look forward then, and frequently glance our thoughts towards death; though they cannot penetrate the darkness of that passage, or reach the state behind it. That lies veiled from the eyes of our mind; and the great God hath not thought fit to throw so much light upon it, as to satisfy the anxious and inquisitive desires the soul hath to know it. However, let us make the best use we can of that little light which Scripture and reason have let in upon this dark and important subject.

'Compose thy thoughts, O my soul, and imagine how it will fare with thee, when thou goest a naked, unembodied spirit, into a world, an unknown world

of spirits, with all thy self-consciousness about thee, where no material object shall strike thine eye, and where thy dear partner and companion, the body, cannot come nigh thee; but where, without it, thou wilt be sensible of the most noble satisfactions, or the most exquisite pains. Embarked in death, thy passage will be dark; and the shore on which it will land thee, altogether strange and unknown. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.'*

That revelation which God hath been pleased to make of his will to mankind, was designed rather to fit us for the future happiness, and direct our way to it, than open to us the particular glories of it, or distinctly shew us what it is. This it hath left still very much a mystery, to check our too curious inquiries into the nature of it, and to bend our thoughts more intently to that which more concerns us, viz. an habitual preparation for it. And what that is we cannot be ignorant, if we believe either our Bible or our reason: for both these assure us, that 'that which makes us like to God, is the only thing that can fit us for the enjoyment of him.' Here, then, let us hold. Let our great concern be, to be 'holy, as he is holy.' And then, and then only, are we sure to enjoy him, 'in whose light we shall see light.' And, be the future state of existence what it will, we shall some way be happy there, and much more happy than we can now conceive; though in what particular manner we know not, because God hath not revealed it.

CHAP. III.

The several relations in which we stand to God, to Christ, and our fellow-creatures.

II. 'SELF-KNOWLEDGE requires us to be well acquainted with the various relations in which we stand to other beings, and the several duties that result from those relations.' And,

1. 'Our first and principal concern is to consider the relation we stand in to him who gave us our being.'

We are the creatures of his hand, and the objects of his care. His power upholds the being his goodness gave us; his bounty accommodates us with the blessings of this life; and his grace provides for us the happiness of a better. Nor are we merely his creatures, but his rational and intelligent creatures. It is the dignity of our natures, that we are capable of knowing and enjoying him that made us. And, as the rational creatures of God, there are two relations especially that we stand in to him; the frequent consideration of which is absolutely necessary to a right self-knowledge: for, as our Creator, he is our king and father; and, as his creatures, we are the subjects of his kingdom, and the children of his family.

1. 'We are the subjects of his kingdom.' And as such, we are bound,

(1.) To yield a faithful obedience to the laws of his kingdom. And the advantages by which these come to be recommended to us above all human laws are many. They are calculated for the private interest of every one, as well as that of the public; and are designed to promote our present, as well as our future happiness. They are plainly

and explicitly published, easily understood, and in fair and legible characters writ in every man's heart; and the wisdom, reason, and necessity of them are readily discerned. They are urged with the most mighty motives that can possibly affect the human heart: and, if any of them are difficult, the most effectual grace is freely offered to encourage and assist our obedience: advantages which no human laws have to enforce the observance of them.—(2.) As his subjects, we must readily pay him the homage due to his sovereignty. And this is no less than the homage of the heart; humbly acknowledging, that we hold every thing of him, and have every thing from him. Earthly princes are forced to be content with verbal acknowledgments, or mere formal homage; for they can command nothing but what is external. But God, who knows and looks at the hearts of all his creatures, will accept of nothing but what comes from thence. He demands the adoration of our whole souls, which is most justly due to him, who formed them, and gave them the very capacities to know and adore him.—(3.) As faithful subjects, we must cheerfully pay him the tribute he requires of us. This is not like the tribute which earthly kings exact; who as much depend upon their subjects for the support of their power, as their subjects do upon them for the protection of their property. But the tribute God requires of us is a tribute of praise and honour, which he stands in no need of from us: for his power is independent, and his glory immutable; and he is infinitely able, of himself, to support the dignity of his universal government. But it is the most natural duty we owe him, as creatures. For to praise him, is only to shew forth his praise; to glorify him, to celebrate his

glory; and to honour him, is to render him and his ways honourable in the eyes and esteem of others. And, as this is the most natural duty that creatures owe to their Creator, so it is a tribute he requires of every one of them, in proportion to their respective talents, and abilities to pay it.—(4.) As dutiful subjects, we must contentedly and quietly submit to the methods and administrations of his government, however dark, involved, or intricate. All governments have their *arcana imperii*, or secrets of state, which common subjects cannot penetrate; and therefore they cannot competently judge of the wisdom or rectitude of certain public measures, because they are ignorant either of the springs of them, or the ends of them, or the expediency of the means arising from the particular situation of things in the present juncture. And how much truer is this with relation to God's government of the world, whose wisdom is far above our reach, and 'whose ways are not as ours!' Whatever, then, may be the present aspect and appearance of things, as dutiful subjects we are bound to acquiesce; to ascribe wisdom and 'righteousness to our Maker,' in confidence that the King and 'Judge of all the earth will do right.'—Again, (5.) As good subjects of God's kingdom, we are bound to pay a due regard and reverence to his ministers; especially if they discover an uncorrupted fidelity to his cause, and a pure unaffected zeal for his honour; if they do not seek their own interest more than that of their divine Master. The ministers of earthly princes too often do this; and it would be happy if all the ministers and ambassadors of the heavenly King were entirely clear of the imputation. It is no uncommon thing for the honour of an earthly monarch to be wounded through the

sides of his ministers. The defamation and slander that is directly thrown at them, is obliquely intended against him; and as such it is taken. So to attempt to make the ministers of the Gospel, in general, the objects of derision, as some do, plainly shews a mind very dissolute and disaffected to God and religion itself; and is to act a part very unbecoming the dutiful subjects of his kingdom.—(Lastly,) As good subjects, we are to do all we can to promote the interest of his kingdom; by defending the wisdom of his administrations, and endeavouring to reconcile others thereunto, under all the darkness and difficulties that may appear in them, in opposition to the profane censures of the prosperous wicked, and the doubts and dismays of the afflicted righteous. This is to act in character, as loyal subjects of the King of heaven. And whoever forgets this part of his character, or acts contrary to it, shews a great degree of self-ignorance.

But, 2. As the creatures of God, we are not only the subjects of his kingdom, but the children of his family. And to this relation, and the obligations of it, must we carefully attend, if we would attain the true knowledge of ourselves. We are his children by creation; in which respect he is truly our father. Isa. lxiv. 8; 'But now, O Lord, thou art our father: we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thine hands.' And, in a more special sense, we are his children by adoption. Gal. iii. 26; 'For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.' And therefore, (1.) We are under the highest obligations to love him as our father. The love of children to parents is founded on gratitude for benefits received, which can never be requited; and ought, in reason, to be proportioned to those benefits; especially if

they flow from a conscience of duty in the parent. And what duty more natural than to love our benefactors? What love and gratitude, then, is due to him, from whom we have received the greatest benefit, even that of our being, and every thing that contributes to the comfort of it?—(2.) As his children, we must honour him; that is, must speak honourably of him, and for him; and carefully avoid every thing that may tend to dishonour his holy name and ways. Mal. i. 6; 'A son honoureth his father: if, then, I be a father, where is mine honour?'—(3.) As our father, we are to apply to him for what we want. Whither should children go but to their father, for protection, help, and relief, in every danger, difficulty, and distress?—And, (4.) We must trust his power and wisdom, and paternal goodness, to provide for us, take care of us, and do for us that which is best; and what that is he knows best. To be anxiously fearful what will become of us, and discontented and perplexed under the apprehension of future evils, whilst we are in the hands and under the care of our Father which is in heaven, is not to act like children. Earthly parents cannot avert from their children all the calamities they fear, because their wisdom and power are limited; but our all-wise and almighty Father in heaven can. They may possibly want love and tenderness for their offspring, but our heavenly Father cannot for his; Isa. xlix. 15.—(5.) As children, we must quietly acquiesce in his disposals, and not expect to see into the wisdom of all his will. It would be indecent and undutiful in a child to dispute his parents' authority, or question their wisdom, or neglect their orders, every time he could not discern the reason and design of them. Much more unreasonable and unbe-

coming is such a behaviour towards God, who giveth not account of any of his matters; 'whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways are past finding out;' Job xxxiii. 13. Rom. xi. 33.—(Lastly,) As children, we must patiently submit to his discipline and correction. Earthly parents may sometimes punish their children through passion, or for their pleasure; but our heavenly Father always corrects his for their profit, Heb. xii. 10, and only if need be, 1 Pet. i. 6, and never so much as their iniquities deserve, Ezra ix. 13. Under his fatherly rebukes, then, let us be ever humble and submissive. Such, now, is the true filial disposition. Such a temper and such a behaviour should we shew towards God, if we would act in character as his children.

These, then, are the two special relations which, as creatures, we stand in to God. And not to act towards him in the manner before mentioned, is to shew that we are ignorant of, or have not yet duly considered, our obligations to him as his subjects and his children; or that we are as yet ignorant both of God and ourselves. Thus we see how directly the knowledge of ourselves leads us to the knowledge of God. So true is the observation of a late pious and very worthy divine, that, 'He that is a stranger to himself, is a stranger to God, and to every thing that may denominate him wise and happy.'

But, 3. In order to know ourselves, there is another important relation we should often think of, and that is, that in which we stand to Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

The former was common to us as men: this is peculiar to us as Christians, and opens to us a new scene of duties and obligations, which a man can

never forget, that does not grossly forget himself; for, as Christians, we are the disciples, the followers, and the servants of Christ, redeemed by him.

And, (1.) As the disciples of Christ, we are to learn of him: to take our religious sentiments only from his Gospel, in opposition to all the authoritative dictates of men, who are weak and fallible as ourselves: 'Call no man master on earth.' Whilst some affect to distinguish themselves by party-names, as the Corinthians formerly did (for which the apostle blames them), one saying 'I am of Paul;' another, 'I am of Apollos;' another, 'I am of Cephas,' 1 Cor. i. 12, let us remember, that we are the disciples of Christ, and, in this sense, make mention of his name only. It is really injurious to it, to seek to distinguish ourselves by any other. There is more carnality in such party-distinctions, denominations, and attachments, than many good souls are aware of; though not more than the apostle Paul (who was unwillingly placed at the head of one himself) hath apprized them of, 1 Cor. iii. 4. We are of Christ: our concern is, to honour that superior denomination, by living up to it; and to adhere inflexibly to his Gospel, as the only rule of our faith, the guide of our life, and the foundation of our hope; whatever contempt or abuse we may suffer, either from the profane or bigoted part of mankind, for so doing.—(2.) As Christians, we are followers of Christ; and therefore bound to imitate him, and copy after that most excellent pattern he hath set us, 'who hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps;' 1 Pet. ii. 21. To see that the same holy temper 'be in us, which was in him;' and to discover it in the same manner he did, and upon like occasions. To this he calls us, Matt. xi. 29. And no man is any far-

ther a Christian, than as he is a follower of Christ; aiming at a more perfect conformity to that most perfect example which he hath set us of universal goodness.—(3.) As Christians, we are the servants of Christ; and the various duties which servants owe to their masters in any degree, those we owe to him in the highest degree; who expects we should behave ourselves in his service with that fidelity and zeal, and steady regard to his honour and interest, at all times, which we are bound to by virtue of this relation, and which his unmerited and unlimited goodness and love lay us under infinite obligations to.—(Lastly,) We are, moreover, his redeemed servants; and, as such, are under the strongest motives to love and trust him.

This deserves to be more particularly considered, because it opens to us another view of the human nature, in which we should often survey ourselves, if we desire to know ourselves; and that is, as depraved or degenerate beings. The inward contest we so sensibly feel, at some seasons especially, between a good and a bad principle (called, in Scripture language, the flesh and the spirit), of which some of the wisest heathens seemed not to be ignorant; this, I say, is demonstration, that some way or other the human nature has contracted an ill bias (and how that came about, the sacred Scriptures have sufficiently informed us), and that it is not what it was when it came originally out of the hands of its Maker; so that the words which St. Paul spake, with reference to the Jews in particular, are justly applicable to the state of mankind in general, 'There is none righteous, no, not one; they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one.'

This is a very mortifying thought, but an undeniable truth, and one of the first principles of that science we are treating of; and very necessary to be attended to, if we would be sensible of the duty and obligations we owe to Christ, as the great Redeemer, in which character he appears for the relief and recovery of mankind under this their universal depravity.

The two miserable effects of the human apostacy are, (1.) That perverse dispositions grow up in our minds from early infancy, that soon settle into vicious habits, which render us weak and unwilling to obey the dictates of conscience and reason, and is commonly called the dominion of sin. And, (2.) At the same time we are subject to the displeasure of God and the penalty of his law, which is commonly called the condemnation of sin. Now, in both these respects, did Christ, 'the Lamb of God, come to take away the sin of the world;' that is, to take away the reigning power of it by the operation of his grace; and the condemning power of it, by the atonement of his blood; to sanctify us by his spirit, and justify us by his death. By the former he reconciles us to God, and by the latter he reconciles God to us; and is, at once, our righteousness and strength. He died to purchase for us the happiness we had forfeited, and sends his grace and Spirit to fit us for that happiness he hath thus purchased. So complete is his redemption! so suitably adapted is the remedy he hath provided to the malady we had contracted!—'O blessed Redeemer of wretched, ruined creatures, how unspeakable are the obligations I owe thee! But, ah! how insensible am I of those obligations! The saddest symptom of degeneracy I find in my nature, is that base ingratitude of heart, which renders me so unaf-

fected with thine astonishing compassions. Till I know thee, I cannot know myself; and, when I survey myself, may I ever think of thee: may the daily consciousness of my weakness and guilt lead my thoughts to thee; and may every thought of thee kindle in my heart the most ardent glow of gratitude to thee, O thou divine, compassionate friend, lover, and redeemer of mankind!'

Whoever, then, he be, that calls himself a Christian, that is, who professes to take the Gospel of Christ for a divine revelation, and the only rule of his faith and practice, but, at the same time, pays a greater regard to the dictates of men than to the doctrines of Christ—who loses sight of that great example of Christ, which should animate his Christian walk, is unconcerned about his service, honour, and interest, and excludes the consideration of his merits and atonement from his hope and happiness—he forgets that he is a Christian; he does not consider in what relation he stands to Christ (which is one great part of his character), and consequently discovers a great degree of self-ignorance.

4. Self-knowledge, moreover, implies a due attention to the several relations in which we stand to our fellow-creatures, and the obligations that result from thence.

If we know ourselves, we shall remember the condescension, benignity, and love, that is due to inferiors; the affability, friendship, and kindness, we ought to shew to equals; the regard, deference, and honour, we owe to superiors; and the candour, integrity, and benevolence, we owe to all.

The particular duties requisite in these relations are too numerous to be here mentioned. Let it suffice to say, that, if a man doth not well consider

the several relations of life in which he stands to others, and does not take care to preserve the decorum and propriety of those relations, he may justly be charged with self-ignorance.

And this is so evident in itself, and so generally allowed, that nothing is more common than to say, when a person does not behave with due decency towards his superiors, such a one does not understand himself. But why may not this, with equal justice, be said of those who act in an ill manner towards their inferiors? The expression, I know, is not so often thus applied; but I see no reason why it should not, since one is as common, and as plain an instance of self-ignorance, as the other. Nay, of the two, perhaps, men in general are more apt to be defective in their duty and behaviour towards those beneath them, than they are towards those that are above them; and the reason seems to be, because an apprehension of the displeasure of their superiors, and the detrimental consequences which may accrue from thence, may be a check upon them, and engage them to pay the just regards which they expect: but there being no such check to restrain them from violating the duties they owe to inferiors (from whose displeasure they have little to fear), they are more ready, under certain temptations, to treat them in an unbecoming manner. And as wisdom and self-knowledge will direct a man to be particularly careful, lest he neglect those duties he is most apt to forget; so, as to the duties he owes to inferiors, in which he is most in danger of transgressing, he ought more strongly to urge upon himself the indispensable obligations of religion and conscience. And if he does not, but suffers himself, through the violence of ungoverned passion, to be transported into the excesses

of rigour, tyranny, and oppression, towards those whom God and nature have put into his power, it is certain he does not know himself, is not acquainted with his own particular weakness, is ignorant of the duty of his relation, and, whatever he may think of himself, hath not the true spirit of government, because he wants the art of self-government. For he that is unable to govern himself, can never be fit to govern others.

Would we know ourselves, then, we must consider ourselves as creatures, as Christians, and as men; and remember the obligations, which, as such, we are under to God, to Christ, and our fellow-men, in the several relations in which we stand to them, in order to maintain the propriety, and fulfil the duties, of those relations.

CHAP. IV.

We must duly consider the Rank and Station of Life in which Providence hath placed us, and what it is that Becomes and Adorns it.

III. 'A MAN that knows himself will deliberately consider and attend to the particular rank and station in life in which Providence hath placed him; and what is the duty and decorum of that station; what part is given him to act; what character to maintain; and with what decency and propriety he acts that part, or maintains that character.'

For a man to assume a character, or aim at a part that does not belong to him, is affectation. And whence is it, that affectation of any kind appears so ridiculous, and exposes men to universal and just contempt, but because it is a certain indication of self-ignorance? Whence is it, that many

seem so willing to be thought something, when they are nothing, and seek to excel in those things in which they cannot, whilst they neglect those things in which they might excel? Whence is it, that they counteract the intention of nature and Providence, that when these intended them one thing, they would fain be another? Whence, I say, but from an ignorance of themselves, the rank of life they are in, and the part and character which properly belong to them?

It is a just observation, and an excellent document of a moral heathen, that 'human life is a drama, and mankind the actors, who have their several parts assigned them by the master of the theatre, who stands behind the scenes, and observes in what manner every one acts. Some have a short part allotted them, and some a long one; some a low, and some a high one. It is not he that acts the highest and most shining part on the stage that comes off with the greatest applause, but he that acts his part best, whatever it be. To take care, then, to act our respective parts in life well, is ours; but to choose in what part of life we shall act, is not ours, but God's.' But a man can never act his part well if he does not attend to it, does not know what becomes it, much less if he affect to act another which does not belong to him. It is always self-ignorance that leads a man to act out of character.

Is it a mean and low station of life thou art in? Know, then, that Providence calls thee to the exercise of industry, contentment, submission, patience, hope, an humble dependence on him, and a respectful deference to thy superiors. In this way, thou mayest shine through thy obscurity, and render thyself amiable in the sight of God and man;

and not only so, but find more satisfaction, safety, and self-enjoyment, than they who move in a higher sphere, from whence they are in danger of falling.

But hath Providence called thee to act in a more public character, and for a more extensive benefit to the world? Thy first care, then, ought to be, that thy example, as far as its influence reaches, may be an encouragement to the practice of universal virtue. And, next, to shine in those virtues especially, which best adorn thy station; as benevolence, charity, wisdom, moderation, firmness, and inviolable integrity, with an undismayed fortitude to press through all opposition, in accomplishing those ends which thou hast a prospect and probability of attaining, for the apparent good of mankind.

And as self-acquaintance will teach us what part in life we ought to act, so the knowledge of that will shew us whom we ought to imitate, and wherein. We are not to take example of conduct from those who have a very different part assigned them from ours, unless in those things that are universally ornamental and exemplary. If we do, we shall but expose our affectation and weakness, and ourselves to contempt, for acting out of character; for what is decent in one, may be ridiculous in another. Nor must we blindly follow those who move in the same sphere, and sustain the same character with ourselves, but only in those things that are befitting that character; for it is not the person, but the character, we are to regard, and to imitate him no further than he keeps to that.

This caution especially concerns youth, who are apt to imitate their superiors very implicitly, especially such as excel in the part or profession they themselves are aiming at; but, for want of judg-

ment to distinguish what is fit and decent, are apt to imitate their very foibles, which a partiality for their persons makes them deem as excellencies; and thereby they become doubly ridiculous, both by acting out of character themselves, and by a weak and servile imitation of others in the very things in which they do so too. To maintain a character, then, with decency, we must keep our eye only upon that which is proper to it.

In fine, as no man can excel in every thing, we must consider what part is allotted us to act in the station in which Providence hath placed us, and keep to that, be it what it will, and seek to excel in that only.

CHAP. V.

Every Man should be well acquainted with his own Talents and Capacities, and in what Manner they are to be exercised and improved to the Greatest Advantage.

IV. 'A MAN cannot be said to know himself till he is well acquainted with his proper talents and capacities, knows for what ends he received them, and how they may be most fitly applied and improved for those ends.'

A wise and self-understanding man, instead of aiming at talents he hath not, will set about cultivating those he hath, as the way in which Providence points out his proper usefulness.

As, in order to the edification of the church, the Spirit of God, at first, conferred upon the ministers of it a great variety of spiritual gifts, 1 Cor. xii. 8—10; so, for the good of the community, God is pleased now to confer upon men a great variety of

natural talents. And 'Every one hath his proper gift of God; one after this manner, another after that,' 1 Cor. vii. 7. And every one is to take care 'Not to neglect, but to stir up the gift of God which is in him,' 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6; because it was given him to be improved; and not only the abuse, but the neglect of it must be hereafter accounted for. Witness the doom of that unprofitable servant, 'who laid up his single pound in a napkin,' Luke xix. 20—24; and of him who went and 'hid his talent in the earth,' Matt. xxv. 25—30.

It is certainly a sign of great self-ignorance for a man to venture out of his depth, or attempt any thing he wants opportunity or capacity to accomplish. And, therefore, a wise man will consider with himself, before he undertakes any thing of consequence, whether he hath abilities to carry him through it, and whether the issue of it is like to be for his credit; lest he sink under the weight he lays upon himself, and incur the just censure of rashness, presumption and folly. See Luke xiv. 28—32.

It is no uncommon thing for some, who excel in one thing, to imagine they may excel in every thing; and, not content with that share of merit which every one allows them, are still catching at that which doth not belong to them. Why should a good orator affect to be a poet? Why must a celebrated divine set up for a politician? or a statesman affect the philosopher? or a mechanic the scholar? or a wise man labour to be thought a wit? This is a weakness that flows from self-ignorance, and is incident to the greatest men. Nature seldom forms an universal genius, but deals out her favours in the present state with

a parsimonious hand. Many a man, by this foible, hath weakened a well-established reputation.

CHAP. VI.

We must be well acquainted with our Inabilities, and those Things in which we are naturally Deficient, as well as those in which we Excel.

V. 'WE must, in order to a thorough self-acquaintance, not only consider our talents and proper abilities, but have an eye to our frailties and deficiencies, that we may know where our weakness as well as our strength lies.' Otherwise, like Samson, we may run ourselves into infinite temptations and troubles.

Every man hath a weak side. Every wise man knows where it is, and will be sure to keep a double guard there.

There is some wisdom in concealing a weakness. This cannot be done till it be first known; nor can it be known without a good degree of self-acquaintance.

It is strange to observe what pains some men are at to expose themselves, to signalize their own folly, and to set out to the most public view those things which they ought to be ashamed to think should ever enter into their character. But so it is: some men seem to be ashamed of those things which should be their glory, whilst others 'glory in their shame,' Phil. iii. 19.

The greatest weakness in a man is to publish his weaknesses, and to appear fond to have them known. But vanity will often prompt a man to this; who, unacquainted with the measure of his capacities, attempts things out of his power and beyond his reach; whereby he makes the world

acquainted with two things to his disadvantage, which they were ignorant of before, viz. his deficiency, and his self-ignorance, in appearing so blind to it.

It is ill-judged (though very common) to be less ashamed of a want of temper, than understanding. For it is no real dishonour or fault in a man to have but a small ability of mind, provided he hath not the vanity to set up for a genius (which would be as ridiculous, as for a man of small strength and stature of body to set up for a champion); because this is what he cannot help. But a man may, in a good measure, correct the fault of his natural temper, if he be well acquainted with it, and duly watchful over it. And, therefore, to betray a prevailing weakness of temper, or an ungoverned passion, diminishes a man's reputation much more than to discover a weakness of judgment or understanding. But what is most dishonourable of all is, for a man at once to discover a great genius and an ungoverned mind; because, that strength of reason and understanding he is master of, gives him a great advantage for the government of his passions; and, therefore, his suffering himself, notwithstanding, to be governed by them, shews that he hath too much neglected or misapplied his natural talent, and willingly submitted to the tyranny of those lusts and passions, over which nature had furnished him with abilities to have secured an easy conquest.

A wise man hath his foibles, as well as a fool. But the difference between them is, that the foibles of the one are known to himself, and concealed from the world; the foibles of the other are known to the world, and concealed from himself. The wise man sees those frailties in himself, which

others cannot; but the fool is blind to those blemishes in his character, which are conspicuous to every body else. Whence it appears, that self-knowledge is that which makes the main difference between a wise man and a fool, in the moral sense of that word.

CHAP. VII.

Concerning the Knowledge of our constitutional Sins.

VI. 'SELF-ACQUAINTANCE shews a man the particular sins he is most exposed and addicted to; and discovers not only what is ridiculous, but what is criminal, in his conduct and temper.'

The outward actions of a man are generally the plainest index of his inward dispositions; and, by the allowed sins of his life, you may know the reigning vices of his mind. Is he addicted to luxury and debauch? sensuality then appears to be his prevailing taste. Is he given to revenge and cruelty? choler and malice, then, reign in his heart. Is he confident, bold, and enterprising? ambition appears to be the secret spring. Is he sly and designing, given to intrigue and artifice? you may conclude, there is a natural subtilty of temper that prompts him to this. And this secret disposition is criminal, in proportion to the degree in which these outward actions, which spring from it, transgress the bounds of reason and virtue.

Every man hath something peculiar in the turn or cast of his mind, which distinguishes him as much as the particular constitution of his body. And both these, viz. his particular turn of mind, and particular constitution of body, incline and dispose him to some kind of sins, much more than to others. And the same it is, that renders the

practice of certain virtues so much more easy to some, than it is to others.

Now, these sins which men generally are most strongly inclined to, and the temptations which they find they have least power to resist, are usually and properly called their constitutional sins, their peculiar frailties, and, in Scripture, their own iniquities, Psal. xviii. 23, and the sins which 'do most easily beset them,' Heb. xii. 1.

'As in the humours of the body, so in the vices of the mind, there is one predominant, which has an ascendant over us, and leads and governs us. It is in the body of sin what the heart is in the body of our nature; it begins to live first, and dies last; and, whilst it lives, it communicates life and spirit to the whole body of sin; and, when it dies, the body of sin expires with it. It is the sin to which our constitution leads, our circumstances betray, and custom enslaves us; the sin, to which not our virtues only, but vices too, lower their topsail and submit; the sin, which, when we would impose upon God and our consciences, we excuse and disguise with all imaginable artifice and sophistry; but, when we are sincere with both, we oppose first, and conquer last. It is, in a word, the sin, which reigns and rules in the unregenerate, and too often alarms and disturbs (ah! that I could say no more) the regenerate.'—*Lucas's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 151.

Some are more inclined to the sins of the flesh; sensuality, intemperance, uncleanness, sloth, self-indulgence, and excess in animal gratifications. Others more inclined to the sins of the spirit; pride, malice, covetousness, ambition, wrath, revenge, envy, &c. And I am persuaded there are few, but, upon a thorough search into themselves,

may find that some one of these sins hath ordinarily a greater power over them than the rest. Others often observe it in them, if they themselves do not. And for a man not to know his predominant iniquity, is a great self-ignorance indeed, and a sign that he has all his life lived far from home; because he is not acquainted with that in himself, which every one, who is but half an hour in his company, perhaps, may be able to inform him of. Hence proceeds that extreme weakness which some discover, in censuring others for the very same faults they are guilty of themselves, and perhaps in a much higher degree; on which the apostle Paul animadverts, Rom. ii. 1.

It must be owned, it is an irksome and disagreeable business for a man to turn his own accuser; to search after his own faults, and keep his eye upon that which it gives him shame and pain to see. It is like tearing open an old wound. But it is better to do this, than to let it mortify. The wounds of the conscience, like those of the body, cannot be well cured till they are searched to the bottom; and they cannot be searched without pain. A man that is engaged in the study of himself, must be content to know the worst of himself.

Do not, therefore, shut your eyes against your darling sin, or be averse to find it out. Why should you study to conceal or excuse it, and fondly cherish that viper in your bosom? 'Some men deal by their sins, as some ladies do by their persons; when their beauty is decayed, they seek to hide it from themselves by false glasses, and from others by paint. So, many seek to hide their sins from themselves by false glosses, and from others by excuses, or false colours.'—*Baxter*. But the greatest cheat they put upon themselves. 'They

that cover their sins shall not prosper,' Prov. xxviii. 13. It is dangerous self-flattery, to give soft and smoothing names to sins, in order to disguise their nature. Rather lay your hand upon your heart, and thrust it into your bosom, though it come out (as Moses's did) leprous as snow, Exod. iv. 6.

And to find out our most beloved sin, let us consider what are those worldly objects or amusements which give us the highest delight; this, it is probable, will lead us directly to some one of our darling iniquities, if it be a sin of commission; and what are those duties which we read or hear of from the word of God, to which we find ourselves most disinclined; and this, in all likelihood, will help us to detect some of our peculiar sins of omission, which, without such previous examination, we may not be sensible of. And thus may we make a proficiency in one considerable branch of self-knowledge.

CHAP. VIII.

The Knowledge of our most dangerous Temptations necessary to Self-Knowledge.

VII. 'A MAN that rightly knows himself, is acquainted with his peculiar temptations; and knows when, and in what circumstances, he is in the greatest danger of transgressing.'

Reader, if ever you would know yourself, you must examine this point thoroughly; and if you have never yet done it, make a pause when you have read this chapter, and do it now. Consider in what company you are most apt to lose the possession and government of yourself; on what occasions you are apt to be most vain and unguarded, most warm and precipitant. Flee that com-

pany, avoid those occasions, if you would keep your conscience clear. What is it that robs you most of your time and your temper? If you have a due regard to the improvement of the one, and the preservation of the other, you will regret such a loss, and shun the occasions of it, as carefully as you would a road beset with robbers.

But especially must you attend to the occasions which most usually betray you into your favourite vices, and consider the spring from whence they arise, and the circumstances which most favour them. They arise, doubtless, from your natural temper, which strongly disposes and inclines you to them. That temper, then, or particular turn of desire, must be carefully watched over as a most dangerous quarter; and the opportunities and circumstances which favour those inclinations must be resolutely avoided, as the strongest temptations. For the way to subdue a criminal inclination is, first, to avoid the known occasions that excite it, and then to curb the first motions of it; and thus, having no opportunity of being indulged, it will, of itself, in time lose its force, and fail of its wonted victory.

The surest way to conquer, is sometimes to decline a battle; to weary out the enemy, by keeping him at bay. Fabius Maximus did not use this stratagem more successfully against Hannibal, than a Christian may against his peculiar vice, if he be but watchful of his advantages. It is dangerous to provoke an unequal enemy to the fight, or to run into such a situation, where we cannot expect to escape without a disadvantageous encounter.

It is of unspeakable importance, in order to self-knowledge and self-government, to be acquainted with all the accesses and avenues to sin, and to

observe which way it is that we are oftenest led to it, and to set reason and conscience to guard those passes, those usual inlets to vice, which, if a man once enters, he will find a retreat extremely difficult.

'Watchfulness, which is always necessary, is chiefly so when the first assaults are made; for then the enemy is most easily repulsed, if we never suffer him to get within us, but, upon the very first approach, draw up our forces, and fight him without the gate. And this will be more manifest, if we observe by what methods and degrees temptations grow upon us. The first thing that presents itself to the mind, is a plain single thought; this straight is improved into a strong imagination; that, again, enforced by a sensible delight; then follow evil motions; and, when these are once stirred, there wants nothing but the assent of the will, and then the work is finished. Now, the first steps of this are seldom thought worth our care, sometimes not taken notice of; so that the enemy is frequently got close up to us, and even within our trenches, before we observe him.'—*Thomas à Kempis*, p. 22.

As men have their particular sins which do most easily beset them, so they have their particular temptations which do most easily overcome them. That may be a very great temptation to one, which is none at all to another. And if a man does not know what are his greatest temptations, he must have been a great stranger indeed to the business of self-employment.

As the subtle enemy of mankind takes care to draw men gradually into sin, so he usually draws them, by degrees, into temptation. As he disguises the sin, so he conceals the temptation to it;

well knowing that, were they but once sensible of their danger of sin, they would be ready to be upon their guard against it. Would we know ourselves thoroughly, then, we must get acquainted, not only with our most usual temptations, that we be not unawares drawn into sin, but with the previous steps, and preparatory circumstances, which make way for those temptations, that we be not drawn unawares into the occasions of sin; for those things which lead us into temptations, are to be considered as temptations, as well as those which immediately lead us into sin. And a man that knows himself will be aware of his remote temptations, as well as the more immediate ones; *e.g.* if he find the company of a passionate man is a temptation (as Solomon tells us it is, Prov. xxii. 24, 25), he will not only avoid it, but those occasions that may lead him into it. And the petition in the Lord's Prayer makes it as much a man's duty to be upon his guard against temptation, as under it. Nor can a man pray from his heart that God would not lead him into temptation, if he take no care himself to avoid it.

CHAP. IX.

Self-Knowledge discovers the secret Prejudices of the Heart.

VIII. 'ANOTHER important branch of self-knowledge is, for a man to be acquainted with his own prejudices, or those secret prepossessions of his heart, which, though so deep and latent that he may not be sensible of them, are often so strong and prevalent, as to give a mighty but imperceptible bias to the mind.

And in this the great art of self-knowledge con-

sists, more than in any one thing again. It being, therefore, a matter of such mighty consequence, and, at the same time, a point to which men, in general, are too inattentive, it deserves a more particular discussion.

These prejudices of the human mind may be considered with regard to opinions, persons, and things.

1. With regard to opinions.

It is a common observation, but well expressed by a late celebrated writer, 'that we set out in life with such poor beginnings of knowledge, and grow up under such remains of superstition and ignorance, such influences of company and fashion, such insinuations of pleasure, &c. that it is no wonder if men get habits of thinking only in one way; that these habits, in time, grow rigid and confirmed; and so their minds come to be overcast with thick prejudices, scarce penetrable by any ray of truth or light of reason.'—See *Religion of Nature delineated*, p. 129.

There is no man but is more fond of one particular set or scheme of opinions in philosophy, politics, and religion, than he is of another, if he hath employed his thoughts at all about them. The question we should examine, then, is, How come we by these attachments? whence are we so fond of those particular notions? did we come fairly by them? or were they imposed upon us, and dictated to our easy belief, before we were able to judge of them? This is most likely. For the impressions we early receive generally grow up with us, and are those we least care to part with. However, which way soever we came by them, they must be re-examined, and brought to the touchstone of sound sense, solid reason, and plain Scripture. If

they will not bear this, after hard rubbing, they must be discarded as no genuine principles of truth, but only counterfeits of it.

And, as reason and Scripture must discover our prejudices to us, so they only can help us to get rid of them. By these we are to rectify, and to these we are to conform, all our opinions and sentiments in religion, as our only standard, exclusive of all other rules, light, or authority whatsoever.

And care must further be taken that we do not make Scripture and reason bend and buckle to our notions, which will rather confirm our prejudices than cure them. For whatever cannot evidently be made out without the help of overstrained metaphors, and the arts of sophistry, is much to be suspected; which used to make archbishop Tillotson say, *Non amo argutias in theologia*, 'I do not love subtilties in divinity.' But,

2. The human mind is very apt to be prejudiced, either for or against certain persons, as well as certain sentiments. And, as prejudice will lead a man to talk very unreasonably with regard to the latter, so it will lead him to act very unreasonably with regard to the former.

What is the reason, for instance, that we cannot help having a more hearty affection for some persons than others? Is it from a similarity of taste and temper? or something in their address, that flatters our vanity? or something in their humour, that hits our fancy? or something in their conversation, that improves our understanding? or a certain sweetness of disposition, and agreeableness of manner, that is naturally engaging? or from benefits received or expected from them? or from some eminent and distinguished excellency in them? or from none of these, but something else, we cannot

tell what? Such sort of inquiries will shew us whether our esteem and affections be rightly placed, or flow from mere instinct, blind prejudice, or something worse.

And so, on the other hand, with regard to our disaffection towards any one, or the disgust we have taken against him; if we would know ourselves, we must examine into the bottom of this, and see not only what is the pretended, but true cause of it; whether it be a justifiable one, and our resentments duly proportioned to it. Is his manner of thinking, talking, and acting, quite different from mine, and therefore what I cannot approve? or have I received some real affront or injury from him? Be it so; my continued resentment against him, on either of these accounts, may be owing, notwithstanding, more to some unreasonable prejudice in me, than any real fault in him.

For, as to the former, his way of thinking, talking, and acting, may possibly be juster than my own, which the mere force of custom and habit only makes me prefer to his. However, be his ever so wrong, he may not have had the same advantage of improving his understanding, address, and conduct, as I have had, and therefore his defects herein are more excusable. And he may have many other kind of excellencies which I have not. 'But he is not only ignorant and unmannered, but insufferably vain, conceited, and overbearing at the same time.' Why, that, perhaps, he cannot help; it is the fault of his nature. He is the object of pity, rather than resentment. And had I such a temper by nature, I should, perhaps, with all my self-improvement, find it a difficult thing to manage; and, therefore, though I can never choose such a one for an agreeable companion, yet

I ought not to harbour a dislike to him, but love, and pity, and pray for him, as a person under a great misfortune, and be thankful that I am not under the same. 'But he is quite blind to this fault of his temper, and does not appear to be in the least sensible of it.' Why, that is a greater misfortune still, and he ought to be more pitied.

And as to the other pretended ground of prejudice, 'He hath often offended and injured me,' let me consider, (1.) Whether any offence was really intended; whether I do not impute that to ill-nature which was only owing to ill-manners, or that to design, which proceeded only from ignorance. Do I not take offence before it is given? If so, the fault is mine, and not his; and the resentment I have conceived against him, I ought to turn upon myself. Again, (2.) Did I not provoke him to it, when I knew his temper? The fault is still my own. I did, or might know the pride, passion, or perverseness of his nature; why, then, did I exasperate him? A man that will needlessly rouse a lion must not expect always to come off so favourably as the hero of La Mancha. But, (3.) Suppose I were not the aggressor, yet how came I into his company? who led me into the temptation? He hath acted according to his nature in what he hath done; but I have not acted according to my reason, in laying myself so open to him. I knew him; why did I not shun him, as I would any other dangerous animal that does mischief by instinct? If I must needs put my finger into a wasp's nest, why should I blame them for stinging me? Or, (4.) If I could not avoid his company, why did I not arm myself? Why did I venture, defenceless, into so much danger? Or, (5.) Suppose he hath done me a real and undeserved in-

jury, without my fault or provocation, yet, does not my present discontent greatly aggravate it? Does it not appear greater to me than it does to any body else? or than it will to me after the present ferment is over? And, lastly, after all, must I never forgive? How shall I be able to repeat the Lord's Prayer, or read our Saviour's comment upon it, Matt. vi. 14, 15, with an unforgiving temper? Do I not hope to be forgiven ten thousand talents? and cannot I forgive my fellow-servant thirty-pence, when I know not but he hath repented, and God hath forgiven him, whose forgiveness I want infinitely more than my greatest enemy does mine?

Such considerations are of great use to soften our prejudices against persons, and at once to discover the true spring, and prevent the bad effects of them. And happy would it be for a Christian, could he but call to mind, and apply to his relief, half the good things which that excellent heathen emperor and philosopher, Marcus Antoninus, could say upon this subject: some of which I have, for the benefit of the English reader, extracted, and thrown into the margin.*

3. The mind is apt to be prejudiced against, or in favour of, certain things and actions, as well as certain sentiments and persons.

If, therefore, you find in yourself a secret disinclination to any particular action or duty, and the mind begins to cast about for excuses and reasons to justify the neglect of it, consider the matter well; go to the bottom of that reluctance, and search out what it is that gives the mind this aversion to it; whether it be the thing or action itself, or some dis-

* The plan of this edition excluding notes, the reader is referred to the works of Marcus Antoninus.

couraging circumstances that may attend it, or some disagreeable consequences that may possibly flow from it, or your supposed unfitness for it at present. Why, all these things may be only imaginary: and to neglect a plain and positive duty upon such considerations, shews that you are governed by appearances more than realities, by fancy more than reason, and by inclination more than conscience.

But let fancy muster up all the discouraging circumstances, and set them in the most formidable light, to bar your way to a supposed duty: for instance, 'It is very difficult, I want capacity, at least am so indisposed to it at present, that I shall make nothing of it; and then it will be attended with danger to my person, reputation, or peace; and the opposition I am like to meet with is great,' &c. But, after all, is the call of Providence clear? is the thing a plain duty; such as reason, conscience, and Scripture, your office, character, or personal engagements call upon you to discharge? If so, all the aforesaid objections are vain and delusive; and you have nothing to do, but to summon your courage, and, in dependence on divine help, to set about the business immediately, and in good earnest, and in the best and wisest manner you can; and, you may depend upon it, you will find the greatest difficulty to lie only in the first attempt; these frightful appearances to be all visionary, the mere figments of fancy, turning lambs into lions, and mole-hills into mountains; and that nothing but sloth, folly, and self-indulgence thus set your imagination on work, to deter you from a plain duty. Your heart would deceive you; but you have found out the cheat, and do not be imposed upon.

Again, suppose the thing done, consider how it will look then. Take a view of it as past; and, whatever pains it may cost you, think whether it will not be abundantly recompensed by the inward peace and pleasure which arises from a consciousness of having acted right. It certainly will. And the difficulties you now dread will enhance your future satisfaction. But think again, how you will bear the reflections of your own mind, if you wilfully neglect a plain and necessary duty; whether this will not occasion you much more trouble than all the pains you might be at in performing it. And a wise man will always determine himself by the end, or by such a retrospective view of things considered as past.

Again, on the other hand, if you find a strong propension to any particular action, examine that with the like impartiality. Perhaps it is what neither your reason nor conscience can fully approve; and yet every motive to it is strongly urged, and every objection against it slighted. Sense and appetite grow importunate and clamorous, and want to lead, while reason remonstrates in vain. But turn not aside from that faithful and friendly monitor, whilst, with a low still voice, she addresses you in this soft, but earnest language: 'Hear me, I beseech you, but this one word more. The action is indeed out of character; what I shall never approve. The pleasure of it is a great deal overrated; you will certainly be disappointed. It is a false appearance that now deceives you. And what will you think of yourself when it is past, and you come to reflect seriously on the matter? Believe it, you will then wish you had taken me for your counsellor instead of those enemies of mine, your lusts and passions, which have so

often misled you, though you know I never did.'

Such short recollections as these, and a little leisure to take a view of the nature and consequences of things or actions, before we reject or approve them, will prevent much false judgment and bad conduct, and, by degrees, wear off the prejudices which fancy has fixed in the mind, either for or against any particular action; teach us to distinguish between things and their appearances; strip them of those false colours that so often deceive us; correct the sallies of the imagination, and leave the reins in the hand of reason.

Before I dismiss this head, I must observe, that some of our strongest prejudices arise from an excessive self-esteem, or a too great value for our own good sense and understanding. Philautus, in every thing, shews himself very well satisfied with his own wisdom, which makes him very impatient of contradiction, and gives him a distaste to all who shall presume to oppose their judgment to his in any thing. He had rather persevere in a mistake than retract it, lest his judgment should suffer, not considering that his ingenuity and good sense suffer much more by such obstinacy. The fulness of his self-sufficiency makes him blind to those imperfections, which every one can see in him but himself. So that, however wise, sincere, and friendly, however gentle and seasonable your remonstrance may be, he takes it immediately to proceed from ill-nature or ignorance in you, but from no fault in him.

Seneca, I remember, tells us a remarkable story, which very well illustrates this matter. Writing to his friend Lucillus, 'My wife,' says he, 'keeps Harpastes in her house still, who, you know, is a

sort of family-fool, and an encumbrance upon us. For my part, I am far from taking any pleasure in such prodigies. If I have a mind to divert myself with a fool, I have not far to go for one; I can laugh at myself. This silly girl, all on a sudden, lost her eye-sight; and (which perhaps may seem incredible, but it is very true) she does not know she is blind, but is every now and then desiring her governess to lead her abroad, saying the house is dark. Now, what we laugh at in this poor creature, we may observe, happens to us all. No man knows that he is covetous or insatiable. Yet, with this difference, the blind seek somebody to lead them, but we are content to wander without a guide. But why do we thus deceive ourselves? The disease is not without us, but fixed deep within. And therefore is the cure so difficult, because we know not that we are sick.'

CHAP. X.

The necessity and means of knowing our Natural Tempers.

IX. 'ANOTHER very important branch of self-knowledge is, the knowledge of those governing passions or dispositions of the mind, which generally form what we call a man's natural temper.'

The difference of natural tempers seems to be chiefly owing to the different degrees of influence the several passions have upon the mind; *e. g.* If the passions are eager, and soon raised, we say the man is of a warm temper; if more sluggish, and slowly raised, he is of a cool temper; according as anger, malice, or ambition prevail, he is of a fierce, churlish, or haughty temper; the influence of the softer passions of love, pity, and benevolence, forms

a sweet, sympathizing, and courteous temper; and where all the passions are duly poised, and the milder and pleasing ones prevail, they make what is commonly called a quiet, good-natured man.

So that it is the prevalence or predominance of any particular passion which gives the turn or tincture to a man's temper, by which he is distinguished, and for which he is loved and esteemed, or shunned and despised by others.

Now what this is, those we converse with are soon sensible of. They presently see through us, and know the fault of our temper, and order their behaviour to us accordingly. If they are wise and well-mannered, they will avoid touching the string, which they know will jar and raise a discord within us. If they are our enemies, they will do it on purpose to set us on tormenting ourselves. And our friends we must suffer sometimes, with a gentle hand, to touch it, either by way of pleasant raillery, or faithful advice.

But a man must be greatly unacquainted with himself, if he is ignorant of his predominant passion, or distinguishing temper, when every one else observes it. And yet, how common is this piece of self-ignorance! The two apostles, Peter, and John, discovered it in that very action wherein they meant to express nothing but a hearty zeal for their Master's honour; which made him tell them, 'that they knew not what manner of spirit they were of,' Luke ix. 5; *i. e.* that, instead of a principle of love and genuine zeal for him, they were, at that time, governed by a spirit of pride, revenge, and cruelty. And that the apostle John should be liable to this censure, whose temper seemed to be all love and sweetness, is a memorable instance how difficult a thing it is for a man at all times to know his own spirit;

and that that passion which seems to have the least power over his mind, may, on some occasions, insensibly gain a criminal ascendant there.

And the necessity of a perfect knowledge of our reigning passions appears further from hence; because they not only give a tincture to the temper, but to the understanding also, and throw a strong bias on the judgment. They have much the same effect upon the eye of the mind, as some distempers have upon the eyes of the body; if they do not put it out, they weaken it, or throw false colours before it, and make it form a wrong judgment of things; and, in short, are the source of those forementioned prejudices, which so often abuse the human understanding.

Whatever the different passions themselves, that reign in the mind, may be owing to; whether to the different texture of the bodily organs, or the different quality or motion of the animal spirits, or to the native turn and cast of the soul itself; yet certain it is, that men's different ways of thinking are much according to the predominance of their different passions, and especially with regard to religion. Thus, *e. g.* we see melancholy people are apt to throw too much gloom upon their religion, and represent it in a very uninviting and unlovely view, as all austerity and mortification; whilst they who are governed by the more gay and cheerful passions, are apt to run into the other extreme, and too much to mingle the pleasures of sense with those of religion; and are as much too lax, as the others too severe; and so, by the prejudice or bias of their respective passions, or the force of their natural temper, are led into the mistake on both sides.

'So that, would a man know himself, he must study his natural temper, his constitutional inclina-

tions and favourite passions; for by these a man's judgment is easily perverted, and a wrong bias hung upon his mind: these are the inlets of prejudice, the unguarded avenues of the mind, by which a thousand errors and secret faults find admission, without being observed or taken notice of.'—*Spect.* vol. vi. No. 399.

And that we may more easily come at the knowledge of our predominant affections, let us consider what outward events do most impress and move us, and in what manner. What is it that usually creates the greatest pain or pleasure in the mind? As for pain, a stoic, indeed, may tell us, 'that we must keep things at a distance; let nothing that is outward come within us; let externals be externals still.' But the human make will scarce bear the rigour of that philosophy. Outward things, after all, will impress and affect us: and there is no harm in this, provided they do not get the possession of us, overset our reason, or lead us to act unbecoming a man or a Christian. And one advantage we may reap from hence is, the manner or degree in which outward things impress us, may lead us into a more perfect knowledge of ourselves, and discover to us our weak side, and the particular passions which have most power over us.

Our pleasures will likewise discover our reigning passions, and the true temper and disposition of the soul. If it be captivated by the pleasures of sin, it is a sign its prevailing taste is very vicious and corrupt; if with the pleasures of sense, very low and sordid; if imaginary pleasures, and the painted scenes of fancy and romance, do most entertain it, the soul hath then a trifling turn; if the pleasures of science, or intellectual improvements, are those it is most fond of, it has then a noble and refined

taste; but if the pleasures of religion and divine contemplation do, above all others, delight and entertain it, it has then its true and proper taste; its temper is, as it should be, pure, divine, and heavenly, provided these pleasures spring from a true religious principle, free from that superstition, bigotry, and enthusiasm, under which it is often disguised.

And thus, by carefully observing what it is that gives the mind the greatest pain and torment, or the the greatest pleasure and entertainment, we come at the knowledge of its reigning passions, and prevailing temper and disposition.

'Include thyself, then, O my soul, within the compass of thine own heart; if it be not large, it is deep; and thou wilt there find exercise enough. Thou wilt never be able to sound it; it cannot be known but by him who tries the thoughts and reins. But dive into this subject as deep as thou canst. Examine thyself; and this knowledge of that which passes within thee will be of more use to thee than the knowledge of all that passes in the world. Concern not thyself with the wars and quarrels of public or private persons. Take cognizance of those contests which are between thy flesh and thy spirit; betwixt the law of thy members and that of thy understanding. Appease those differences. Teach thy flesh to be in subjection. Replace reason on its throne, and give it piety for its counsellor. Tame thy passions, and bring them under bondage. Put thy little state in good order; govern wisely and holily those numerous people which are contained in so little a kingdom; that is to say, that multitude of affections, thoughts, opinions, and passions, which are in thine heart.'—*Jurieu's Method of Christian Devotion*, part iii. chap. 3.

CHAP. XI.

Concerning the secret Springs of our Actions.

X. 'ANOTHER considerable branch of self-acquaintance is, the knowledge of the true motives and secret springs of our actions.'

And this sometimes cannot, without much pains, be acquired. But for want of it, we shall be in danger of passing a false judgment upon our actions, and of having a wrong opinion of several parts of our conduct.

It is not only very possible, but very common, for men to be ignorant of the chief inducements of their behaviour; and to imagine they act from one motive, whilst they are apparently governed by another. If we examine our views, and look into our hearts narrowly, we shall find that they more frequently deceive us in this respect than we are aware of, by persuading us that we are governed by much better motives than we are. The honour of God, and the interest of religion, may be the open and avowed motive, whilst secular interest and secret vanity may be the hidden and true one. While we think we are serving God, we may be only sacrificing to Mammon. We may, like Jehu, boast our zeal for the Lord, when we are only animated by the heart of our natural passions; may cover a censorious spirit under a cloak of piety; and giving admonitions to others, may be only giving vent to our spleen.

How many come to the place of public worship out of custom or curiosity, who would be thought to come thither only out of conscience! and whilst their external and professed view is to serve God, and gain good to their souls, their secret and in-

ward motive is only to shew themselves to advantage, or to avoid singularity, and prevent others making observations on their absence. Munificence and almsgiving may often proceed from a principle of pride and party-spirit, when it may appear to be the effect of pure piety and charity; and seeming acts of friendship, from a motive of selfishness.

By thus disguising our motives, we may impose upon men, but, at the same time, we impose upon ourselves; and, whilst we are deceiving others, our own hearts deceive us. And, of all impostures, self-deception is the most dangerous, because least suspected.

Now, unless we examine this point narrowly, we shall never come to the bottom of it; and unless we come at the true spring and real motive of our actions, we shall never be able to form a right judgment of them; and they may appear very different in our own eye, and in the eye of the world, from what they do in the eye of God: 'For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the heart;' 1 Sam. xvi. 7. And hence it is, that 'that which is highly esteemed among men, is oftentimes abomination in the sight of God;' Luke xvi. 15. 'Every way of man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts;' Prov. xvi. 2.

CHAP. XII.

Every one that knows Himself, is, in a particular manner, sensible how far he is governed by a thirst for Applause.

XI. 'ANOTHER thing necessary to unfold a man's heart to himself, is to consider what is his appetite for fame, and by what means he seeks to gratify that particular passion.'

This passion, in particular, having always so main a stroke, and oftentimes so unsuspected an influence on the most important parts of our conduct, a perfect acquaintance with it is a very material branch of self-knowledge, and therefore requires a distinct and particular consideration.

Emulation, like the other passions of the human mind, shews itself much more plainly, and works much more strongly in some, than it does in others. It is in itself innocent, and was planted in our natures for very wise ends, and is capable of serving very excellent purposes, if kept under proper restrictions and regulations. But without these, it degenerates into a mean and criminal ambition.

When a man finds something within him that pushes him on to excel in worthy deeds, or in actions truly good and virtuous, and pursues that design with a steady unaffected ardour, without reserve or falsehood, it is a true sign of a noble spirit; for that love of praise can never be criminal, that excites and enables a man to do a great deal more good than he could do without it. And perhaps there never was a fine genius, or a noble spirit, that rose above the common level, and distinguished itself by high attainments in what is truly excellent, but was secretly, and perhaps insensibly, prompted by the impulse of this passion.

But, on the contrary, if a man's views centre only in the applause of others, whether it be deserved or not; if he pants after popularity and fame, not regarding how he comes by it; if his passion for praise urge him to stretch himself beyond the line of his capacity, and to attempt things to which he is unequal; to condescend to mean arts and low dissimulation, for the sake of a name; and, in a sinister, indirect way, sue hard for a little incense, not caring from whom he receives it; it then degenerates into what is properly called vanity. And if it excites a man to wicked attempts, and makes him willing to sacrifice the esteem of all wise and good men, to the shouts of the giddy multitude; if his ambition overleaps the bounds of decency and truth, and breaks through obligations of honour and virtue; it is then not only vanity, but vice; a vice the most destructive to the peace and happiness of human society, and which, of all others, hath made the greatest havoc and devastation among men.

What an instance have we here of the wide difference between common opinion and truth! that a vice, so big with mischief and misery, should be mistaken for a virtue! and that they, who have been most infamous for it, should be crowned with laurels, even by those who have been ruined by it, and have those laurels perpetuated by the common consent of men through after ages! Seneca's judgment of Alexander is certainly more agreeable to truth than the common opinion; who called him 'a public cut-throat, rather than a hero; and who, in seeking only to be a terror to mankind, arose to no greater an excellence, than what belonged to the most hurtful and hateful animals on earth.'

Certain it is, that these false heroes are, of all men, most ignorant of themselves, who seek their

gain and glory from the destruction of their own species; and, by this wicked ambition, entail infamy and curses upon their name and family, instead of that immortal glory they pursued, and imagined they had attained. According to the prophet's words, 'Woe to him who coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high; that he may be delivered from the power of evil! Thou hast consulted shame to thine house, by cutting off many people; and hast sinned against thy soul;' Hab. ii. 9, 10.

Now no man can truly know himself till he be acquainted with this, which is so often the secret and unperceived spring of his actions, and observes how far it governs and influences him in his conversation and conduct.

And, to correct the irregularity and extravagance of this passion, let us but reflect how airy and unsubstantial a pleasure the highest gratifications of it afford; how many cruel mortifications it exposes us to, by awakening the envy of others; to what meanness it often makes us submit; how frequently it loseth its end, by pursuing it with too much ardour (for virtue and real excellence will rise to the view of the world, though it be not mounted on the wings of ambition, which, by soaring too high, procures but a more fatal fall); and how much more solid pleasure the approbation of conscience will yield, than the acclamations of ignorant and mistaken men, who, judging by externals only, cannot know our true character, and whose commendations a wise man would rather despise than court. 'Examine but the size of people's sense, and the condition of their understanding, and you will never be fond of popularity, nor afraid of censure; nor solicitous what judgment they may form of you,

who know not how to judge rightly of themselves.' —*Marc. Anton.* lib. ix. § 18.

CHAP. XIII.

What kind of Knowledge we are already furnished with, and what degree of esteem we set upon it.

XII. 'A MAN can never rightly know himself, unless he examines into his knowledge of other things.'

We must consider, then, the knowledge we have; and whether we do not set too high a price upon it, and too great a value upon ourselves on the account of it; of what real use it is to us, and what effect it hath upon us; whether it does not make us too stiff, unsociable, and assuming; testy and supercilious, and ready to despise others for their supposed ignorance. If so, our knowledge, be it what it will, does us more harm than good. We were better without it; ignorance itself would not render us so ridiculous. Such a temper, with all our knowledge, shews that we know not ourselves.

'A man is certainly proud of that knowledge he despises others for the want of.'

How common it is for some men to be fond of appearing to know more than they do, and of seeming to be thought men of knowledge! To which end, they exhaust their fund almost in all companies to outshine the rest; so that in two or three conversations they are drawn dry, and you see to the bottom of them much sooner than you could at first imagine. And even that torrent of learning which they pour upon you at first so unmercifully, rather confounds than satisfies you. Their visible aim is not to inform your judgment, but display

their own. You have many things to query and except against, but their loquacity gives you no room; and their good sense, set off to so much advantage, strikes a modest man dumb. If you insist upon your right to examine, they retreat, either in confusion or equivocation; and, like the scuttle-fish, throw a large quantity of ink behind them, that you may not know where to pursue. Whence this foible flows is obvious enough. Self-knowledge would soon correct it.

But, as some ignorantly affect to be more knowing than they are, so others vainly affect to be more ignorant than they are; who, to shew they have greater insight and penetration than other men, insist upon the absolute uncertainty of science; will dispute even first principles; grant nothing as certain, and so run into downright pyrrhonism; the too common effect of abstracted debates excessively refined.

Every one is apt to set the greatest value upon that kind of knowledge in which he imagines he himself most excels, and to undervalue all other kinds of knowledge in comparison of it. There wants some certain rule, then, by which every man's knowledge is to be tried, and the value of it estimated. And let it be this: 'That is the best and most valuable kind of knowledge, that is most subservient to the best ends, *i.e.* which tends to make a man wiser and better, or more agreeable and useful, both to himself and others.' For knowledge is but a means that relates to some end. And as all means are to be judged by the excellency of their ends, and their expediency to produce them; so, that must be the best knowledge that hath the directest tendency to promote the best ends, viz. a man's own true happiness, and that of

others; in which the glory of God, the ultimate end, is ever necessarily comprised.

Now, if we were to judge of the several kinds of science by this rule, we should find,—(1.) Some of them to be hurtful and pernicious, as tending to pervert the true end of knowledge; to ruin a man's own happiness, and make him more injurious to society. Such is the knowledge of vice, the various temptations to it, and the secret ways of practising it; especially the arts of dissimulation, fraud, and dishonesty. (2.) Others will be found unprofitable and useless; as those parts of knowledge, which, though they may take up much time and pains to acquire, yet answer no valuable purpose; and serve only for amusement, and the entertainment of the imagination: for instance, an acquaintance with plays, novels, games, and modes, in which a man may be very critical and expert, and yet not a whit the wiser or more useful man. (3.) Other kinds of knowledge are good only relatively, or conditionally, and may be more useful to one than another; viz. a skill in a man's particular occupation or calling, on which his credit, livelihood, or usefulness in the world depends. And, as this kind of knowledge is valuable in proportion to its end, so it ought to be cultivated with a diligence and esteem answerable to that. (Lastly,) Other kinds of knowledge are good, absolutely and universally; viz. the knowledge of God and ourselves, the nature of our final happiness, and the way to it. This is equally necessary to all. And how thankful should we be, that we, who live under the light of the Gospel, and enjoy that light in its perfection and purity, have so many happy means and opportunities of attaining this most useful and necessary kind of knowledge!

A man can never understand himself, then, till he makes a right estimate of his knowledge; till he examines what kind of knowledge he values himself most upon, and most diligently cultivates; how high a value he sets upon it; what good it does him; what effect it hath upon him; what he is the better for it; what end it answers now, or what it is like to answer hereafter.

There is nothing in which a man's self-ignorance discovers itself more, than in the esteem he hath for his understanding, or for himself on account of it. It is a trite and true observation, 'That empty things make the most sound.' Men of the least knowledge are most apt to make a show of it, and to value themselves upon it; which is very visible in forward confident youth, raw conceited academics, and those who, uneducated in youth, betake themselves in later life to reading, without taste or judgment, only as an accomplishment, and to make a show of scholarship; who have just learning enough to spoil company, and render themselves ridiculous, but not enough to make either themselves or others at all the wiser.

But, beside the forementioned kinds of knowledge, there is another, which is commonly called false knowledge; which, though it often imposes upon men under the show and semblance of true knowledge, is really worse than ignorance. Some men have learned a great many things, and have taken a great deal of pains to learn them, and stand very high in their own opinion on account of them, which yet they must unlearn before they are truly wise. They have been at a vast expense of time, and pains, and patience, to heap together, and to confirm themselves in a set of wrong notions, which they lay up in their minds as a fund of valuable

knowledge: which, if they try by the forementioned rules, viz. 'The tendency they have to make them wiser and better, or more useful and beneficial to others,' will be found to be worth just nothing at all.

Beware of this false knowledge; for, as there is nothing of which men are more obstinately tenacious, so there is nothing that renders them more vain or more averse to self-knowledge. Of all things, men are most fond of their wrong notions.

The apostle Paul often speaks of these men and their self-sufficiency, in very poignant terms; who 'though they seem wise, yet,' says he, 'must become fools before they are wise;' 1 Cor. iii. 18. Though they think they know a great deal, 'know nothing yet as they ought to know;' 1 Cor. viii. 2: but 'deceive themselves, by thinking themselves something, when they are nothing;' Gal. vi. 3. And, whilst they 'desire to be teachers of others, understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm;' 1 Tim. i. 7: and 'want themselves to be taught what are the first rudiments and principles of wisdom;' Heb. vi. 12.

CHAP. XIV.

Concerning the Knowledge, Guard, and Government of our Thoughts.

XIII. 'ANOTHER part of self-knowledge consists in a due acquaintance with our own thoughts, and the workings of the imagination.'

The right government of the thoughts requires no small art, vigilance, and resolution; but it is a matter of such vast importance to the peace and improvement of the mind, that it is worth while to be at some pains about it. A man that hath so

numerous and turbulent a family to govern as his own thoughts, which are so apt to be under the influence and command of his passions and appetites, ought not to be long from home; if he is, they will soon grow mutinous and disorderly under the conduct of those two headstrong guides, and raise great clamours and disturbances, and sometimes on the slightest occasions; and a more dreadful scene of misery can hardly be imagined, than that which is occasioned by such a tumult and uproar within, when a raging conscience, or inflamed passions, are let loose without check or control. A city in flames, or the mutiny of a drunken crew aboard, who have murdered the captain, and are butchering one another, are but faint emblems of it. The torment of the mind, under such an insurrection and merciless ravage of the passions, is not easy to be conceived. The most revengeful man cannot wish his enemy a greater.

Of what vast importance, then, is it for a man to watch over his thoughts, in order to a right government of them? to consider what kind of thoughts find the easiest admission; in what manner they insinuate themselves, and upon what occasions?

It was an excellent rule which a wise heathen prescribed to himself in his private meditations: 'Manage,' saith he, 'all your actions and thoughts in such a manner, as if you were just going out of the world.'—*Marc. Anton. Med.* lib. ii. § 11.—Again, saith he, 'A man is seldom, if ever, unhappy for not knowing the thoughts of others; but he that does not attend to the motions of his own, is certainly miserable.'—*Marc. Anton.* lib. ii. § 8.

It may be worth our while, then, here to discuss this matter a little more particularly; and consi-

der, I. What kind of thoughts are to excluded or rejected. And, II. What ought to be indulged and entertained in the heart.

I. Some thoughts ought to be immediately banished as soon as they have found entrance. And, if we are often troubled with them, the safest way will be to keep a good guard on the avenues of the mind, by which they enter, and avoid those occasions which commonly excite them. For, sometimes, it is much easier to prevent a bad thought entering the mind, than to get rid of it when it is entered. More particularly,

1. Watch against all fretful and discontented thoughts, which do but chafe and wound the mind to no purpose. To harbour these, is to do yourself more injury than it is in the power of your greatest enemy to do you. It is equally a Christian's interest and duty to 'learn, in whatever state he is, therewith to be content;' Phil. iv. 11.

2. Harbour not too anxious and apprehensive thoughts. By giving way to tormenting fears, suspicions of some approaching danger or troublesome event, some not only anticipate, but double the evil they fear; and undergo much more from the apprehensions of it before it comes, than by suffering it when it is come. This is a great but common weakness, which a man should endeavour to arm himself against, by such kind of reflections as these: 'Are not all these events under the certain direction of a wise Providence? If they befal me, they are then that share of suffering which God hath appointed me, and which he expects I should bear as a Christian. How often hath my too timorous heart magnified former trials, which I found to be less in reality, than they appeared in their approach? And perhaps the formidable aspect

they put on, is only a stratagem of the great enemy of my best interest, designed on purpose to divert me from some point of duty, or to draw me into some sin, to avoid them. However, why should I torment myself to no purpose? The pain and affliction the dreaded evil will give me when it comes, is of God's sending; the pain I feel in the apprehension of it, before it comes, is of my own procuring. Whereby I often make my sufferings more than double; for this overplus of them, which I bring upon myself, is often greater than that measure of them which the hand of Providence immediately brings upon me.'

3. Dismiss, as soon as may be, all angry and wrathful thoughts. These will but canker and corrode the mind, and dispose it to the worst temper in the world, viz. that of fixed malice and revenge. 'Anger may steal into the heart of a wise man, but it rests only in the bosom of fools;' Eccles. vii. 9.—Make all the most candid allowances for the offender; consider his natural temper; turn your anger into pity; repeat 1 Cor. xiii.; think of the patience and meekness of Christ, and the petition in the Lord's prayer; and how much you stand in need of forgiveness yourself, both from God and man; how fruitless, how foolish, is indulged resentment; how tormenting to yourself. You have too much good nature willingly to give others so much torment; and why should you give it yourself? You are commanded to love your neighbour as yourself, but not forbidden to love yourself as much. And why should you do yourself that injury, which your enemy would be glad to do you? Especially,

4. Banish all malignant and revengeful thoughts. A spirit of revenge is the very spirit of

the devil; than which nothing makes a man more like him, and nothing can be more opposite to the temper which Christianity was designed to promote. If your revenge be not satisfied, it will give you torment now; if it be, it will give you greater hereafter. None is a greater self-tormentor than a malicious and revengeful man, who turns the poison of his own temper in upon himself.

5. Drive from the mind all silly, trifling, and unseasonable thoughts; which sometimes get into it we know not how, and seize and possess it before we are aware, and hold it in empty idle amusements, that yield it neither pleasure nor profit, and turn to no manner of account in the world, only consume time, and prevent a better employment of the mind. And, indeed, there is little difference, whether we spend the time in sleep, or in these waking dreams. Nay, if the thoughts which thus insensibly steal upon you, be not altogether absurd and whimsical, yet if they be impertinent and unseasonable, they ought to be dismissed, because they keep out better company.

6. Cast out all wild and extravagant thoughts, all vain and fantastical imaginations. Suffer not your thoughts to roam upon things that never were, and perhaps never will be; to give you a visionary pleasure in the prospect of what you have not the least reason to hope, or a needless pain in the apprehension of what you have not the least reason to fear. The truth is, next to a clear conscience, and a sound judgment, there is not a greater blessing than a regular and well-governed imagination: to be able to view things as they are, in their true light and proper colours; and to distinguish the false images that are painted on the fancy, from the representations of truth and reason. For, how

common a thing is it for men, before they are aware, to confound reason and fancy, truth and imagination, together! to take the flashes of the animal spirits for the light of evidence! and think they believe things to be true or false, when they only fancy them to be so; and fancy them to be so, because they would have them so; not considering that mere fancy is only the *ignis fatuus* of the mind; which often appears brightest when the mind is most covered with darkness, and will be sure to lead them astray who follow it as their guide. Near akin to these are,

7. Romantic and chimerical thoughts. By which I mean that kind of wild-fire, which the briskness of the animal spirits sometimes suddenly flashes upon the mind, and excites images that are so extremely ridiculous and absurd, that one can scarce forbear wondering how they could get admittance. These random flights of fancy are soon gone; and so differ from that castle-building of the imagination before-mentioned, which is a more settled amusement. But these are too incoherent and senseless to be of long continuance: and are the maddest sallies, and the most ramping reveries of the fancy that can be. I know not whether my reader understands now what I mean; but if he attentively regards all that passes through his mind, perhaps he may, hereafter, by experience.

8. Repel all impure and lascivious thoughts, which taint and pollute the mind; and though hid from men, are known to God, in whose eye they are abominable. Our Saviour warns us against these, as a kind of spiritual fornication, Matt. v. 28, and inconsistent with that purity of heart which his Gospel requires.

9. Take care how you too much indulge gloomy

and melancholy thoughts. Some are disposed to see every thing in the worst light. A black cloud hangs hovering over their minds, which, when it falls in showers through the eyes, is dispersed, and all within is serene again. This is often purely mechanical; and owing either to some fault in the bodily constitution, or some accidental disorder in the animal frame. However, one that consults the peace of his own mind will be upon his guard against this, which so often robs him of it.

10. On the other hand, let not the imagination be too sprightly and triumphant. Some are as unreasonably exalted as others are depressed; and the same person, at different times, often runs into both extremes, according to the different temper and flow of the animal spirits. And, therefore, the thoughts which so eagerly crowd into the mind at such times, ought to be suspected and well guarded, otherwise they will impose upon our judgments, and lead us to form such a notion of ourselves, and of things, as we shall soon see fit to alter, when the mind is in a more settled and sedate frame.

Before we let our thoughts judge of things, we must set reason to judge our thoughts; for they are not always in a proper condition to execute that office. We do not believe the character which a man gives us of another, unless we have a good opinion of his own; so, neither should we believe the verdict which the mind pronounces, till we first examine whether it be impartial and unbiassed; whether it be in a proper temper to judge, and have proper lights to judge by. The want of this previous act of self-judgment is the cause of so much self-deception and false judgment.

Lastly, with abhorrence reject immediately all

profane and blasphemous thoughts, which are sometimes suddenly injected into the mind, we know not how, though we may give a pretty good guess from whence. And all those thoughts which are apparently temptations and inducements to sin, our Lord hath, by his example, taught us to treat in this manner, Matt. iv. 10.

These, then, are the thoughts we should carefully guard against. And as they will (especially some of them) be frequently insinuating themselves into the heart, remember to set reason at the door of it to guard the passage, and bar their entrance, or drive them out forthwith when entered; not only as impertinent, but mischievous intruders.

But, II. There are other kinds of thoughts which we ought to indulge, and with great care and diligence retain and improve.

Whatever thoughts give the mind a rational or religious pleasure, and tend to improve the heart and understanding, are to be favoured, often recalled, and carefully cultivated. Nor should we dismiss them, till they have made some impressions on the mind, which are like to abide there.

And to bring the mind into a habit of recovering, retaining, and improving such thoughts, two things are necessary.

1. To habituate ourselves to a close and rational way of thinking. And, 2. To moral reflections and religious contemplations.

(1.) To prepare and dispose the mind for the entertainment of good and useful thoughts, we must take care to habituate it to a close and rational way of thinking.

When you have started a good thought, pursue it; do not presently lose sight of it, or suffer any trifling suggestion that may intervene to divert you

from it. Dismiss it not till you have sifted and exhausted it, and well considered the several consequences and inferences that result from it. However, retain not the subject any longer than you find your thoughts run freely upon it; for to confine them to it when it is quite worn out, is to give them an unnatural bent, without sufficient employment; which will make them flag, or be more apt to run off to something else.

And, to keep the mind intent on the subject you think of, you must be at some pains to recal and refix your desultory and rambling thoughts. Lay open the subject in as many lights and views as it is capable of being represented in; clothe your best ideas in pertinent and well-chosen words, deliberately pronounced, or commit them to writing.

Whatever be the subject, admit of no inferences from it, but what you see plain and natural. This is the way to furnish the mind with true and solid knowledge; as, on the contrary, false knowledge proceeds from not understanding the subject, or drawing inferences from it which are forced and unnatural, and allowing to those precarious inferences, or consequences drawn from them, the same degree of credibility as to the most rational and best established principles.

Beware of a superficial, slight, or confused view of things. Go to the bottom of them, and examine the foundation; and be satisfied with none but clear and distinct ideas (when they can be had) in every thing you read, hear, or think of: for, resting in imperfect and obscure ideas, is the source of much confusion and mistake.

Accustom yourself to speak naturally, pertinently, and rationally, on all subjects, and you will soon learn to think so on the best; especially if

you often converse with those persons that speak, and those authors that write in that manner.

And such a regulation and right management of your thoughts and rational powers will be of great and general advantage to you in the pursuit of useful knowledge, and a good guard against the levities and frantic sallies of the imagination. Nor will you be sensible of any disadvantage attending it, excepting one, viz. its making you more sensible of the weakness and ignorance of others, who are often talking in a random, inconsequential manner; and whom, however, it may oftentimes be more prudent to bear with, than contradict. But the vast benefit this method will be of in tracing out truth and detecting error, and the satisfaction it will give you in the cool and regular exercises of self-employment, and in the retaining, pursuing, and improving good and useful thoughts, will more than compensate that petty disadvantage.

(2.) If we would have the mind furnished and entertained with good thoughts, we must inure it to moral and religious subjects.

It is certain the mind cannot be more nobly or usefully employed, than in such kind of contemplations: because the knowledge it thereby acquires is of all others the most excellent knowledge, and that both in regard to its object and its end; the object of it being God, and the end of it eternal happiness.

The great end of religion is, to 'make us like God, and conduct us to the enjoyment of him.' And whatever hath not this plain tendency, and especially if it have the contrary, men may call religion, if they please; but they cannot call it more out of its name. And whatever is called religious knowledge, if it does not direct us in the way to

this end, is not religious knowledge, but something else, falsely so called. And some are unhappily accustomed to such an abuse of words and understanding, as not only to call, but to think, those things religion, which are the very reverse of it; and those notions religious knowledge, which lead them the farthest from it.

The sincerity of a true religious principle cannot be better known, than by the readiness with which the thoughts advert to God, and the pleasure with which they are employed in devout exercises. And though a person may not always be so well pleased with hearing religious things talked of by others, whose different taste, sentiments, or manner of expression, may have something disagreeable; yet, if he have no inclination to think of them himself, or converse with himself about them, he hath great reason to suspect that his 'heart is not right with God.' But, if he frequently and delightfully exercise his mind in divine contemplations, it will not only be a good mark of his sincerity, but will habitually dispose it for the reception of the best and most useful thoughts, and fit it for the noblest entertainments.

Upon the whole, then, it is of as great importance for a man to take heed what thoughts he entertains, as what company he keeps; for they have the same effect upon the mind. Bad thoughts are as infectious as bad company; and good thoughts solace, instruct, and entertain the mind like good company. And this is one great advantage of retirement; that a man may choose what company he pleases, from within himself.

As, in the world, we oftener light into bad company than good, so, in solitude, we are oftener troubled with impertinent and unprofitable thoughts,

than entertained with agreeable and useful ones. And a man that hath so far lost the command of himself, as to lie at the mercy of every foolish or vexing thought, is much in the same situation as a host, whose house is open to all comers, whom, though ever so noisy, rude, and troublesome, he cannot get rid of: but with this difference, that the latter hath some recompense for his trouble, the former none at all, but is robbed of his peace and quiet for nothing.

Of such vast importance to the peace, as well as the improvement of the mind, is the right regulation of the thoughts, which will be my apology for dwelling so long on this branch of the subject: which I shall conclude with this one observation more; that it is a very dangerous thing to think, as too many are apt to do, that it is a matter of indifference what thoughts they entertain in their hearts, since the reason of things concurs with the testimony of the holy Scripture to assure us, 'That the allowed thought of foolishness is sin.' Prov. xxiv. 9.

CHAP. XV.

Concerning the Memory.

XIV. 'A MAN, that knows himself, will have a regard, not only to the management of his thoughts, but the improvement of his memory.'

The memory is that faculty of the soul which was designed for the storehouse or repository of its most useful notions; where they may be laid up in safety, to be produced upon proper occasions.

Now, a thorough self-acquaintance cannot be had without a proper regard to this in two respects. 1. Its furniture. 2. Its improvement.

1. A man, that knows himself, will have a regard to the furniture of his memory; not to load it with trash and lumber, a set of useless notions or low conceits, which he will be ashamed to produce before persons of taste and judgment.

If the retention be bad, do not crowd it. It is of as ill consequence to overload a weak memory, as a weak stomach. And, that it may not be cumbered with trash, take heed what company you keep, what books you read, and what thoughts you favour; otherwise a great deal of useless rubbish may fix there before you are aware, and take up the room which ought to be possessed by better notions. But let not a valuable thought slip from you, though you pursue it with much time and pains before you overtake it. The regaining and refixing it may be of more avail to you than many hours reading.

What pity is it that men should take such immense pains, as some do, to learn those things, which, as soon as they become wise, they must take as much pains to unlearn! a thought that should make us very curious and cautious about the proper furniture of our minds.

2. Self-knowledge will acquaint a man with the extent and capacity of his memory, and the right way to improve it.

There is no small art in improving a weak memory, so as to turn it to as great an advantage as many do theirs, which are much stronger. A few short rules to this purpose may be no unprofitable digression.

(1.) Beware of all kinds of intemperance in the indulgence of the appetites and passions. Excesses of all kinds do a great injury to the memory.

(2.) If it be weak, do not overload it. Charge

it only with the most useful and solid notions. A small vessel should not be stuffed with lumber: but if its freight be precious, and judiciously stowed, it may be more valuable than a ship of twice its burden.

(3.) Recur to the help of a common-place book, according to Mr. Locke's method, and review it once a year. But take care that, by confiding to your minutes or memorial aids, you do not excuse the labour of the memory; which is one disadvantage attending this method.

(4.) Take every opportunity of uttering your best thoughts in conversation, when the subject will admit it: that will deeply imprint them. Hence, the tales which common story-tellers relate they never forget, though ever so silly.

(5.) Join to the idea you would remember, some other that is more familiar to you, which bears some similitude to it, either in its nature, or in the sound of the word by which it is expressed: or that hath some relation to it, either in time or place: and then, by recalling this, which is easily remembered, you will (by that concatenation or connexion of ideas which Mr. Locke takes notice of) draw in that which is thus linked or joined with it; which otherwise you might hunt after in vain. This rule is of excellent use to help you to remember names.

(6.) What you are determined to remember, think of before you go to sleep at night, and the first thing in the morning, when the faculties are fresh: and recollect, at evening, every thing worth remembering the day past.

(7.) Think it not enough to furnish this storehouse of the mind with good thoughts; but lay them up there in order, digested or ranged under proper

subjects or classes; that, whatever subject you have occasion to think or talk upon, you may have recourse immediately to a good thought, which you heretofore laid up there under that subject, so that the very mention of the subject may bring the thought to hand; by which means you will carry a regular common-place book in your memory. And it may not be amiss, sometimes, to take an inventory of this mental furniture, and recollect how many good thoughts you have there treasured up under such particular subjects, and whence you had them.

(Lastly,) Nothing helps the memory more than often thinking, writing, or talking, on those subjects you would remember. But enough of this.

CHAP. XVI.

Concerning the Mental Taste.

XV. 'A MAN that knows himself, is sensible of, and attentive to, the particular taste of his mind, especially in matters of religion.'

As the late Mr. Howe judiciously observes, 'there is, beside bare understanding and judgment, and diverse from that heavenly gift, which, in the Scripture, is called grace, such a thing as gust and relish belonging to the mind of man (and I doubt not, with all men, if they observe themselves), and which are as unaccountable, and as various, as the relishes and disgusts of sense. This they only wonder at who understand not themselves, or will consider nobody but themselves. So that it cannot be said, universally, that it is a better judgment, or more grace, that determines men the one way or the other; but some-

what in the temper of their minds distinct from both, which I know not how better to express than by mental taste; and this hath no more of mystery in it, than, that there is such a thing belonging to our natures as complacency and displacency in reference to the objects of the mind. And this, in the kind of it, is as common to men as human nature; but as much diversified in individuals as men's other inclinations are.'

Now this different taste in matters relating to religion (though it may be sometimes natural, or what is born with a man, yet) generally arises from the difference of education and custom. And the true reason why some persons have an inveterate disrelish to certain circumstantials of religion, though ever so justifiable, and at the same time a fixed esteem for others, that are more exceptionable, may be no better than what I have heard some very honestly profess, viz. that the one they have been used to, and the other not. As a person, by long use and habit, acquires a greater relish for coarse and unwholesome food, than the most delicate diet, so a person long habituated to a set of phrases, notions, and modes, may, by degrees, come to have such a veneration and esteem for them, as to despise and condemn others which they have not been accustomed to, though perhaps more edifying and more agreeable to Scripture and reason.

This particular taste in matters of religion differs very much (as Mr. Howe well observes) both from judgment and grace.

However, it is often mistaken for both. When it is mistaken for the former, it leads to error; when mistaken for the latter, to censoriousness.

This different taste of mental objects is much

the same with that which, with regard to the objects of sense, we call fancy; for, as one man cannot be said to have a better judgment in food than another, purely because he likes some kinds of meats better than he; so neither can he be said to have a better judgment in matters of religion, purely because he hath a greater fondness for some particular doctrines and forms.

But though this mental taste be not the same as the judgment, yet it often draws the judgment to it, and sometimes very much perverts it.

This appears in nothing more evidently than in the judgment people pass upon the sermons they hear. Some are best pleased with those discourses that are pathetic and warning, others with what is more solid and rational, and others with the sublime and mystical. Nothing can be too plain for the taste of some, or too refined for that of others. Some are for having the address only to their reason and understanding, others only to their affections and passions, and others to their experience and consciences. And every hearer or reader is apt to judge according to his particular taste, and to esteem him the best preacher or writer who pleases him most; without examining, first, his own particular taste, by which he judgeth.

It is natural, indeed, for every one to desire to have his own taste pleased; but it is unreasonable in him to set it up as the best, and make it a test and standard to others: but much more unreasonable to expect, that he, who speaks in public, should always speak to his taste, which might as reasonably be expected by another of a different taste. But it can no more be expected, that what is delivered to a multitude of hearers should alike suit all their tastes, than that a single dish, though

prepared with ever so much art and exactness, should equally please a great variety of appetites: among which there may be some perhaps very nice and sickly.

It is the preacher's duty to adapt his subjects to the taste of his hearers, as far as fidelity and conscience will admit; because it is well known from reason and experience, as well as from the advice and practice of the apostle Paul, that this is the best way to promote their edification. But if their taste be totally vitiated, and incline them to take in that which will do them more harm than good, and to relish poison more than food, the most charitable thing the preacher can do in that case is, to endeavour to correct so vicious an appetite, which loathes that which is most wholesome, and craves that which is pernicious. This, I say, it is his duty to attempt in the most gentle and prudent manner he can, though he run the risk of having his judgment or orthodoxy called into question by them, as it very possibly may; for, commonly, they are the most arbitrary and unmerciful judges in this case, who are the least able to judge.

There is not, perhaps, a more unaccountable weakness in human nature than this, that, with regard to religious matters, our animosities are generally greatest where our differences are least; they, who come pretty near to our standard, but stop short there, are more the object of our disgust and censure, than they who continue at the greatest distance from it; and it requires the greatest knowledge and command of our temper to get over this weakness. To whatever secret spring in the human mind it may be owing, I shall not stay to inquire; but the thing itself is too obvious not to be taken notice of.

Now, we should, all of us, be careful to find out and examine our proper taste of religious things; that, if it be a false one, we may rectify it; if a bad one, mend it; if a right and good one, strengthen and improve it. For the mind is capable of a false taste, as well as the palate, and comes by it the same way, viz. by being long used to unnatural relishes, which, by custom, become grateful. And having found out what it is, and examined it by the test of Scripture, reason, and conscience, if it be not very wrong, let us indulge it, and read those books that are most suited to it, which, for that reason, will be most edifying. But, at the same time, let us take care of two things; 1. That it do not bias our judgment, and draw us into error. 2. That it do not cramp our charity, and lead us to censoriousness.

CHAP. XVII.

Of our great and governing Views in Life.

XVI. 'ANOTHER part of self-knowledge is, to know what are the great ends for which we live.'

We must consider what is the ultimate scope we drive at, the general maxims and principles we live by, or whether we have not yet determined our end, and are governed by no fixed principles, or by such as we are ashamed to own.

There are few that live so much at random as not to have some main end in eye; something that influences their conduct, and is the great object of their pursuit and hope. A man cannot live without some leading views: a wise man will always know what they are: whether it is fit he should be led by them or no; whether they be such as his

understanding and reason approve, or only such as fancy and inclination suggest. He will be as much concerned to act with reason, as to talk with reason; as much ashamed of a solecism and contradiction in his character, as in his conversation.

Where do our views centre? In this world we are in, or in that we are going to? If our hopes and joys centre here, it is a mortifying thought, that we are every day 'departing from our happiness;' but if they are fixed above, it is a joy to think that we are every day drawing nearer to the object of our highest wishes.

Is our main care to appear great in the eye of man, or good in the eye of God? If the former, we expose ourselves to the pain of a perpetual disappointment; for it is much, if the envy of men do not rob us of a great deal of our just praise, or if our vanity will be content with that they allow us. But if the latter be our main care, if our chief view is, to be approved of God, we are laying up a fund of the most lasting and solid satisfactions. Not to say that this is the truest way to appear great in the eye of men, and to conciliate the esteem of all those whose praise is worth our wish.

'Be this, then, O my soul! thy wise and steady pursuit; let this circumscribe and direct thy views; be this a law to thee, from which account it a sin to depart, whatever disrespect or contempt it may expose thee to from others; be this the character thou resolvest to live up to, and at all times to maintain, both in public and private, viz. a friend and lover of God; in whose favour thou centrest all thy present and future hopes. Carry this view with thee through life, and dare not, in any instance, to act inconsistently with it.'

CHAP. XVIII.

How to know the true State of our Souls; and whether we are fit to Die.

LASTLY, 'The most important point of self-knowledge, after all, is, to know the true state of our souls towards God, and in what condition we are to die.'

These two things are inseparably connected in their nature, and therefore I put them together. The knowledge of the former will determine the latter, and is the only thing that can determine [it: for no man can tell whether he is fit for death, till he is acquainted with the true state of his own soul.

This, now, is a matter of such vast moment, that it is amazing any considerate man, or any one who thinks what it is to die, should rest satisfied with an uncertainty in it. Let us trace out this important point, then, with all possible plainness, and see if we cannot come to some satisfaction in it upon the most solid principles.

In order to know, then, whether we are fit to die, we must first know, 'what it is that fits us for death?' And the answer to this is very natural and easy: viz. that only fits us for death, 'that fits us for happiness after death.'

This is certain. But the question returns, 'What is it that fits us for happiness after death?'

Now, in answer to this, there is a previous question, necessary to be determined, viz. 'What that happiness is?'

It is not a fool's paradise, or a Turkish dream of

sensitive gratifications. It must be a happiness suited to the nature of the soul, and what it is capable of enjoying in a state of separation from the body. And what can that be, but the enjoyment of God, the best of beings, and the author of ours?

The question, then, comes to this, 'What is that which fits us for the enjoyment of God, in the future state of separate spirits?'

And, methinks, we may bring this matter to a very sure and short issue, by saying, it is 'that which makes us like to him now.' This only is our proper qualification for the enjoyment of him after death, and therefore our only proper preparation for death. For how can they, who are unlike to God here, expect to enjoy him hereafter? And if they have no just ground to hope that they shall enjoy God in the other world, how are they fit to die?

So that, the great question, 'Am I fit to die?' resolves itself into this, 'Am I like to God?' for it is this only that fits me for heaven; and that which fits me for heaven is the only thing that fits me for death.

Let this point, then, be well searched into, and examined very deliberately and impartially.

Most certain it is, that God can take no real complacency in any but those that are like him; and it is as certain, that none but those that are like him can take pleasure in him. But God is a most pure and holy being; a being of infinite love, mercy, and patience; whose righteousness is invariable, whose veracity inviolable, and whose wisdom unerring. These are the moral attributes of the divine Being, in which he requires us to imitate him; the express lineaments of the divine nature, in which all good men bear a resemblance

to him, and for the sake of which only they are the objects of his delight: for God can love none but those that bear this impress of his own image on their souls. Do we find, then, these visible traces of the divine image there? Can we make out our likeness to him in his holiness, goodness, mercy, righteousness, truth and wisdom? If so, it is certain we are capable of enjoying him, and are the proper objects of his love. By this, we know we are fit to die, because, by this, we know we are fit for happiness after death.

Thus, then, if we are faithful to our consciences, and impartial in the examination of our lives and tempers, we may soon come to a right determination of this important question, 'What is the true state of our souls towards God? and in what condition are we to die?' Which, as it is the most important, so it is the last instance of self-knowledge I shall mention, and, with it, close the first part of this subject.

PART II.

Shewing the great Excellency and Advantages of this kind of Science.

HAVING in the former part of the subject laid open some of the main branches of self-knowledge, or pointed out the principal things which a man ought to be acquainted with relating to himself, I am now, reader, to lay before you the excellency and usefulness of this kind of knowledge, as an inducement to labour after it, by a detail of the several

great advantages which attend it, and which shall be recounted in the following chapters.

CHAP. I.

Self-Knowledge the Spring of Self-Possession.

I. 'ONE great advantage of self-knowledge is, that it gives a man the truest and most constant self-possession.'

A man that is endowed with this excellent knowledge, is calm and easy.

1. Under affronts and defamation. For he thinks thus: 'I am sure I know myself better than any man can pretend to know me. This calumniator hath, indeed, at this time, missed his mark, and shot his arrows at random; and it is my comfort, that my conscience acquits me of his angry imputation. However, there are worse crimes which he might more justly accuse me of, which, though hid from him, are known to myself. Let me set about reforming them, lest, if they come to his notice, he should attack me in a more defenceless part, find something to fasten his obloquy, and fix a lasting reproach upon my character.'

There is a great deal of truth and good sense in that common saying and doctrine of the Stoics, though they might carry it too far, that 'it is not things, but thoughts, that disturb and hurt us.' Now, as self-acquaintance teaches a man the right government of the thoughts (as is shewn above, part i. chap. 14.), it will help him to expel all anxious, tormenting, and fruitless thoughts, and retain the most quieting and useful ones, and so keep all easy within. Let a man but try the expe-

riment, and he will find that a little resolution will make the greatest part of the difficulty vanish.

2. Self-knowledge will be a good ballast to the mind under any accidental hurry or disorder of the passions. It curbs their impetuosity, puts the reins into the hands of reason, quells the rising storm ere it make shipwreck of the conscience, and teaches a man to 'leave off contention before it be meddled with,' Prov. xvii. 14; it being much safer to keep the lion chained, than to encounter it in its full strength and fury. And thus will a wise man, for his own peace, deal with the passions of others, as well as his own.

Self-knowledge, as it acquaints a man with his weaknesses and worst qualities, will be his guard against them, and a happy counterbalance to the faults and excesses of his natural temper.

3. It will keep the mind sedate and calm under the surprise of bad news, or afflicting providences.

'For, am I not a creature of God? and my life and my comforts, are they not wholly at his dispose, from whom I have received them, and by whose favour I have so long enjoyed them, and by whose mercy and goodness I have still so many left me?

'A heathen can teach me, under such losses of friends, or estate, or any comfort, to direct my eyes to the hand of God, by whom it was lent me, and is now recalled, that I ought not to say, it is lost, but restored; and though I be injuriously deprived of it, still the hand of God is to be acknowledged; for, what is it to me by what means he that gave me that blessing takes it from me again?'—*Epict. Enchirid.* cap. 15.

He that rightly knows himself will live every

day dependent on the divine Author of his mercies for the continuance and enjoyment of them; and will learn, from a higher authority than that of a heathen moralist, that he hath nothing that he can properly call his own, or ought to depend upon as such; that he is but a steward employed to dispense the good things he possesses, according to the direction of his Lord, at whose pleasure he holds them, and to whom he should be ready, at any time, cheerfully to resign them. Luke xvi. 1.

4. Self-knowledge will help a man to preserve an equanimity and self-possession under all the various scenes of adversity and prosperity.

Both have their temptations. To some, the temptations of prosperity are the greatest; to others, those of adversity. Self-knowledge shews a man which of these are greatest to him; and, at the apprehension of them, teaches him to arm himself accordingly, that nothing may deprive him of his constancy and self-possession, or lead him to act unbecoming the man or the Christian.

We commonly say, 'No one knows what he can bear till he is tried.' And many persons verify the observation, by bearing evils much better than they feared they should. Nay, the apprehension of an approaching evil often gives a man a greater pain than the evil itself. This is owing to inexperience and self-ignorance.

A man, that knows himself his own strength and weakness, is not so subject as others to the melancholy presages of the imagination; and, whenever they intrude, he makes no other use of them than to take the warning, collect himself, and prepare for the coming evil, leaving the degree, duration, and the issue of it, with him who is the sovereign

Disposer of all events, in a quiet dependence on his power, wisdom, and goodness.

Such self-possession is one great effect and advantage of self-knowledge.

CHAP. II.

Self-Knowledge leads to a wise and steady Conduct.

II. 'As self-knowledge will keep a man calm and equal in his temper, so it will make him wise and cautious in his conduct.'

A precipitant and rash conduct is ever the effect of a confused and irregular hurry of the thoughts. So that, when, by the influence of self-knowledge, the thoughts become cool, sedate, and rational, the conduct will be so too. It will give a man that even, steady, uniform behaviour in the management of his affairs, that is so necessary for the dispatch of business, and prevent many disappointments and troubles, which arise from the unsuccessful execution of immature or ill-judged projects.

In short, most of the troubles which men meet with in the world may be traced up to this source, and resolved into self-ignorance. We may complain of Providence, and complain of men; but the fault, if we examine it, will commonly be found to be our own. Our imprudence, which arises from self-ignorance, either brings our troubles upon us or increases them. Want of temper and conduct will make any affliction double.

What a long train of difficulties do sometimes proceed from one wrong step in our conduct, which self-ignorance, or inconsideration, betrayed us into! And every evil that befals us, in consequence of that, we are to charge upon ourselves.

CHAP. III.

Humility, the Effect of Self-Knowledge.

III. 'TRUE self-knowledge always produces humility.'

Pride is ever the offspring of self-ignorance. The reason men are vain and self-sufficient is, because they do not know their own failings; and the reason they are not better acquainted with them is, because they hate self-inspection. Let a man but turn his eyes within, scrutinize himself, and study his own heart, and he will soon see enough to make him humble. 'Behold I am vile,' (Job xl. 4.) is the language only of self-knowledge.

Whence is it that young people are generally so vain, self-sufficient, and assured, but because they have taken no time or pains to cultivate a self-acquaintance? And why does pride and stiffness appear so often in advanced age, but because men grow old in self-ignorance? A moderate degree of self-knowledge would cure an inordinate degree of self-complacency.

Humility is not more necessary to salvation, than self-knowledge is to humility.

And especially would it prevent that bad disposition which is too apt to steal upon and infect some of the best human minds, especially those who aim at singular and exalted degrees of piety, viz. a religious vanity, or spiritual pride; which, without a great deal of self-knowledge and self-attention, will gradually insinuate into the heart, taint the mind, and sophisticate our virtues, before we are aware; and, in proportion to its pre-

valence, make the Christian temper degenerate into the Pharisaical.

'Might I be allowed to choose my own lot, I should think it much more eligible to want my spiritual comforts, than to abound in these, at the expense of my humility. No; let a penitent and contrite spirit be always my portion; and may I ever so be the favourite of Heaven, as never to forget that I am chief of sinners. Knowledge in the sublime and glorious mysteries of the Christian faith, and ravishing contemplations of God and a future state, are most desirable advantages; but still I prefer charity, which edifieth, before the highest intellectual perfections of that knowledge which puffeth up; 1 Cor. viii. 1. Those spiritual advantages are certainly best for us, which increase our modesty, and awaken our caution, and dispose us to suspect and deny ourselves. The highest in God's esteem are meanest in their own; and their excellency consists in the meekness and truth, not in the pomp and ostentation of piety, which affects to be seen and admired of men.'—*Stanhope's Tho. à Kempis,* book ii. ch. 11.

CHAP. IV.

Charity, another effect of Self-Knowledge.

IV. 'SELF-KNOWLEDGE greatly promotes a spirit of meekness and charity.'

The more a man is acquainted with his own failings, the more is he disposed to make allowances for those of others. The knowledge he hath of himself will incline him to be as severe in his animadversions on his own conduct as he is on that of

others, and as candid to their faults as he is to his own.

There is an uncommon beauty, force, and propriety, in that caution which our Saviour gives us, Matt. vii. 3—5. 'And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.' In which words these four things are plainly intimated. (1.) That some are much more quick-sighted to discern the faults and blemishes of others than their own; can spy a mote in another's eye, sooner than a beam in their own. And commonly it is so; they who are most quick-sighted to the faults of others, are most blind to their own. (2.) That they are often the most forward and officious to correct and cure the follies of others, who are most unfit for it. The beam in their own eye makes them altogether unfit to pull out the mote from their brother's. A man half blind himself, should never set up for an oculist. (3.) That they who are inclined to deal in censure should always begin at home. (4.) Great censoriousness is great hypocrisy. 'Thou hypocrite,' &c. All this is nothing but the effect of woeful self-ignorance.

This common failing of the human nature the heathens were very sensible of, and represented it in the following manner. Every man, say they, carries a wallet, or two bags with him; the one hanging before him, the other behind him; in that before, he puts the faults of others; into that be-

hind, his own; by which means he never sees his own failings, whilst he has those of others always before his eyes.

But self-knowledge, now, helps us to turn this wallet, and place that which hath our own faults, before our eyes, and that which hath in it those of others, behind our back. A very necessary regulation this, if we would behold our own faults in the same light in which they do; for we must not expect that others will be as blind to our foibles as we ourselves are; they will carry them before their eyes, whether we do or no. And to imagine that the world takes no notice of them, because we do not, is just as wise as to fancy that others do not see us, because we shut our eyes.

CHAP. V.

Moderation, the effect of Self-Knowledge.

V. 'ANOTHER genuine offspring of self-knowledge, is moderation.'

This, indeed, can hardly be conceived to be separate from that meekness and charity before-mentioned; but I choose to give it a distinct mention, because I consider it under a different view and operation, viz. as that which guards and influences our spirits in all matters of debate and controversy.

Moderation is a great and important Christian virtue, very different from that bad quality of the mind under which it is often misrepresented and disguised, viz. lukewarmness and indifference about the truth. The former is very consistent with a regular and well-corrected zeal; the latter consists in the total want of it: the former is sensible of, and endeavours, with peace and prudence, to main-

tain the dignity and importance of divine doctrines; the latter hath no manner of concern about them: the one feels the secret influences of them; the other is quite a stranger to their power and efficacy: the one laments, in secret, the sad decay of vital religion; the other is an instance of it. In short, the one proceeds from true knowledge, the other from great ignorance; the one is a good mark of sincerity, the other a certain sign of hypocrisy. And to confound two things together, which are so essentially different, can be the effect of nothing but great ignorance or inconsideration, or an overheated, injudicious zeal.

A self-knowing man can easily distinguish between these two. And the knowledge which he has of human nature in general, from a thorough contemplation of his own in particular, shews him the necessity of preserving a medium (as in every thing else, so especially) between the two extremes of a bigoted zeal on the one hand, and an indolent lukewarmness on the other. As he will not look upon every thing to be worth contending for, so, he will look upon nothing worth losing his temper for in the contention; because, though the truth be of ever so great importance, nothing can be of a greater disservice to it, or make a man more incapable of defending it, than intemperate heat and passion, whereby he injures and betrays the cause he is over anxious to maintain. 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;' James i. 20.

Self-knowledge heals our animosities, and greatly cools our debates about matters of dark and doubtful speculation. One who knows himself, sets too great a value upon his time and temper, to plunge rashly into those vain and fruitless controversies, in which one of them is sure to be lost, and the

other in great danger of being so; especially when a man of bad temper and bad principles is the opponent; who aims rather to silence his adversary with overbearing confidence, dark unmeaning language, authoritative airs, and hard words, than convince him with solid argument; and who plainly contends, not for truth, but for victory. Little good can be done to the best cause in such a circumstance. And a wise and moderate man, who knows human nature, and knows himself, will rather give his antagonist the pleasure of an imaginary triumph, than engage in so unequal a combat.

An eagerness and zeal for dispute on every subject, and with every one, shews great self-sufficiency, that never-failing sign of great self-ignorance. And true moderation, which consists in an indifference about little things, and in a prudent and well-proportioned zeal about things of importance, can proceed from nothing but true knowledge, which has its foundation in self-acquaintance.

CHAP. VI.

Self-Knowledge improves the Judgment.

VI. 'ANOTHER great advantage of being well acquainted with ourselves is, that it helps us to form a better judgment of other things.'

Self-knowledge, indeed, does not enlarge or increase our natural capacities, but it guides and regulates them; leads us to the right use and application of them; and removes a great many things which obstruct the due exercise of them, as pride, prejudice, and passion, &c. which oftentimes so miserably pervert the rational powers.

He that hath taken a just measure of himself, is thereby better able to judge of other things.

1. He knows how to judge of men and human nature better. For human nature, setting aside the difference of natural genius, and the improvements of education and religion, is pretty much the same in all. There are the same passions and appetites, the same natural infirmities and inclinations in all, though some are more predominant and distinguishable in some than they are in others. So that, if a man be but well acquainted with his own, this, together with a very little observation on the ways of men, will soon discover to him those of others, and shew him very impartially the particular failings and excellencies of men, and help him to form a much truer sentiment of them, than if he were to judge only by their exterior, the appearance they make in the eye of the world (than which sometimes nothing shews them in a falser light), or by popular opinions and prejudices.

2. Self-knowledge will teach us to judge rightly of facts, as well as men. It will exhibit things to the mind in their proper light and true colours, without those false glosses and appearances which fancy throws upon them, or in which the imagination often paints them. It will teach us to judge, not with the imagination, but with the understanding; and will set a guard upon the former, which so often represents things in wrong views, and gives the mind false impressions of them. See part i. chap. 4.

3. It helps us to estimate the true value of all worldly good things. It rectifies our notions of them, and lessens that enormous esteem we are apt to have for them. For, when a man knows himself, and his true interests, he will see how far,

and in what degree, these things are suitable to him, and subservient to his good; and how far they are unsuitable, ensnaring, and pernicious. This, and not the common opinion of the world, will be his rule of judging concerning them. By this, he will see quite through them; see what they really are at bottom, and how far a wise man ought to desire them. The reason why men value them so extravagantly is, because they take a superficial view of them, and only look upon their outside, where they are most showy and inviting. Were they to look within them, consider their intrinsic worth, their ordinary effects, their tendency, and their end, they would not be so apt to overvalue them. And a man that has learned to see through himself, can easily see through these.

CHAP. VII.

Self-Knowledge directs to the proper exercise of Self-Denial.

VII. 'A MAN that knows himself, best knows how, and wherein, he ought to deny himself.'

The great duty of self-denial, which our Saviour so expressly requires of all his followers (plain and necessary as it is), has been much mistaken and abused, and that not only by the church of Rome, in their doctrines of penance, fasts, and pilgrimages, but by some Protestant Christians, in the instances of voluntary abstinence, and unnecessary austerities; whence they are sometimes apt to be too censorious against those who indulge themselves in the use of those indifferent things, which they make it a point of conscience to abstain from. Whereas, would they confine their exercise of self-

denial to the plain and important points of Christian practice, devoutly performing the necessary duties they are most averse to, and resolutely avoiding the known sins they are most inclined to, under the direction of Scripture, they would soon become more solid, judicious, and exemplary Christians. And did they know themselves, they would easily see, that herein there is occasion and scope enough for self-denial, and that to a degree of greater severity and difficulty than there is in those little corporeal abstinences and mortifications they enjoin themselves.

1. Self-knowledge will direct us to the necessary exercises of self-denial, with regard to the duties our tempers are most averse to.

There is no one, but at some times, finds a great backwardness and indisposition to some duties, which he knows to be seasonable and necessary. This, then, is a proper occasion for self-discipline. For, to indulge this indisposition is very dangerous, and leads to an habitual neglect of known duty; and to resist and oppose it, and prepare for a diligent and faithful discharge of the duty, notwithstanding the many pleas and excuses that carnal disposition may urge for the neglect of it, this requires no small pains and self-denial, and yet is very necessary to the peace of conscience.

And, for our encouragement to this piece of self-denial, we need only remember, that the difficulty of the duty, or our unfitness for it, will, upon the trial, be found to be much less than we apprehend; and the pleasure of reflecting, that we have discharged our consciences, and given a fresh testimony of our uprightness, will more than compensate the pains and difficulty we found therein. And the oftener these criminal propensions to the wilful

neglect of duty are opposed and overcome, the seldomer will they return, or the weaker will they grow, till at last, by divine grace, they will be wholly vanquished, and, in the room of them, will succeed an habitual 'readiness to every good work,' Tit. iii. 1, and a very sensible delight therein; a much happier effect than can be expected from the severest exercises of self-denial in the instances before-mentioned.

2. A man that knows himself, will see an equal necessity for self-denial, in order to check and control his inclinations to sinful actions; to subdue the rebel within; to resist the solicitations of sense and appetite; to summon all his wisdom to avoid the occasions and temptations to sin, and all his strength to oppose it.

All this (especially if it be a favourite or a constitutional iniquity) will cost a man pains and mortification enough; for instance, the subduing a violent passion, or taming a sensual inclination, or forgiving an apparent injury and affront. It is evident such a self-conquest can never be attained without much self-knowledge and self-denial.

And that self-denial that is exercised this way, as it will be a better evidence of our sincerity, so it will be more helpful and ornamental to the interests of religion, than the greatest zeal in those particular duties which are more suitable to our natural temper, or than the greatest austerities in some particular instances of mortification, which are not so necessary, and perhaps not so difficult or disagreeable to us as this.

To what amazing heights of piety may some be thought to mount, (raised on the wings of a flaming zeal, and distinguished by uncommon preciseness and severity about little things), who all the while,

perhaps, cannot govern one passion, and appear yet ignorant of, and slaves to, their darling iniquity! Through an ignorance of themselves, they misapply their zeal, and misplace their self-denial, and, by that means, blemish their characters with a visible inconsistency.

CHAP. VIII.

Self-Knowledge promotes our Usefulness in the World.

VIII. 'THE more we know of ourselves, the more useful we are like to be in those stations of life in which Providence hath fixed us.'

'When we know our proper talents and capacities, we know in what manner we are capable of being useful; and the consideration of our characters and relations in life will direct us to the proper application of those talents; shew us to what ends they were given us, and to what purposes they ought to be cultivated and improved.

It is a sad thing to observe, how miserably some men debase and prostitute their capacities. Those gifts and indulgences of nature, by which they outshine many others, and by which they are capable of doing real service to the cause of virtue and religion, and of being eminently useful to mankind, they either entirely neglect, or shamefully abuse, to the dishonour of God, and the prejudice of their fellow-creatures, by encouraging and emboldening them in the ways of vice and vanity. For the false glare of a profane wit will sometimes make such strong impressions on a weak unsettled mind, as to overbear the principles of reason and wisdom, and give it too favourable sentiments of what it before

abhorred; whereas, the same force and sprightliness of genius would have been very happily and usefully employed in putting sin out of countenance, and in rallying the follies, and exposing the inconsistencies, of a vicious and profligate character.

When a man once knows where his strength lies, wherein he excels, or is capable of excelling, how far his influence extends, and in what station of life Providence hath fixed him, and the duties of that station, he then knows what talents he ought to cultivate, in what manner and to what objects they are to be particularly directed and applied, in order to shine in that station, and be useful in it. This will keep him even and steady in his pursuits and views, consistent with himself, uniform in his conduct, and useful to mankind; and will prevent his shooting at a wrong mark, or missing the right mark he aims at, as thousands do for want of this necessary branch of self-knowledge.—See part i. chap. 5.

CHAP. IX.

Self-Knowledge leads to a Decorum and consistency of Character.

IX. 'A MAN that knows himself, knows how to act with discretion and dignity in every station and character.'

Almost all the ridicule we see in the world takes its rise from self-ignorance. And to this, mankind, by common assent, ascribe it, when they say of a person that acts out of character, he does not know himself. Affectation is the spring of all ridicule, and self-ignorance the true source of affectation.

A man that does not know his proper character, nor what becomes it, cannot act suitably to it. He will often affect a character which does not belong to him; and will either act above or beneath himself, which will make him equally contemptible in the eyes of them that know him.

A man of superior rank and character, that knows himself, knows that he is but a man; subject to the same sicknesses, frailties, disappointments, pains, passions, and sorrows, as other men; that true honour lies in those things in which it is possible for the meanest peasant to exceed him, and therefore he will not be vainly arrogant. He knows that they are only transitory and accidental things that set him above the rest of mankind; that he will soon be upon a level with them; and therefore learns to condescend: and there is a dignity in this condescension; it does not sink, but exalts his reputation and character.

A man of inferior rank, that knows himself, knows how to be content, quiet, and thankful in his lower sphere. As he has not an extravagant veneration and esteem for those external things which raise one man's circumstances so much above another's, so he does not look upon himself as the worse or less valuable man for not having them; much less does he envy them that have them. As he has not their advantages, so neither has he their temptations; he is in that state of life which the great Arbiter and Disposer of all things hath allotted him, and he is satisfied: but as a deference is owing to external superiority, he knows how to pay a proper respect to those that are above him, without that abject and servile cringing, which discovers an inordinate esteem for their condition. As he does not over-esteem them for those little

accidental advantages in which they excel him, so neither does he over-value himself for those things in which he excels others.

Were hearers to know themselves, they would not take upon them to dictate to their preachers, or teach their ministers how to teach them (which, as St. Austin observes, is the same thing as if a patient, when he sends for a physician, should prescribe to him what he would have him prescribe); but, if they happen to hear something not quite agreeable to their former sentiments, would betake themselves more diligently to the study of their Bibles to know, 'whether those things were so;' Acts xvii. 11.

And were ministers to know themselves, they would know the nature and duty of their office, and the wants and infirmities of their hearers, better, than to domineer over their faith, or shoot over their heads, and seek their own popularity rather than their benefit. They would be more solicitous for their edification than their approbation; and, like a faithful physician, would earnestly intend and endeavour their good, though it be in a way they may not like; and rather risk their own characters with weak and captious men, than 'withhold any thing that is needful for them,' or be unfaithful to God and their own consciences. The most palatable food is not always the most wholesome. Patients must not expect to be always pleased, nor physicians to be always applauded.

CHAP. X.

Piety, the effect of Self-Knowledge.

X. 'SELF-KNOWLEDGE tends greatly to cultivate a spirit of true piety.'

Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion, that nothing is more destructive to it. And of all ignorance none is a greater bane to it than self-ignorance. This, indeed, is very consistent with superstition, bigotry, and enthusiasm, those common counterfeits of piety, which by weak and credulous minds are often mistaken for it. But true piety and real devotion can only spring from a just knowledge of God and ourselves; and the relation we stand in to him, and the dependence we have upon him. For when we consider ourselves as the creatures of God, whom he made for his honour, and as creatures incapable of any happiness but what results from his favour, and as entirely and continually dependent upon him for every thing we have and hope for: and whilst we bear this thought in our minds; what can induce or prompt us more to love, and to fear, and trust him as our God, our father, and all-sufficient friend and helper?

CHAP. XI.

Self-Knowledge teaches us rightly to perform the Duties of Religion.

XI. SELF-KNOWLEDGE will be a good help and direction to us in many of our religious duties and Christian exercises.' Particularly,

1. In the duty of prayer; both as to the matter and the mode. He that rightly knows himself, will be very sensible of his spiritual wants; and he that is well acquainted with his spiritual wants, will not be at a loss what to pray for. 'Our hearts would be the best prayer-books, if we were skilful in reading them. Why do men pray, and call for prayers, when they come to die; but that they begin a little better to know themselves? And were they now but to hear the voice of God and conscience, they would not remain speechless. But they that are born deaf are always dumb.'—*Baxter.*

Again, self-knowledge will teach us to pray, not only with fluency, but fervency; will help us to keep the heart, as well as order our speech, before God; and so promote the grace as well as gift of prayer. Did we but seriously consider what we are, and what we are about; whom we pray to, and what we pray for; it is impossible we should be so dead, spiritless, and formal in this duty as we too often are. The very thought would inspire us with life, and faith, and fervour.

2. Self-knowledge will be very helpful to us in the duty of thanksgiving: as it makes us mindful of the mercies we receive; the suitableness and the seasonableness of them. A self-knowing man considers what he hath, as well as what he wants; is at once sensible, both of the value of his mercies, and his unworthiness of them: and this is what makes him thankful. For this reason it is, that one Christian's heart even melts with gratitude for those very mercies which others disesteem and depreciate, and perhaps despise, because they have not what they think greater. But a man that knows himself, knows that he deserves nothing, and there-

fore is thankful for every thing. For thankfulness as necessarily flows from humility, as humility does from self-acquaintance.

3. In the duties of reading and hearing the word of God, self-knowledge is of excellent use, to enable us to understand and apply that which we read or hear. Did we understand our hearts better, we should understand the word of God better, for that speaks to the heart. A man that is acquainted with his heart, easily sees how it penetrates and explores, searches, and lays open its most inward parts. He feels what he reads; and finds *that* a quickening spirit, which, to a self-ignorant man, is but a dead letter.

Moreover, this self-acquaintance teaches a man to apply what he reads and hears of the word of God; he sees the pertinence, congruity, and suitableness of it to his own case; and lays it up faithfully in the store-room of his mind, to be digested and improved by his after-thoughts. And it is by this art of aptly applying Scripture, and urging the most suitable instructions and admonitions of it home upon our consciences, that we receive the greatest benefit by it.

4. Nothing is of more eminent service in the great duty of meditation, especially in that part of it which consists in heart-converse. A man, who is unacquainted with himself, is as unfit to converse with his heart, as he is with a stranger he never saw, and whose taste and temper he is altogether unacquainted with: he knows not how to get his thoughts about him; and when he has, he knows not how to range and fix them, and hath no more the command of them, than a general has of a wild undisciplined army, that has been never exercised or accustomed to obedience and order. But one,

who hath made it the study of his life to be acquainted with himself, is soon disposed to enter into a free and familiar converse with his own heart; and in such a self-conference improves more in true wisdom, and acquires more useful and substantial knowledge, than he could do from the most polite, and refined conversation in the world. Of such excellent use is self-knowledge in all the duties of piety and devotion.

CHAP. XII.

Self-Knowledge, the best Preparation for Death.

XII. 'SELF-KNOWLEDGE will be an habitual preparation for death, and a constant guard against the surprise of it,' because it fixes and settles our hopes of future happiness. That which makes the thoughts of death so terrifying to the soul, is its utter uncertainty what will become of it after death. Were this uncertainty but removed, a thousand things would reconcile us to the thoughts of dying.

'Distrust and darkness of a future state,
Is that which makes mankind to dread their fate:
Dying is nothing; but 'tis this we fear,
To be we know not what, we know not where.'

Now, self-knowledge, in a good degree, removes this uncertainty: for, as the word of God hath revealed the certainty of a future state of happiness, which good men shall enter upon after death, and plainly described the requisite qualifications for it; when a good man, by a long and laborious self-acquaintance, comes distinctly to discern those qualifications in himself, his hopes of heaven soon raise him above the fears of death; and though he

may not be able to form any clear or distinct conception of the nature of that happiness, yet, in general, he is assured that it will be a most exquisite and satisfying one, and will contain in it every thing necessary to make it complete, because it will come immediately from God himself. Whereas, they who are ignorant what they are, must necessarily be ignorant what they shall be. A man that is all darkness within, can have but a dark prospect forward.

O! what would we not give for solid hope in death! Reader! wouldst thou have it, know God, and know thyself.

PART III.

Shewing how Self-Knowledge is to be attained.

FROM what hath been said under the two former parts of this subject, self-knowledge appears to be in itself so excellent, and its effects so extensively useful and conducive to the happiness of human kind, that nothing need further be added by way of motive or inducement to excite us to make it the great object of our study and pursuit. If we regard our present peace, satisfaction, and usefulness, or our future and everlasting interests, we shall certainly value and prosecute this knowledge above all others, as what will be most ornamental to our characters, and beneficial to our interest, in every state of life, and abundantly recompense all our labour.

Were there need of any further motives to excite

us to this, I might lay open the many dreadful effects of self-ignorance, and shew how plainly it appears to be the original spring of all the follies and incongruities we see in the characters of men, and of most of the mortifications and miseries they meet with here. This would soon appear, by only mentioning the reverse of those advantages before specified, which naturally attend self-knowledge: for what is it, but a want of self-knowledge and self-government, that makes us so unsettled and volatile in our dispositions? so subject to transport and excess of passions in the varying scenes of life? so rash and unguarded in our conduct? so vain and self-sufficient? so censorious and malignant? so eager and confident? so little useful in the world, to what we might be? so inconsistent with ourselves? so mistaken in our notions of true religion? so generally indisposed to, or unengaged in, the holy exercises of it? and, finally, so unfit for death, and so afraid of dying? I say, to wha is all this owing, but self-ignorance?—the first and fruitful source of all this long train of evils. And, indeed, there is scarce any, but what may be traced up to it. In short, it brutifies man, to be ignorant of himself. 'Man that is in honour, and understandeth not (himself especially), is as the beasts that perish;' Psalm xlix. 20.

'Come home, then, O my wandering, self-neglecting soul! lose not thyself in a wilderness or tumult of impertinent, vain, distracting things. Thy work is nearer thee: the country thou shouldst first survey and travel is within thee, from which thou must pass to that above thee; when, by losing thyself in this without thee, thou wilt find thyself, before thou art aware, in that below thee. Let the

eyes of fools be in the corners of the earth; leave it to men beside themselves, to live as without themselves; do thou keep at home, and mind thine own business; survey thyself, thine own make and nature, and thou wilt find full employ for all thy most active thoughts. But dost thou delight in the mysteries of nature? consider well the mystery of thy own. The compendium of all thou studiest is near thee, even within thee; thyself being the epitome of the world. If either necessity or duty, nature or grace, reason or faith, internal inducements, external impulses, or eternal motives, might determine the subject of thy study and contemplation, thou wouldst call home thy distracted thoughts, and employ them more on thyself and thy God.'—*Baxter's Mischief of Self-Ignorance.*

Now, then, let us resolve, that, henceforth, the study of ourselves shall be the business of our lives; that, by the blessing of God, we may arrive at such a degree of self-knowledge, as may secure to us the excellent benefits before mentioned: to which end we would do well to attend diligently to the rules laid down in the following chapters.

CHAP. I.

Self-Examination necessary to Self-Knowledge.

I. 'THE first thing necessary to self-knowledge is self-inspection.'

We must often look into our hearts, if we would know them. They are very deceitful: more so than any man can think, till he has searched, and tried, and watched them. We may meet with frauds and faithless dealings from men, but, after all, our own hearts are the greatest cheats, and there are

none, we are in greater danger from than ourselves. We must first suspect ourselves, then examine ourselves, then watch ourselves, if we expect ever to know ourselves. How is it possible there should be any self-acquaintance without self-converse?

Were a man to accustom himself to such self-employment, he need not live 'till thirty before he suspects himself a fool, or till forty before he knows it.'—*Night Thoughts*, part i.

Men could never be so bad as they are, if they did but take a proper care and scope in this business of self-examination; if they did but look backwards to what they were, inwards to what they are, and forwards to what they shall be.

And as this is the first and most necessary step to self-acquaintance, it may not be amiss to be a little more particular in it. Therefore,

1. This business of self-scrutiny must be performed with great care and diligence, otherwise our hearts will deceive us even whilst we are examining them. 'When we set ourselves to think, some trifle or other presently interrupts and draws us off from any profitable recollection. Nay, we ourselves fly out, and are glad to be diverted from a severe examination into our own state; which is sure, if diligently pursued, to present us with objects of shame and sorrow, which will wound out sight, and soon make us weary of this necessary work.'—*Stanhope's Thomas à Kempis*, p. 166.

Do not let us flatter ourselves, then, that this is a mighty easy business; much pains and care are necessary sometimes to keep the mind intent, and more to keep it impartial; and the difficulty of it is the reason that so many are averse to it, and care not to descend into themselves.

Reader, try the experiment; retire now into thy

self, and see if thou canst not strike out some light within, by closely urging such questions as these. 'What am I? for what was I made? and to what ends have I been preserved so long by the favour of my Maker? do I remember, or forget those ends? have I answered, or perverted them? What have I been doing since I came into the world? what is the world or myself the better for my living so many years in it? what is my allowed course of actions? am I sure it will bear the future test? am I now in that state I shall wish to die in? and, O my soul, think, and think again, what it is to die! Do not put that most awful event far from thee; nor pass it by with a superficial thought. Canst thou be too well fortified against the terrors of that day? and art thou sure that the props which support thee now will not fail thee then? What hopes hast thou for eternity? hast thou, indeed, that holy, godlike temper, which alone can fit thee for the enjoyment of God? Which world art thou most concerned for? what things do most deeply affect thee? O my soul, remember thy dignity; think how soon the scene will shift. Why shouldst thou forget thou art immortal?'

2. This self-excitation and scrutiny must be very frequently made. They who have a great deal of important business on their hands, should be often looking over their accounts, and frequently adjust them, lest they should be going backwards, and not know it; and custom will soon take off the difficulty of this duty, and turn it into delight.

In our morning retreat, it will be proper to remember that we cannot preserve throughout the day that calm and even temper we may then be in; that we shall very probably meet with some things to ruffle us, some attack on our weak side. Place

a guard there now. Or, however, if no incidents happen to discompose us, our tempers will vary; our thoughts will flow pretty much with our blood; and the dispositions of the mind be a good deal governed by the motions of the animal spirits; our souls will be serene or cloudy, our tempers volatile or phlegmatic, and our inclinations sober or irregular, according to the briskness or sluggishness of the circulation of the animal fluids, whatever may be the cause or immediate occasion of that; and therefore, we must resolve to avoid all occasions that may raise any dangerous ferments there, which, when once raised, will excite in us very different thoughts and dispositions from those we now have; which, together with the force of a fair opportunity and urgent temptation, may overset our reason and resolution, and betray us into those sinful indulgences which will wound the conscience, stain the soul, and create bitter remorse in our cooler reflections. Pious thoughts and purposes, in the morning, will set a guard upon the soul, and fortify it under all the tempations of the day.

But such self-inspection, however, should never fail to make part of our evening devotions, when we should review and examine the several actions of the day, the various tempers and dispositions we have been in, and the occasions that excited them. It is an advice worthy of a Christian, though it first dropped from a heathen pen, that, before we betake ourselves to rest, we review and examine all the passages of the day, that we may have the comfort of what we have done aright, and may redress what we find to have been amiss; and make the shipwrecks of one day be as marks to direct our course on another; a practice that hath been recommended by many of the heathen moralists of

the greatest name, as Plutarch, Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, and particularly Pythagoras, in the verses that go under his name, and are called his golden verses; wherein he advises his scholars every night to recollect the passages of the day, and ask themselves these questions: 'Wherein have I transgressed this day? what have I done? what duty have I omitted?' &c. Seneca recommends the same practice. 'Sectius (saith he) did this: At the close of the day, before he betook himself to rest, he addressed his soul in the following manner. What evil of thine hast thou cured this day? what vice withstood? in what respect art thou better? Passion will cease, or become more cool, when it knows it is every day to be thus called to account. What can be more advantageous than this constant custom of searching through the day?—And the same course (saith Seneca) I take myself; and every day sit in judgment on myself. And, at even, when all is hush and still, I make a scrutiny into the day; look over my words and actions, and hide nothing from myself; conceal none of my mistakes through fear. For why should I, when I have it in my power to say thus? This once I forgive thee, but see thou do so no more. In such a dispute I was too keen: do not, for the future, contend with ignorant men; they will not be convicted, because they are unwilling to shew their ignorance. Such a one I reproved with too much freedom, whereby I have not reformed, but exasperated him: remember hereafter to be more mild in your censures; and consider not only whether what you say be true, but whether the person you say it to can bear to hear the truth.'—*Senec. de Ira*, lib. iii. cap. 36. Thus far that excellent moralist.

Let us take a few other specimens of a more

pious and Christian turn, from a judicious and devout writer.

'This morning when I arose, instead of applying myself to God in prayer (which I generally find it best to do immediately after a few serious reflections), I gave way to idle musing, to the great disorder of my heart and frame. How often have I suffered for want of more watchfulness on this occasion! When shall I be wise? I have this day shamefully trifled almost through the whole of it; was in my bed when I should have been upon my knees; prayed but coolly in the morning; was strangely off my guard in the business and conversation I was concerned with in the day, particularly at ——; I indulged to very foolish, sinful, vile thoughts, &c. I fell in with a strain of conversation too common among all sorts, viz. speaking evil of others; taking up a reproach against my neighbour. I have often resolved against this sin, and yet run into it again. How treacherous this wicked heart of mine! I have lost several hours this day in mere sauntering and idleness. This day I had an instance of mine own infirmity, that I was a little surprised at, and I am sure I ought to be humbled for. The behaviour of ——, from whom I can expect nothing but humour, indiscretion, and folly, strangely ruffled me; and that after I have had warning over and over again. What a poor, impotent, contemptible creature am I! This day I have been kept, in a great measure, from my too frequent failings. I had this day very comfortable assistances from God, upon an occasion not a little trying—what shall I render?'—*Bennet's Christ. Orat.*

3. See that the mind be in the most composed and disengaged frame it can, when you enter upon this business of self-judgment. Choose a time when

it is most free from passion, and most at leisure from the cares and affairs of life. A judge is not like to bring a cause to a good issue, that is either intoxicated with liquor on the bench, or has his mind distracted with other cares, when he should be intent on the trial. Remember you sit in judgment upon yourself, and have nothing to do at present but to sift the evidence which conscience may bring in either for or against you, in order to pronounce a just sentence, which is of much greater concernment to you at present than any thing else can be; and therefore it should be transacted with the utmost care, composure, and attention.

4. Beware of partiality, and the influence of self-love, in this weighty business; which, if you do not guard against it, will soon lead you into self-delusion, the consequences of which may be fatal to you. Labour to see yourself as you are; and view things in the light in which they are, and not in that in which you would have them be. Remember, that the mind is always apt to believe those things true, which it would have be so; and backward to believe those things true, which it wishes were not so; and this is an influence you will certainly lie under in this affair of self-judgment.

You need not be much afraid of being too severe upon yourself: your great danger will generally be passing a too favourable judgment. A judge ought not, indeed, to be a party concerned, and should have no interest in the person he sits in judgment upon. But this cannot be the case here, as you yourself are both judge and criminal, which shews the danger of pronouncing a too favourable sentence. But remember your business is only with the evidence and the rule of judgment; and that, however you come off now, there will be a re-

hearing in another court, where judgment will be according to truth.

'However, look not unequally either at the good or evil that is in you, but view them as they are. If you observe only the good that is in you, and overlook the bad, or search only after your faults, and overlook your graces, neither of these will bring you to a true acquaintance with yourself.'—*Baxter's Director.*

And to induce you to this impartiality, remember that this business (though it may be hid from the world) is not done in secret. God sees how you manage it, before whose tribunal you must expect a righteous judgment. 'We should order our thoughts so,' saith Seneca, 'as if we had a window in our breasts, through which any one might see what passes there, And, indeed, there is one that does; for what does it signify that our thoughts are hid from men? From God nothing is hid.'—*Sen. Epist.* 84.

5. Beware of false rules of judgment. This is a sure and common way to self-deception. *E. G.* Some judge themselves by what they have been. But it does not follow, if men are not so bad as they have been, that therefore they are as good as they should be. It is wrong to make our past conduct implicitly the measure of our present, or the present the rule of our future; when our past, present, and future conduct must all be brought to another rule. And they, who thus 'measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves are not wise;' 2 Cor. x. 12. Again, others are apt to judge of themselves by the opinions of men, which is the most uncertain rule that can be; for in that very opinion of theirs you may be deceived. How do you know they have really so good an

opinion of you as they profess? but if they have, have not others as bad? and why should not the opinion of these be your rule as well as the opinion of those? Appeal to self-flattery for an answer. However, neither one nor the other of them, perhaps, appear to know themselves; and how should they know you? how is it possible they should have opportunities of knowing you better than you know yourself? A man can never gain a right knowledge of himself from the opinion of others, which is so various, and generally so ill-founded; for men commonly judge by outward appearances, or inward prejudice, and therefore, for the most part, think and speak of us very much at random. Again, others are for judging of themselves by the conduct of their superiors, who have opportunities, and advantages of knowing, acting, and being better; and yet, without vanity be it spoken, say they, we are not behind-hand with them. But what then? Neither they nor you, perhaps, are what the obligations of your character indispensably require you to be, and what you must be, ere you can be happy. But consider how easily this argument may be turned upon you. You are better than some, you say, who have greater opportunities and advantages of being good than you have, and therefore your state is safe; but you yourself have greater opportunities and advantages of being good than some others have, who are, nevertheless, better than you; and, therefore, by the same rule, your state cannot be safe. Again, others judge of themselves by the common maxims of the vulgar world concerning honour and honesty, virtue and interest; which maxims, though generally very corrupt, and very contrary to those of reason, conscience, and Scripture, men will follow as a rule,

for the sake of the latitude it allows them; and fondly think, that, if they stand right in the opinion of the lowest kind of men, they have no reason to be severe upon themselves. Others, whose sentiments are more delicate and refined, they imagine may be mistaken, or may overstrain the matter. In which persuasion they are confirmed by observing how seldom the consciences of the generality of men smite them for those things which these nice judges condemn as heinous crimes. I need not say how false and pernicious a rule this is. Again, others may judge of themselves and their state by sudden impressions they have had, or strong impulses upon their spirits, which they attribute to the finger of God, and by which they have been so exceedingly affected, as to make no doubt but that it was the instant of their conversion; but whether it was, or not, can never be known but by the conduct of their after-lives. In like manner, others judge of their good state by their good frames, though very rare it may be, and very transient, soon passing off 'like a morning cloud, or as the early dew.'—'But we should not judge of ourselves by that which is unusual or extraordinary with us, but by the ordinary tenour and drift of our lives. A bad man may seem good in some good mood, and a good man may seem bad in some extraordinary falls. To judge of a bad man by his best hours, and a good man by his worst, is the way to be deceived in them both.' —*Baxter's Director.* And the same way may you be deceived in yourself. Pharoah, Ahab, Herod, and Felix, had all of them their softenings, their transitory fits of goodness; but yet they remain upon record under the blackest characters.

These, then, are all the wrong rules of judgment;

and to trust to them, or try ourselves by them, leads to fatal self-deception. Again,

6. In the business of self-examination, you must not only take care you do not judge by wrong rules, but that you do not judge wrong by right rules. You must endeavour, then, to be well acquainted with them. The office of a judge is not only to collect the evidence and the circumstances of facts, but to be well skilled in the laws by which those facts are to be examined.

Now the only right rules by which we are to examine, in order to know ourselves, are reason and Scripture. Some are for setting aside these rules, as too severe for them, too stiff to bend to their perverseness, too straight to measure their crooked ways; are against reason, when reason is against them; decrying it as carnal reason; and, for the same cause, are against Scripture too, depreciating it as a dead letter. And thus, rather than be convinced they are wrong, they despise the only means that can set them right.

And as some are for setting aside each part of their rules, so others are for setting them one against the other; reason against Scripture, and Scripture against reason; when they are both given us by the God of our nature, not only as perfectly consistent, but as proper to explain and illustrate each other, and prevent our mistaking either; and to be, when taken together (as they always should), the most complete and only rule by which to judge, both of ourselves and every thing belonging to our salvation, as reasonable and fallen creatures.

(1.) Then, one part of that rule, which God hath given us to judge of ourselves by, is right reason; by which, I do not mean the reasoning of any par-

ticular man, which may be very different from the reasoning of another particular man, and both, it may be, very different from right reason; because both may be influenced, not so much by the reason and nature of things, as by partial prepossessions and the power of passions; but by right reason, I mean those common principles which are readily allowed by all who are capable of understanding them, and not notoriously perverted by the power of prejudice, and which are confirmed by the common consent of all the sober and thinking part of mankind, and may be easily learned by the light of nature. Therefore, if any doctrine or practice, though supposed to be founded in, or countenanced by, revelation, be nevertheless apparently repugnant to these dictates of right reason, or evidently contradict our natural notions of the divine attributes, or weaken our obligations to universal virtue, that, we may be sure, is no part of revelation, because then one part of our rule would clash with, and be opposite to, the other. And thus reason was designed to be our guard against a wild and extravagant construction of Scripture.

(2.) The other part of our rule is the sacred Scriptures, which we are to use as our guard against the licentious excursions of fancy, which is often imposing itself upon us for right reason. Let any religious scheme or notion, then, appear ever so pleasing or plausible, if it be not established on the plain principles of Scripture, it is forthwith to be discarded; and that sense of Scripture, that is violently forced to bend towards it, is very much to be suspected.

It must be very surprising to one who reads and studies the sacred Scriptures with a free unbiassed mind, to see what elaborate, fine-spun, and flimsy

glosses, men will invent and put upon some texts as the true and genuine sense of them, for no other reason, but because it is most agreeable to the opinion of their party, from which, as the standard of their orthodoxy, they durst never depart; who, if they were to write a critique, in the same manner, on any Greek or Latin author, would make themselves extremely ridiculous in the eyes of the learned world. But, if we would not pervert our rule, we must learn to think as Scripture speaks, and not compel that to speak as we think. Would we know ourselves, then, we must often view ourselves in the glass of God's word. And when we have taken a full survey of ourselves from thence, let us not soon forget 'what manner of persons we are;' James i. 23, 24. If our own image do not please us, let us not quarrel with our mirror, but set about mending ourselves.

The eye of the mind, indeed, is not like that of the body, which can see every thing else but itself; for the eye of the mind can turn itself inward, and survey itself. However, it must be owned, it can see itself much better when its own image is reflected upon it from this mirror: and it is by this only that we can come at the bottom of our hearts, and discover those secret prejudices and carnal prepossessions which self-love would hide from us.

This, then, is the first thing we must do in order to self-knowledge: we must examine, scrutinize, and judge ourselves, diligently, leisurely, frequently, and impartially; and that not by the false maxims of the world, but by the rules which God hath given us, reason and Scripture; and take care to understand those rules, and not set them at variance. The next important step to self-knowledge is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAP. II.

Constant Watchfulness necessary to Self-Knowledge.

II. 'WOULD we know ourselves, we must be very watchful over our hearts and lives.'

1. We must keep a vigilant eye upon our hearts, *i. e.* our tempers, inclinations, and passions. A more necessary piece of advice we cannot practise, in order to self-acquaintance, than that which Solomon gives us, Prov. iv. 23, 'Keep your heart with all diligence,' or, as it is in the original, 'above all keeping.' *Q.D.* Whatever you neglect or overlook, be sure you mind your heart. Narrowly observe all its inclinations and aversions, all its motions and affections, together with the several objects and occasions which excite them. And this precept is enforced with two very urgent reasons in Scripture. The first is, because 'out of it are the issues of life:' *i.e.* as our heart is, so will the tenor of our life and conduct be; as is the fountain, so are the streams; as is the root, so is the fruit, Matt. vii. 18. And the other is, because 'it is deceitful above all things,' Jer. xvii. 9. And therefore, without a constant guard upon it, we shall insensibly run into many hurtful self-deceptions. To which I may add, that, without this careful keeping of the heart, we shall never be able to acquire any considerable degree of self-acquaintance or self-government.

2. To know ourselves, we must watch our life and conduct, as well as our hearts; and, by this, the heart will be better known, as the root is best known by the fruit. We must attend to the nature and consequences of every action we are disposed

or solicited to before we comply, and consider how it will appear in an impartial review. We are apt enough to observe and watch the conduct of others; a wise man will be as critical and as severe upon his own: for indeed we have a great deal more to do with our own conduct than other men's; as we are to answer for our own, but not for theirs. By observing the conduct of other men, we know them; by carefully observing our own, we must know ourselves.

CHAP. III.

We should have some regard to the Opinions of Others concerning us, particularly of our Enemies.

III. 'WOULD we know ourselves, we should not altogether neglect the opinion which others have of us, or the things they may say of us.'

Not that we need be very solicitous about the censure or applause of the world, which is generally very rash and wrong, according to the particular humours and prepossessions of men; and a man that knows himself will soon know how to despise them both. 'The judgment which the world makes of us, is generally of no manner of use to us; it adds nothing to our souls or bodies, nor lessens any of our miseries. Let us constantly follow reason,' says Montaigne, 'and let the public approbation follow us the same way if it pleases.'

But still, I say, a total indifference in this matter is unwise. We ought not to be entirely insensible to the reports of others; no, not to the railings of an enemy: for an enemy may say something out of ill-will to us, which it may concern us to think of coolly when we are by ourselves; to

examine whether the accusation be just, and what there is in our conduct and temper which may make it appear so. And by this means our enemy may do us more good than he intended, and be an occasion of discovering something of our hearts to us which we did not know before. A man that hath no enemies ought to have very faithful friends; and one who hath no such friends ought to think it no calamity that he hath enemies to be his effectual monitors. 'Our friends,' says Mr. Addison, 'very often flatter us as much as our own hearts. They either do not see our faults, or conceal them from us; or soften them by their representations, after such a manner, that we think them too trivial to be taken notice of. An adversary, on the contrary, makes a stricter search into us, discovers every flaw and imperfection in our tempers; and, though his malice may set them in too strong a light, it has generally some ground for what it advances. A friend exaggerates a man's virtues; an enemy inflames his crimes. A wise man should give a just attention to both of them, so far as it may tend to the improvement of the one and the diminution of the other. Plutarch has written an essay on the benefits which a man may receive from his enemies; and, among the good fruits of enmity, mentions this in particular, that, by the reproaches it casts upon us, we see the worst side of ourselves, and open our eyes to several blemishes and defects in our lives and conversations, which we should not have observed without the help of such ill-natured monitors.

'In order, likewise, to come at a true knowledge of ourselves, we should consider, on the other hand, how far we may deserve the praises and approbation which the world bestow upon us;

whether the actions they celebrate proceed from laudable and worthy motives, and how far we are really possessed of the virtues which gain us applause amongst those with whom we converse. Such a reflection is absolutely necessary, if we consider how apt we are either to value or condemn ourselves by the opinions of others, and to sacrifice the report of our own hearts to the judgment of the world.'—*Spectator*, vol. v. No. 399.

It is the character of a very dissolute mind, to be entirely insensible to all that the world says of us; and shews such a confidence of self-knowledge, as is usually a sure sign of self-ignorance. The most knowing minds are ever least presumptuous. And true self-knowledge is a science of so much depth and difficulty, that a wise man would not choose to be over-confident that all his notions of himself are right, in opposition to the judgment of all mankind; some of whom, perhaps, have better opportunities and advantages of knowing him (at some seasons especially) than he has of knowing himself; because they never look through the same false medium of self-flattery.

CHAP. IV.

Frequent converse with Superiors, a help to Self-Knowledge.

IV. 'ANOTHER proper means of self-knowledge, is to converse as much as you can with those who are your superiors in real excellence.'

'He, that walketh with wise men, shall be wise;' Prov. xiii. 20. Their example will not only be your motive to laudable pursuits, but a mirror to your mind; by which you may possibly discern some

failings, or deficiencies, or neglects, in yourself, which before escaped you. You will see the unreasonableness and vanity of your self-sufficiency, when you observe how much you are surpassed by others in knowledge and goodness. Their proficiency will make your defects the more obvious to you. And, by the lustre of their virtues, you will better see the deformity of your vices; your negligence, by their diligence; your pride, by their humility; your passion, by their meekness; and your folly, by their wisdom.

Examples not only move, but teach and direct much more effectually than precepts; and shew us, not only that such virtues may be practised, but how; and how lovely they appear when they are. And, therefore, if we cannot have them always before our eyes, we should endeavour to have them always in our mind; and especially that of our great Head and Pattern, who hath set us a lovely example of the most innocent conduct, under the worst and most disadvantageous circumstances of human life.

CHAP. V.

Of cultivating such a Temper as will be the best disposition to Self-Knowledge.

V. 'IF a man would know himself, he must, with great care, cultivate that temper which will best dispose him to receive this knowledge.'

Now, as there are no greater hinderances to self-knowledge than pride and obstinacy, so there is nothing more helpful to it than humility and an openness to conviction.

1. One, who is in quest of self-knowledge, must,

above all things, seek humility. And how near an affinity there is between these two, appears from hence, that they are both acquired the same way. The very means of attaining humility are the properest means for attaining self-knowledge. By keeping an eye every day upon our faults and wants, we become more humble; and, by the same means, we become more self-knowing. By considering how far we fall short of our rule and our duty, and how vastly others exceed us, and especially by a daily and diligent study of the word of God, we come to have meaner thoughts of ourselves; and, by the very same means, we come to have a better acquaintance with ourselves.

A proud man cannot know himself. Pride is that beam in the eye of his mind, which renders him quite blind to any blemishes there. Hence, nothing is a surer sign of self-ignorance than vanity and ostentation.

Indeed, true self-knowledge and humility are so necessarily connected, that they depend upon, and mutually beget each other. A man that knows himself, knows the worst of himself, and therefore cannot but be humble; and an humble mind is frequently contemplating its own faults and weaknesses, which greatly improves it in self-knowledge. So that self-acquaintance makes a man humble; and humility gives him still a better acquaintance with himself.

2. An openness to conviction is no less necessary to self-knowledge than humility.

As nothing is a greater bar to true knowledge than an obstinate stiffness in opinion, and a fear to depart from old notions, which (before we were capable of judging perhaps) we had long taken up for the truth; so nothing is a greater bar to self-

knowledge, than a strong aversion to part with those sentiments of ourselves which we have been blindly accustomed to, and to think worse of ourselves than we are used.

And such an unwillingness to retract our sentiments, in both cases, proceeds from the same cause, viz. a reluctance to self-condemnation. For he that takes up a new way of thinking, contrary to that which he hath long received, therein condemns himself of having lived in an error; and he that begins to see faults in himself he never saw before, condemns himself of having lived in ignorance and sin. Now this is an ungrateful business, and what self-flattery gives us a strong aversion to.

But such an inflexibility of judgment, and hatred of conviction, is a very unhappy and hurtful turn of mind. And a man, that is resolved never to be in the wrong, is in a fair way never to be in the right.

As infallibility is no privilege of the human nature, it is no diminution to a man's good sense or judgment to be found in an error, provided he is willing to retract it. He acts with the same freedom and liberty as before: whoever be his monitor, it is his own good sense and judgment that still guides him; which shines to great advantage in thus directing him against the bias of vanity and self-opinion. And in thus changing his sentiments, he only acknowledges that he is not, what no man ever was, incapable of being mistaken. In short, it is more merit, and an argument of a more excellent mind, for a man freely to retract when he is in the wrong, than to be overbearing and positive when he is in the right.

A man, then, must be willing to know himself, before he can know himself. He must open his

eyes, if he desires to see; yield to evidence and conviction, though it be at the expense of his judgment, and to the mortification of his vanity.

CHAP. VI.

To be sensible of our false Knowledge, a good step to Self-Knowledge.

VI. 'WOULD you know yourself, take heed and guard against false knowledge.'

See that the 'light that is within you be not darkness;' that your favourite and leading principles be right. Search your furniture, and see what you have to unlearn. For oftentimes there is as much wisdom in casting off some knowledge which we have, as in acquiring that which we have not; which, perhaps, was what made Themistocles reply, when one offered to teach him the art of memory, that 'he had much rather he would teach him the art of forgetfulness.'

A scholar, that hath been all his life collecting of books, will find in his library, at last, a great deal of rubbish; and, as his taste alters, and his judgment improves, he will throw out a great many as trash and lumber, which, it may be, he once valued and paid dear for, and replace them with such as are more solid and useful. Just so should we deal with our understandings; look over the furniture of the mind; separate the chaff from the wheat, which are generally received into it together; and take as much pains to forget what we ought not to have learned, as to retain what we ought not to forget. To read froth and trifles all our life, is the way always to retain a flashy and juvenile turn; and only to contemplate our first

(which is generally our worst) knowledge, cramps the progress of the understanding, and is a great hinderance to a true self-knowledge. In short, would we improve the understanding to the valuable purposes of self-knowledge, we must take as much care what books we read, as what company we keep.

'The pains we take in books or arts, which treat of things remote from the use of life, is a busy idleness. If I study (says Montaigne), it is for no other science than what treats of the knowledge of myself, and instructs me how to live and die well.'—*Rule of Life.*

It is a comfortless speculation, and a plain proof of the imperfection of the human understanding, that, upon a narrow scrutiny into our furniture, we observe a great many things which we think we know, but do not; and a great many things which we do know, but ought not; that of the knowledge which we have been all our lives collecting, a good deal of it is mere ignorance, and a good deal of it worse than ignorance. To be sensible of which is a very necessary step to self-acquaintance.—See part i. ch. 13.

CHAP. VII.

Self-Inspection peculiarly necessary upon some particular occasions.

VII. 'WOULD you know yourself, you must very carefully attend to the frame and emotions of your mind, under some particular incidents and occasions.'

Some sudden accidents which befal you when the mind is most off its guard, will better discover

its secret turn and prevailing disposition, than much greater events you are prepared for. *E. G.*

1. Consider how you behave under any sudden affronts or provocations from men. 'A fool's wrath is presently known;' Prov. xii. 16. *i. e.* a fool is presently known by his wrath.

If your anger be soon kindled, it is a sign that secret pride lies lurking in the heart, which, like gunpowder, takes fire at every spark of provocation that lights upon it. For whatever may be owing to a natural temper, it is certain that pride is the chief cause of frequent and wrathful resentments; for pride and anger are as nearly allied as humility and meekness. 'Only by pride cometh contention;' Prov. xiii. 10. And a man would not know what mud lay at the bottom of his heart, if provocation did not stir it up.

Athenodorus the philosopher, by reason of his old age, begged leave to retire from the court of Augustus, which the emperor granted him; and as Athenodorus was taking his leave of him, 'Remember,' said he, 'Cæsar, whenever you are angry, you say or do nothing, before you have repeated the four-and-twenty letters of the alphabet to yourself.' Whereupon Cæsar catching him by the hand, 'I have need,' says he, 'of your presence still;' and kept him a year longer. This is celebrated by the ancients as a rule of excellent wisdom. But a Christian may prescribe to himself a much wiser, viz. 'When you are angry, answer not till you have repeated the fifth petition of the Lord's prayer, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;' and our Saviour's comment upon it, 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their tres-

passes, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses;' Matt. vi. 14, 15.

It is a just and seasonable thought that of Marcus Antoninus, upon such occasions. 'A man misbehaves himself towards me—what is that to me? The action is his; and the will that sets him upon it is his; and therefore let him look to it. The fault and injury is his, not mine. As for me, I am in the condition Providence would have me, and am doing what becomes me.'—*Meditations*, book v. § 25.

But still this amounts only to a philosophical contempt of injuries, and falls much beneath a Christian forgiveness of them; which, as Christians, we are bound to, and which, if we know ourselves, we shall be disposed to. And therefore, in order to a true self-knowledge, we must always take care to examine and observe in what manner we are affected in such circumstances.

2. How do you behave under a severe and unexpected affliction from the hand of Providence? which is another circumstance, which, when rightly improved, will help us very much to know ourselves.

If there be any habitual discontent or impatience lurking within us, this will draw it forth, especially if the affliction be attended with any of those aggravating circumstances, with which Job's was.

Afflictions are often sent with this intent, to teach us to know ourselves; and, therefore, ought to be carefully improved to this purpose.

And much of the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father is seen by a serious and attentive mind, not only in proportioning the degrees of his corrections to his children's strength, but in adapting the kinds of them to their tempers; afflicting one in one way, another in another, according as

he knows they are most easily wrought upon, and as will be most for their advantage; by which means a slight affliction of one kind may as deeply affect us, and procure as great an advantage to us, as a much greater of another kind.

It is a trite but true observation, that a wise man receives more benefit from his enemies than from his friends, from his afflictions than from his mercies; by which means he makes his enemies in effect his best friends, and his afflictions his greatest mercies. Certain it is, that a man never has an opportunity of taking a more fair and undisguised view of himself than in these circumstances: and therefore, by diligently observing in what manner he is affected at such times, he may make an improvement in the true knowledge of himself, very much to his future advantage, though perhaps not a little to his present mortification; for a sudden provocation from man, or severe affliction from God, may detect something which lay latent and undiscovered so long at the bottom of his heart, that he never once suspected it to have had any place there. Thus the one excited wrath in the meekest man, Psal. cvi. 33, and the other passion in the most patient, Job iii. 3.

By considering, then, in what manner we bear the particular afflictions God is pleased to allot us, and what benefit we receive from them, we may come to a very considerable acquaintance with ourselves.

3. In a time of peace, prosperity, and pleasure, when the soul is generally most unguarded, what is its temper and disposition then?

This is the warm season that nourishes and impregnates the seeds of vanity, self-confidence, and a supercilious contempt of others. If there be such

a root of bitterness in the heart, it will be very apt to shoot forth in the sunshine of uninterrupted prosperity, even after the frost of adversity had nipped it, and, as we thought, killed it.

Prosperity is a trial, as well as adversity, and is commonly attended with more dangerous temptations. And were the mind but as seriously disposed to self-reflection, it would have a greater advantage of attaining a true knowledge of itself under the former than under the latter. But the unhappiness of it is, the mind is seldom rightly turned for such an employment under those circumstances. It has something else to do; has the concerns of the world to mind; and is too much engaged by the things without it, to advert to those within it; and is more disposed to enjoy than examine itself. However, it is a very necessary season for self-examination, and a very proper time to acquire a good degree of self-knowledge, if rightly improved.

Lastly, How do we behave in bad company?

And that is to be reckoned bad company, in which there is no probability of our doing or getting any good, but apparent danger of our doing or getting much harm; I mean, our giving offence to others, by an indiscreet zeal, or incurring guilt to ourselves, by a criminal compliance.

Are we carried down by the torrent of vanity and vice? Will a flash of wit, or a brilliant fancy, make us excuse a profane expression? If so, we shall soon come to relish it, when thus seasoned, and use it ourselves. This is a time when our zeal and wisdom, our fortitude and firmness, are generally put to the most delicate proof, and when we may too often take notice of the unsuspected escapes of folly, fickleness, and indiscretion.

At such seasons as these, then, we may often

discern what lies at the bottom of our hearts, better than we can in the more even and customary scenes of life, when the passions are all calm and still: and therefore, would we know ourselves, we should be very attentive to our frame, temper, disposition, and conduct, upon such occasions.

CHAP. VIII.

To know Ourselves, we must wholly abstract from external Appearances.

VIII. 'WOULD you know yourself, you must, as far as possible, get above the influence of external appearances and circumstances.'

A man is what his heart is. The knowledge of himself is the knowledge of his heart, which is entirely an inward thing; to the knowledge of which, then, outward things (such as a man's condition and circumstances in the world) can contribute nothing; but, on the other hand, if taken into any consideration, will be a great bar and hinderance to him in his pursuit of self-knowledge.

1. Are your circumstances in the world easy and prosperous, take care you do not judge of yourself too favourably on that account.

These things are without you, and therefore can never be the measure of what is within you; and however the world may respect you for them, they do not in the least make you either a wiser or more valuable man.

In forming a true judgment of yourself, then, you must entirely set aside the consideration of your estate and family, your wit, beauty, genius, health, &c. which are all but the appendages or trappings of a man, or a smooth and shining varnish, which may lacquer over the basest metal.

A man may be a good and happy man without these things, and a bad and wretched one with them. Nay, he may have all these, and be the worse for them. They are so far from being good and excellent in themselves, that we often see Providence bestows them upon the vilest of men, and, in kindness, denies them to some of the best. They often are the greatest temptations that can put a man's faith and firmness to the proof. Or,

2. Is your condition in life mean and afflicted? Do not judge the worse of yourself for not having those external advantages which others have.

None will think the worse of you for not having them, but those who think the better of themselves for having them: in both which they shew a very depraved and perverted judgment. These are (τὰ οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) things entirely without us, and out of our power; for which a man is neither the better nor the worse, but according as he uses them: and therefore you ought to be as indifferent to them as they are to you. A good man shines amiably through all the obscurity of his low fortune, and a wicked man is a poor little wretch in the midst of all his grandeur.

Were we to follow the judgment of the world, we should think otherwise of these things, and by that mistake be led into a mistaken notion of ourselves. But we have a better rule to follow, to which if we adhere, the consideration of our external condition in life, be it what it will, will have no undue influence on the mind in its search after self-knowledge.

CHAP. IX.

The practice of Self-Knowledge, a great means to promote it.

IX. 'LET all your self-knowledge be reduced into practice.'

The right improvement of that knowledge we have, is the best way to attain more.

The great end of self-knowledge is self-government, without which it is but a useless speculation. And, as all knowledge is valuable in proportion to its end, so this is the most excellent kind of knowledge, only because the practice of it is of such extensive use, as hath been already shewn.

'Above all other subjects,' says an ancient pious writer, 'study thine own self. For no knowledge, that terminates in curiosity or speculation, is comparable to that which is of use; and of all useful knowledge, that is most so, which consists in the due care and just notions of ourselves. This study is a debt which every one owes himself. Let us not, then, be so lavish, so unjust, as not to pay this debt, by spending some part, at least, if we cannot all, or most, of our time and care upon that which has the most indefeasible claim to it. Govern your passions; manage your actions with prudence; and, where false steps have been made, correct them for the future. Let nothing be allowed to grow headstrong and disorderly; but bring all under discipline. Set all your faults before your eyes; and pass sentence upon yourself with the same severity as you would do upon another, for whom no partiality hath biassed your judgment.'—*St. Bernard's Meditations*, chap. v.

What will our most exact and diligent self-re-

searches avail us, if, after all, we sink into indolence and sloth? Or what will it signify to be convinced that there is a great deal amiss in our deportment and dispositions, if we sit still contentedly under that conviction, without taking one step towards a reformation? It will, indeed, render us but the more guilty in the sight of God. And how sad a thing will it be to have our self-knowledge hereafter rise up in judgment against us!

'Examination is in order to correction and amendment. We abuse it and ourselves, if we rest in the duty without looking farther. We are to review our daily walk, that we may reform it; and, consequently, a daily review will point out to us the subject and matter of our future daily care. This day (saith the Christian, upon his review of things at night) I lost so much time, particularly at ——. I took too great a liberty, particularly in ——. I omitted such an opportunity that might have been improved to better purpose. I mismanaged such a duty—I find such a corruption often working; my old infirmity still cleaves to me; how easily doth this sin beset me! Oh! may I be more attentive for the time to come; more watchful over my heart; take more heed to my ways! May I do so the next day!'—'The knowledge of a distemper is a good step to a cure; at least, it directs to proper methods and applications in order to it. Self-acquaintance leads to self-reformation. He that, at the close of each day, calls over what is past, inspects himself, his behaviour and manners, will not fall into that security, and those uncensured follies, that are so common and so dangerous.'—*Bennet's Christ. Orat.*

And it may not be improper, in order to make us sensible of, and attentive to, some of the more se-

cret faults and *foibles* of our tempers, to pen them down at night, according as they appeared during the transactions of the day; by which means, we shall not only have a more distinct view of that part of our character to which we are generally most blind, but shall be able to discover some defects and blemishes in it, which, perhaps, we never apprehended before. For the wiles and doublings of the heart are sometimes so hidden and intricate, that it requires the nicest care and most steady attention to detect and unfold them.

For instance: 'This day I read an author whose sentiments were very different from mine, and who expressed himself with much warmth and confidence. It excited my spleen, I own, and I immediately passed a severe censure upon him; so that, had he been present, and talked in the same strain, my ruffled temper would have prompted me to use harsh and ungrateful language, which might have occasioned a very unchristian contention. But I now recollect, that, though the author might be mistaken in those sentiments (as I still believe he was), yet, by his particular circumstances in life, and the method of his education, he hath been strongly led into that way of thinking; so that his prejudice is pardonable; but my uncharitableness is not, especially considering, that, in many respects, he has the ascendant of me. This proceeded, then, from uncharitableness, which is one fault of my temper I have to watch against; and which I never was before so sensible of as I am now, upon this recollection. Learn more moderation, and make more allowances for the mistaken opinions of others for the future. Be as charitable to others, who differ from you, as you desire they should be to you, who differ as much from them; for it may

be, you cannot be more assured of being in the right than they are.

'Again: this day I have found myself strongly inclined to put in something by way of abatement to an excellent character given of an absent person by one of his great admirers. It is true, I had the command of myself to hold my tongue, and it is well I had: for the ardour of his zeal would not have admitted the exception (though I still think that, in some degree, it was just), which might have raised a wrangling debate about his character, perhaps at the expense of my own; or, however, occasioned much animosity and contention. But I have since examined the secret spring of that impulse, and find it to be envy, which I was not then sensible of; but my antagonist had certainly imputed it to this; and had he taken the liberty to have told me so, I much question whether I should have had the temper of the philosopher, who, when he was really injured, being asked whether he was angry or no, replied, 'No; but I am considering with myself whether I ought not to be so.' I doubt I should not have had so much composure, but should have immediately resented it as a false and malicious aspersion. But it was certainly envy and nothing else; for the person, who was the object of the encomium, was much my superior in many respects. And the exception that arose to my mind was the only flaw in his character, which nothing but a quick-sighted envy could descry. Take heed, then, of that vice for the future.

'Again: this day I was much surprised to observe in myself the symptoms of a vice, which, of all others, I ever thought myself most clear of, and have always expressed the greatest detestation of

in others; and that is covetousness. For what else could it be that prompted me to withhold my charity from my fellow-creature in distress, on pretence that he was not, in every respect, a proper object; or to dispense it so sparingly to another, who I knew was so, on pretence of having lately been at a considerable expense upon another occasion? This could proceed from nothing else but a latent principle of covetousness; which, though I never before observed in myself, yet it is likely others have. O how inscrutable are the depths and deceits of the human heart!—Had my enemy brought against me a charge of indolence, self-indulgence, or pride, and impatience, or a too quick resentment of affronts and injuries, my own heart must have confirmed the accusation, and forced me to plead guilty. Had he charged me with bigotry, self-opinion, and censoriousness, I should have thought it proceeded from the same temper in himself, having rarely observed any thing like it in my own. But had he charged me with covetousness, I should have taken it for downright calumny, and despised the censure with indignation and triumph. And yet, after all, I find it had been but too true a charge. O! how hard a thing is it to know myself! This, like all other knowledge, the more I have of it, the more sensible I am of my want of it.'

The difficulty of self-government and self-possession arises from the difficulty of a thorough self-acquaintance, which is necessary to it; I say, a thorough self-acquaintance, such as has been already set forth in its several branches. (Part I.) For, as self-government is simply impossible (I mean considered as a virtue), where self-ignorance

prevails, so the difficulty of it will decrease in proportion to the degree in which self-acquaintance increases.

Many, perhaps, may be ready to think this is a paradox, and imagine that they know their predominant passions and foibles very well, but still find it extremely difficult to correct them. But let them examine this point again, and perhaps they may find, that that difficulty arises, either from their defect of self-knowledge (for it is in this, as in other kinds of knowledge, wherein some are very ready to think themselves much greater proficients than they are), or else from their neglect to put in practice that degree of self-knowledge they have. They know their particular failings, yet will not guard against the immediate temptations to them. And they are often betrayed into the immediate temptations which overcome them, because they are ignorant of, or do not guard against, the more remote temptations, which lead them into those which are more immediate and dangerous, which may not improperly be called the temptations to temptations; in observing and guarding against which consists a very necessary part of self-knowledge, and the great art of keeping clear of danger, which, in our present state of frailty, is the best means of keeping clear of sin.

To correct what is amiss, and to improve what is good in us, is supposed to be our hearty desire, and the great end of our self-research. But if we do not endeavour after this, all our labour after self-knowledge will be in vain; nay, if we do not endeavour it, we cannot be said heartily to desire it: 'For there is most of the heart, where there is most of the will; and there is most of the will, where there is most endeavour; and where there is most

endeavour, there is generally most success. So that endeavour must prove the truth of our desire, and desire will generally prove the sincerity of our endeavour.'—*Baxter*. This, I think, we may safely say, without attributing too much to the power of the human will, considering that we are rational and free agents, and considering what effectual assistance is offered to them who seek it, to render their endeavours successful, if they are sincere—Which introduces the subject of the following chapter.

CHAP. X.

Frequent and fervent Prayer the most effectual means for attaining true Self-Knowledge.

LASTLY: 'The last means to self-knowledge which I shall mention is, frequent and devout applications to the Fountain of light, and the Father of our spirits, to assist us in this important study, and give us the true knowledge of ourselves.'

This I mention last, not as the least, but, on the contrary, as the greatest and best means of all, to attain a right and thorough knowledge of ourselves, and the way to render all the rest effectual. And therefore, though it be the last means mentioned, it is the first that should be used.

Would we know ourselves, we must often converse, not only with ourselves in meditation, but with God in prayer; in the lowliest prostration of soul, beseeching the Father of our spirits to discover them to us; 'in whose light we may see light,' where, before, there was nothing but darkness, to make known to us the depth and devices of our heart. For, without the grace and influence of his divine illuminations and instructions, our hearts

will, after all our care and pains to know them, most certainly deceive us. And self-love will so prejudice the understanding, as to keep us still in self-ignorance.

The first thing we are to do, in order to self-knowledge, is to assure ourselves, that our hearts 'are deceitful above all things.' And the next is, to remember, that 'the Lord searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins,' Jer. xvii. 9. *i. e.* that he, the (Καρδιογνωστης) 'searcher of all hearts,' (1 Chron. xxviii. 9.) hath a perfect knowledge of them, deceitful as they are. Which consideration, as it suggesteth to us the strongest motive to induce us to labour after a true knowledge of them ourselves, so it directs us, at the same time, how we may attain this knowledge; viz. by a humble and importunate application to him, to whom alone they are known, to make them known to us. And this, by the free and near access which his holy Spirit hath to our spirits, he can effectually do various ways, viz. by fixing our attentions; by quickening our apprehensions; removing our prejudices (which, like a false medium before the eye of the mind, prevent its seeing things in a just and proper light); by mortifying our pride; strengthening the intellective and reflecting faculties; and enforcing upon the mind a lively sense and knowledge of its greatest happiness and duty; and so awakening the soul from that carnal security and indifference about its best interests, which a too serious attention to the world is apt to betray it into.

Besides, prayer is a very proper expedient for attaining self-knowledge, as the actual engagement of the mind in this devotional exercise is, in itself, a great help to it: for the mind is never in a better frame, than when it is intently and devoutly

engaged *in this duty.* It has then the best apprehensions *of God,* the truest notions of itself, and the *justest sentiments* of earthly things; the clearest *conceptions of its* own weakness, and the deepest *sense of its* own vileness; and consequently is *in the best* disposition that can be, to receive a true and right knowledge of itself.

And, oh! could we but always think of ourselves *in* such a manner, or could we but always be in a disposition to think of ourselves in such a manner, as we sometimes do in the fervour of our humilia*tions* before the throne of grace, how great a pro*gress* should we soon make in this important sci*ence!* Which evidently shews the necessity of *such* devout and humble engagements of the soul, and how happy a means they are to attain a just self-acquaintance.

And now, reader, whoever thou art that hast taken the pains to peruse these sheets, whatever be thy circumstances or condition in the world, whatever thy capacity or understanding, whatever thy occupations and engagements, whatever thy favourite sentiments and principles, or whatever religious sect or party thou espousest, know for certain, that thou hast been deeply interested in what thou hast been reading, whether thou hast attended to it or no: for it is of no less concern to thee than the security of thy peace and usefulness in this world, and thy happiness in another; and relates to all thy interests, both as a man and a Christian. Perhaps thou hast seen something of thine own image in the glass that has now been held up to thee; and wilt thou go away, and soon 'forget what manner of person thou art?' Perhaps thou

hast met with some things thou dost not well understand or approve; but shall that take off thine attention from those things thou dost understand and approve, and art convinced of the necessity of? If thou hast received no improvement, no benefit from what thou hast been reading, read it over again. The same thought, you know, often impresses one more at one time than another; and we sometimes receive more knowledge and profit by the second perusal of a book than by the first. And I would fain hope, that thou wilt find something in this that may set thy thoughts on work, and which, by the blessing of God, may make thee more observant of thy heart and conduct; and, in consequence of that, a more solid, serious, wise, established Christian.

But will you, after all, deal by this book you have now read, as you have dealt by many sermons you have heard? pass your judgment upon it according to your received and established set of notions; and condemn or applaud it only as it is agreeable or disagreeable to them; and commend or censure it only as it suits or does not suit your particular taste; without attending to the real weight, importance, and necessity of the subject, abstracted from those views? Or will you be barely content with the entertainment and satisfaction which some parts of it may possibly have given you; to assent to the importance of the subject, and justness of the sentiment, or the propriety of some of the observations you have been reading, and so dismiss all without any farther concern about the matter? Believe it, O Christian reader, if this be all the advantage you gain by it, it were scarce worth while to have confined yourself so long to the perusal of it. It has aimed, it has sin-

cerely aimed, to do you a much greater benefit; to bring you to a better acquaintance with one you express a particular regard for, and who is capable of being the best friend, or the worst enemy, you have in the world; and that is yourself. It was designed to convince you, that, would you live and act consistently, either as a man or a Christian, you must know yourself; and to persuade you, under the influence of the foregoing motives, and by the help of the forementioned directions, to make self-knowledge the great study, and self-government the great business, of your life. In which resolution may Almighty God confirm you; and in which great business may his grace assist you, against all future discouragements and distractions! With him I leave the success of the whole; to whom be glory and praise for ever!

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE CONSIDERED.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED, SOME

MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS.

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

CHAP I.

'WHAT shall I do to be saved?' was a question which the trembling and astonished jailer put to Paul and Silas, when he saw the prison-doors opened in a miraculous manner; a question of the utmost moment and importance, and which it nearly concerns us all to be well resolved in. For, if there be a life after this, and we do not die like the 'beasts that perish;' if death does not put a final period to our beings, but when this short life is ended, we enter upon the regions of eternity, and shall be for ever happy or miserable, according as we demean ourselves in this short time of trial and probation; if this be the state and condition of mankind (as the voice of reason, the dictates of conscience, and the Holy Scriptures, do loudly proclaim it is), how does it behove every one of us to inquire what we must do to attain everlasting life; and to consider whether we are in the way that leads to heaven and immortality; or, if we have been so unhappy to wander out of it, how we may recover and return to it again!

This is an inquiry that deserves our utmost diligence and attention. For if we are ignorant of the will of God, or, knowing it, will not follow or be

led by that unerring light, but suffer ourselves to be hurried away by our unruly passions in the pursuit of the things of this life, we are wretched and miserable, blind and naked, notwithstanding all our attainments: and we shall one day be convinced, to our sorrow, that there is no folly like that of preferring things temporal to things eternal. Whatever 'the children of this world' may think, and how much soever they may applaud their own wisdom in contriving schemes to be rich and great, yet, if their chief care and concern is taken up about these things, it is certain they will be found 'fools' when weighed in the balance of true wisdom.

He that is truly wise will consider that he has a soul as well as a body to take care of; a spiritual and immortal substance, which can never die; but when enlarged from that prison in which it is now confined, must live for ever, either in happiness or misery. Shall we then be so foolish as to confine our ambitious pursuits within the narrow limits of this world without considering what will be the condition of our souls hereafter? Shall we labour and toil for 'the meat that perisheth,' and be cold about the momentous concerns of eternity? Shall we spare no pains in order to increase our temporal estates, and to lay up 'goods for many years,' when we know not but 'this night our souls may be required of us?' And if we have made no provision for their everlasting welfare, what will it avail us that we have been rich and great in this world?

'The fashion of this world passeth away,' and all the glory and splendour of it will in a little time have an end. How great then is the folly of that man, and how deplorable will his condition

be, who, instead of 'seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, in the first place,' has consumed his days in seeking after the honours and riches of this world, and has worn himself out in the pursuit of those things which are of no value in the sight of God? Wretched stupidity! 'What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' Matt. xvi. 26. Time bears no proportion to eternity. The most exquisite pleasures of this life, which at best are of a short continuance, can never compensate for the loss of that happiness which 'God has prepared for them that love him.' How miserably then will that man be deceived, who places all his hopes and happiness in the poor and empty satisfactions of a sensual life; who looks no farther than the present time; and lives as if he cared not what became of him hereafter, provided he may but enjoy 'the pleasures of sin for a season!'

But some, perhaps, may ask, Where is the man so abandoned to folly and madness, as to be content, for the sake of a present short-lived happiness, to be miserable for ever hereafter? I wish, indeed, there were none such: but, alas! there are too many that make this sad choice. Not that any one chooses evil for the sake of evil, or prefers misery before happiness (for a desire of happiness is inseparable from our nature); but in the Scripture account of things, he is said to 'choose' destruction who walks in the broad way that leads to it. For God has been pleased to 'set before us life and death, blessing and cursing;' Deut. xxx. 19.—Rewards on the one hand, to encourage our obedience; and punishments on the other, to deter us from sin. As the man, therefore, who obeys the commandments of God chooses 'life,' so he that

deliberately trangresses them chooses 'death;' that death which God has threatened to the sinner, even 'death eternal.' For the 'wages of sin is death;' and he that chooses the one (let his pretences be what they may), must be said to choose the other; because he knows (at least it is his own fault if he does not know) that 'God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil;' Rom. ii. 6—9.

See, then, what a wretched piece of folly the sinner is guilty of (how wise soever he may think himself, and how much soever he may despise the sober part of mankind), when he first enters upon a life of wickedness. For he is then evidencing to all the world, that life and death being set before him, he has determined his choice to the latter; a choice so absurd and unaccountable, that, did not experience convince us it is often made, we could hardly think it possible for a rational creature to be so blind. O blessed God! hast thou set before us happiness and misery, 'joys unspeakable, and full of glory,' on the one hand, and torments endless and intolerable on the other; hast thou given us the light of reason to guide us, and superadded that of thy Holy Spirit to illuminate and instruct us; hast thou implanted in our natures a dread of, and aversion from, pain and misery, and an insatiable and never-ceasing thirst after happiness; and it is possible for us, after all this, to be so blind and senseless, such enemies to our own souls, and so regardless of their eternal welfare, as to pre-

fer the dark ways of sin and misery before those blessed paths that lead to the bright regions of bliss and glory! Alas! such wretched fools are too many among us, who, notwithstanding all that thou hast done for us, will not hearken, nor be advised, but run headlong into the ways of sin and destruction!

This, indeed, is a melancholy consideration: and what shall we say to awaken men out of this fatal lethargy, and to inspire them with a just sense of their danger? what, but entreat them to consider, that, 'unless they repent, they will certainly perish?' For the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: and, though God 'winked at the times of ignorance,' yet 'now he commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead;' Acts xvii. 30, 31.—In that awful day, sinners 'will in vain call to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.' For, when 'the great day of his wrath is come, who shall then be able to stand?' Rev. vi. 16, 17.—Who, indeed, shall be able to stand before the face of an incensed God, and hear him pronounce that dreadful sentence, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? Ah! who can bear an eternity of horror and despair?' 'who can dwell' with implacable fiends 'in everlasting burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14.

These are considerations of infinite moment and concern, and sufficiently shew us the necessity of

'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living righteously, soberly, and godlily, in this present world.' But, because the weightiest truths, when their consequences are not immediately felt, are too apt to be disregarded; I shall enlarge a little upon the great importance of a religious life, by endeavouring to prove these three things:

I. That there is no solid happiness to be attained in this life, but in the practice of religion.

II. That as religion is the only thing that can make us happy while we live, so there is nothing but a good life can give us any comfortable prospect when we come to die.

III. That a conscientious observance of the duties of religion will not only make us live happily and die comfortably, but, what is infinitely beyond all this, will most certainly be rewarded with eternal happiness in the life to come.

First, then, I shall endeavour to prove, 'that there is no solid happiness to be attained in this life but in the practice of religion.'

It has ever been the great artifice of the devil, to possess the minds of unthinking men with an opinion that religion is a sour, morose, ill-natured thing; an enemy to whatever is pleasant and cheerful; and that whoever engages in the practice of it, must from that instant renounce all the pleasures and enjoyments of this life. But, as the devil is 'the father of lies,' it is no wonder that he sets every thing before us in a false and deceitful light. It was by these means he deceived our first unhappy parents, and it is by the same methods he endeavours to betray their too credulous posterity. He is continually representing 'evil as good, and good for evil; putting darkness for light, and light for darkness.' He knows that there is such a beauty

and comeliness in religion, as no one can behold it but with love and admiration; and therefore he endeavours to draw a veil over its lustre, and to raise in our minds frightful ideas concerning it. And too many, alas! are misled by such false and unjust representations.

But would men be persuaded once to make the experiment; would they forsake the dangerous paths of sin, and walk in the way that leads to everlasting happiness; would they retire from the noise and tumult of a loose and disordered life, and listen to the still voice of reason and religion; they would quickly find how grossly they have been cheated, and wonder how it was possible they should so long have been deceived. They would soon discover, and then admire, 'the beauty of holiness,' and be thoroughly convinced that there is no pleasure like that of a good conscience; no real and solid happiness but what results from a life of virtue and holiness. They would then bless the happy change they had made, and would not part with their interest in heaven for the greatest enjoyments this world could give them. All those empty pleasures which once captivated and ensnared them, would then appear mean and contemptible; and nothing would be thought of any real value, but what sets them forward in the way of salvation.

O, happy man! (whosoever thou be) that hast made this noble trial, and, by a true and sincere repentance, art restored to the favour and love of God! Thou hast 'turned away thine eyes from beholding vanity,' and canst now look up with confidence to God, and relish the pleasures of a virtuous life. How is thy mind filled with love and joy and admiration, when thou considerest, that, by the grace and goodness of God, thou art rescued

out of the jaws of the devouring lion, and art delivered from fear and shame, and self-condemnation; the sure and miserable attendents of a guilty conscience!

We may have some idea of the happiness of such a man, by considering what is the pleasure of a redeemed captive when restored to his country, his liberty, and his friends; or, of a mariner got safe to shore after a storm, wherein he was every moment in expectation of being swallowed up by the deep. And yet it must be owned, the comparison falls infinitely short: for what slavery is so great as a soul under the bondage and dominion of sin? or, what are the most terrible dangers of the sea, when compared with those to which the sinner is continually exposed?

But have not some, it may be asked, made trial of religion, and yet have found no satisfaction therein; as may be concluded from their returning again to their former course of life? It is true, there are some instances (and sad ones they are, God knows) of some, who, 'after they have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have yet fallen away,' and entered again into a life of sin and debauchery. But has this been owing to a dislike of religion? By no means; but rather to a want of care in not avoiding the company which has formerly seduced them; or to a forgetfulness, or at least to a neglect, of the vows and resolutions they have made: or, it may be, they have fallen under some violent temptation, which they have not so vigorously resisted as they might and ought to have done. Instances, however, of this kind, I trust, are but rare. Whereas, on the other hand, how many are there, who, having for-

saken the company and conversation of the wicked, and having lamented the folly and madness of their past lives, have, from being the slaves of sin and Satan, become the servants of God? These will tell you, from their own experience, that they have found more true peace and satisfaction in conquering one vicious habit, than they ever met with in the most sensual enjoyment; that all their past sinful pleasures yield them now no other fruits than those bitter ones of shame and remorse; and that in religion, on the contrary, they find such a spring of comfort continually refreshing their souls, as they would not part with it for all this world can possibly give them; that they taste such a pleasure in the service of God, as makes them, with holy David, desire 'to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their lives, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple;' (Psalm xxvii. 4.) and, like him, esteem it better to 'be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord (one of the meanest of God's servants), than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness,' amid the delights and pleasures of a wicked and deluded world.

In fact, nothing can give a man so exqusite a satisfaction, as to reflect upon the actions of a well-spent life; to consider that he has made God his friend, and secured an interest in the favour of Him, who is the eternal source and fountain of all good; infinite in mercy and loving-kindness, as well as in power: not only able, but willing and ready, to help and assist him in all difficulties: a Being to whom he may have recourse under every trial and temptation, under the greatest calamities and troubles of life; to whom he may lay open all his wants and infirmities, pour forth all his sorrows and afflictions, and may at all times with confidence

look up, as being assured that he has a powerful intercessor in heaven, Jesus Christ the righteous, 'in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;' Col. i. 14; 'and who is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them;' Heb. vii. 25.—I say, for a man to consider these important truths; to think that he is answering the end of his creation; that he is doing the work for which he was sent into the world; that he is become a 'member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven:' how must such thoughts cheer and refresh his soul with a solid, substantial, and lasting pleasure! in comparison whereof, all the vain and empty enjoyments of this world are as nothing.

But then, on the contrary, for a wicked man to reflect, that 'the face of the Lord is against them that do evil,' Psalm xxxiv. 16, and consequently that he is in the number of those against whom God has declared his displeasure; that, instead of 'working out his salvation with fear and trembling,' he is daily 'heaping up to himself wrath against the day of wrath;' and though (it may be) he is now 'clothed with purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day;' though he may at present live in all the gaiety and splendour, the pomp and luxury of a great fortune; yet there will come a time (and, for aught he knows, it may not be many moments off) when he shall be stripped of all his pleasures and enjoyments, and want even 'a drop of water to cool his tongue:' surely, such considerations as these must strike the sinner with horror and amazement, and, like Belshazzar, when he saw the hand-writing upon the wall, make him tremble even in the midst of his greatest mirth and jollity.

And can a man with such impressions on his mind (and these, or something like these, will be sure to haunt the sinner) be said to be happy? Are the stings of conscience, the terrors of an Almighty Judge, and the dreadful expectations of God's vengeance, consistent with a state of satisfaction? Alas! the libertine may flatter himself as he pleases, and think to deceive others, by putting on an air of gaiety and pleasantness; but it is certain, his mind can never be long at rest, while he carries about him a faithful monitor, that will be continually upbraiding him for his folly and madness; representing to him the dangers to which he is exposed, and crossing him, as it were, in his way, while he is in full pursuit of his unlawful pleasures. And though he may, perhaps, be able sometimes to silence the voice of this troublesome companion, by mere dint of noise and extravagance; yet, when his passions abate (as they will not always bear to be upon the stretch), and the man grows cool, he will find the upbraidings of his conscience return upon him with the greater violence. The shame and anguish, the horror and confusion, that he will then feel, will infinitely overbalance all the satisfactions he can meet with in the enjoyments of his sinful pleasures.

I own, indeed, this is not the case of every sinner. A man, by a long course of wickedness, may arrive at such a hardened state, as to be incapable of any virtuous impressions; his soul may be seared, as it were, with a hot iron, and be fallen into such a deep and fatal lethargy, as nothing, perhaps, shall be able to awaken it, till it comes to feel the very torments of the damned. But no one, I believe, will think this to be a state of happiness.

The truth is, if we consider a wicked man, with respect to this world only, abstractedly from what

will be his portion hereafter, we shall find, that there are many and great evils to which he is exposed, besides the torments of a guilty conscience. Are not pains and aches, rottenness and diseases, the natural effects of lust and intemperance; poverty and broken fortunes, the certain consequences of pride and prodigality? Does not passion, and anger, and revenge, frequently expose men to mischievous, and many times fatal quarrels and contentions? Does not robbery, theft, and murder, bring upon others a shameful and untimely end? How many evils are there in the world, that are the immediate effects of men's vices? 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? (says St. James:) come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?' James iv. 1.—And from the same fatal source are derived many of those other evils and calamities which some men labour under. If we trace them to their original, we shall find them to be the natural fruits of men's lusts and passions; to have proceeded from their covetous and ambitious desires, and the gratification of their unruly lusts and appetites. Indeed, how can it be otherwise, if we consider, 'That the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked;' Prov. iii. 33; and that 'evil pursueth sinners?' Prov. xiii. 21.—How can any thing but misery attend *him* who has provoked the wrath of an Almighty God?

Let us now consider what is the lot and portion of good men in this world; and whether the practice of virtue and righteousness is not the most likely way to promote present as well as future happiness, and to make our pilgrimage here on earth a state of tolerable ease and comfort.

Solomon had as much experience of the pleasures of the world as ever man had, and tried as

many ways to make himself happy as his heart could devise; having 'kept nothing from his eyes that they desired, nor withheld his heart from any joy;' Eccles. ii. 10; and yet, when he came to cast up the account, he found this to be the sum of it, 'that all was vanity and vexation of spirit.' Accordingly, when he is instructing his son in the ways of true happiness, he advises him to 'get wisdom and understanding.' For 'wisdom,' says he, 'is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding;' Prov. iii. 13.—And, as an encouragement to do so, he tells him, that 'happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;' Prov. iii. 13, &c.—This wisdom and understanding, which he recommends as a treasure of so great value, is not 'the wisdom of this world,' (for that is 'foolishness with God,' 1 Cor. iii. 19.) but it is 'the wisdom that cometh from above,' which will make us wise unto salvation: the wisdom of living in the fear and love of God, and in a strict obedience to his commandments. 'The fear of the Lord,' says he, 'is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding;' Prov. ix. 10. Or, as it is in Job, 'Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.'

Behold, then, the excellence of religion! it not only secures to us a reversion of endless happiness,

but makes our lives at present easy and delightful. The very paths of religion are pleasant, as well as the end to which they lead. It is true, vice has its present pleasures as well as virtue: but then there is this difference between them; the pleasures of sin are weak, short-lived, and only varnished over; they begin and end almost in the same moment, and can never be purchased but at the expense of much succeeding trouble, shame, and self-condemnation. Whereas, those which result from a holy and religious life are substantial, sincere, steady, and secure: they leave no disgust upon the mind; no loathings and dislike; are neither accompanied with shame, nor followed with remorse or sadness —those bitter allays to all sinful gratifications. 'We may talk of pleasures and enjoyments,' says a great prelate of our church; 'but no man ever truly found them till he became acquainted with God, and was made sensible of his love, and partaker of his heavenly favours, and lived in an entire friendship and communion with him.' No, certainly; religion is the only happiness of a rational creature, the only thing that can give us any true and real satisfaction. All other pleasures are, at best, but short and transitory; but in religion we find a delight and satisfaction which is solid, substantial, and lasting; a delight that grows and improves under thought and reflection.

'Whenever,' to use the words of another excellent person, 'an action is good and virtuous, it is not only natural, but it carries with it a felicity flowing from, and essential to, the very nature of it. Paternal, conjugal, filial affection; are they not full of delight? Justice, friendship, beneficence, all the offices of humanity, and the whole train of virtues; does not the exercise of them ad-

minister the most sincere and lasting joy? The propensity there is in us toward them, and the satisfaction there is in the doing of them, does, in dispositions not debauched, lead, most irresistibly, to the practice of them. We have, when we are about them, no boding, misgiving thoughts, no forbidding whispers, no secret reluctancy: comfort, complacency of mind, and a gratulating conscience, always accompany such actions.'

What a perpetual source of joy and comfort is a good conscience! It gladdens the heart, cheers and refreshes the soul, and fills the mind with a constant serenity and cheerfulness, which is infinitely to be preferred before the noisy mirth of fools and madmen. He that is possessed of this inestimable jewel, has a treasure greater than all the riches of the Indies: a treasure which he always carries about with him, and which neither the malice of the devil, nor the wickedness of men, can rob him of; and so long as he retains this fund of joy and comfort (as he may always do, unless he is wretchedly wanting to himself), he can never be truly miserable. For a good conscience, as it gives a relish to all our outward enjoyments, so it abates and takes off the edge of the sharpest affliction; and not only enables a man to bear up under present evils, but fortifies him against the dread and apprehension of future ones. It arms him with courage and resolution, and gives him such a firmness and presence of mind, as makes him able to endure the greatest shock. Solomon observes, that 'the wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion;' Prov. xxviii. 1.—And the holy Psalmist tells us, that a good man 'shall not be afraid of any evil tidings; for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the

Lord;' Psalm cxii. 7.—'The Lord,' says he, 'is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?' Psalm xxvii. 1. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me;' Psalm xxiii. 4.—What, indeed, should *he* fear whose soul is anchored on the rock of ages; 'who has the God of Jacob for his help; whose hope is in the Lord his God?' Psalm cxlvi. 5.—He knows that he is in the hands of a most gracious and merciful Father, and is fully persuaded that 'all things shall work together for good to them that love him.' He is assured, that 'the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him; upon them that hope in his mercy to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine;' Psalm xxxiii. 18, 19.—And therefore he can rejoice in God, even in the midst of trouble and affliction, when he considers, that as his afflictions come from the hands of a good and gracious Being, who 'does not willingly afflict the children of men;' so he knows, that 'as the time is short,' they can be of no long continuance, and that, if he makes a right use of them, 'they will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

See then the folly and madness of those 'that take not God for their strength, but trust to the multitude of their riches, and strengthen themselves in their wickedness,' Psalm lii. 7, and think by these means to be fortified against the evils of this life! Alas! there are numberless calamities, from which wealth and power can never shelter us: and therefore if a man withdraws his trust in God, and takes sanctuary in the strength of his wickedness, he will find himself miserably mistaken when

the day of adversity comes upon him. The weight of sin superadded to that of temporal evils, is a burden greater than any person is able to bear. It is certain, whatever the great ones of this world may think, nothing can alleviate the force of worldly troubles but a good life. It is that, and that only, which is a sufficient counterpoise to balance the weight of any great affliction. Nothing else is sufficient to support a man in 'the evil days of his pilgrimage,' and to sustain his spirit under the severer calamities of this life. All other experiments, how promising soever, will be found vain and ineffectual. The consciousness of having, in some measure, lived holily and unblameably, will make him look up with a cheerful assurance to the great Supporter of his being, enable him to see through the darkest clouds of sorrow and affliction, and behold with an eye of faith that heavenly country to which he is travelling, and where he hopes shortly to arrive. And this, though it will not wholly remove the afflictions which God is sometimes pleased, for wise and good ends, to send upon some men in this life, nor make us insensible of the pangs that attend them; yet it will mightily lessen and enervate their force, and enable us to bear up under them with courage and even cheerfulness. For, how strong a consolation must it be for a good man, under bodily pains, or grief of mind, to contemplate a state where there shall be 'no more sorrow, no more pain, and where all tears shall be wiped' for ever 'from his eyes?' Or, if he is under the pressure of want and extreme necessity, how must it support and relieve his sinking spirits to consider, that he has a Father in Heaven, 'who will never leave him, nor forsake him,' Heb. xiii. 5, how much soever he may at present think

fit to deprive him of outward comforts! and that there is no person in the world so great, so prosperous, or so happy, but that (having a little patience) he himself shall be more so.

The sum of what I have said upon this head is so elegantly expressed by the author of an essay 'on the Omnipresence of God,' that I believe I shall leave this reflection more strongly upon my reader's mind, if I give him the words of an unknown, but excellent person.

'How happy,' says he, speaking of the intercourse there is between God and the souls of good men, 'how happy is an intellectual being, who, by prayer and meditation, by virtue and good works, opens this communication between God and his own soul! Though the whole creation frowns upon him, and all nature looks black about him, he has his light and support within him, that are able to cheer his mind, and bear him up in the midst of all those horrors which encompass him. He knows that his Helper is at hand, and is always nearer to him than any thing else can be which is capable of annoying or terrifying him. In the midst of calumny or contempt, he attends to that Being, who whispers better things within his soul, and whom he looks upon as his defender, his glory, and "the lifter-up of his head." In his deepest solitude and retirement, he knows that he is in company with the greatest of Beings; and perceives, within himself, such real sensations of his presence, as are more delightful than any thing that can be met with in the conversation of his creatures. Even in the hour of death he considers the pains of his dissolution to be nothing else but the breaking down of that partition which stands between his soul and the sight of that Being, who is always

present with him, and is about to manifest itself to him in fulness of joy.

'If we would be thus happy,' to go on with the words of this pious author, 'and thus sensible of our Maker's presence from the secret effects of his mercy and goodness, we must keep such a watch over all our thoughts, that, in the language of the Scripture, "his soul may have pleasure in us:" we must take care not to grieve his Holy Spirit, but endeavour to make the meditations of our hearts always acceptable in his sight, that he may delight thus to reside and dwell in us. The light of nature could direct Seneca to this doctrine, in a very remarkable passage among his epistles: "Sacer inest in nobis spiritus, bonorum malorumque custos et observator; et quemadmodum nos illum tractamus, ita et ille nos. There is a Holy Spirit residing in us, who watches and observes both good and evil men, and will treat us after the same manner that we treat him." But 'I shall conclude,' says the same author, 'this discourse with those more emphatical words in divine revelation: "If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."'

I have thus far considered the effects of a good life. First, as it fills our minds with joy, and peace, and comfort, and delivers us from those uneasy reflections which haunt and torment the sinner; and, secondly, as it is a means to secure us from those evils which are the immediate consequences of sin; and supports us under such afflictions as it pleases God, many times, to send upon good men in this world. I shall now consider it with respect to some other advantages it hath above that of a wicked course of actions: and I trust it will fully

appear, that there is nothing so likely to secure a man's happiness in this world, as a strict observance of the precepts and duties of religion.

St. Peter lays it down as an undoubted truth, that whosoever desires to live happily, must live holily. 'He that will love life,' says he, 'and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil and do good;' 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11.—And the reason that temporal prosperity is so likely to be the lot and portion of the religious man, is, because 'the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil;' 1 Pet. iii. 12, and Psalm xxxiv. 15, 16.—It is very evident, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that the providence of God does very much interest itself in the care and support of good men in this world. 'O, taste and see,' says the holy Psalmist, 'how gracious the Lord is! Blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear ye the Lord, ye that are his saints; for they that fear him lack nothing. The lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good;' Psalm xxxiv. 8—10.—How remarkable are the words of the wise son of Sirach to the same purpose! 'Look at the generations of old,' says he; 'did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise that called upon him?' Ecclesiasticus ii. 10.—Add to this that observation of holy David: 'I have been young, and now am old; yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread;' Psalm xxxvii. 25.—On the contrary, 'I have seen,' says he, 'the ungodly in great power, and flourishing

like a green bay-tree: I went by, and lo! he was gone: I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found;' Psalm xxxvii. 35, 36. The contemplation of this watchful providence of God over good men made the devout Psalmist resolve and say, 'I will always give thanks unto the Lord; his praise shall ever be in my mouth;' Psalm xxxiv. 1.

It is certain that God is a being of infinite purity and holiness: and as he must therefore hate iniquity with the utmost abhorrence, so there is no doubt but a serious and conscientious observance of the duties of religion will recommend a man to his favour and protection. He that 'feeds the fowls of the air, clothes the grass of the field,' and is of a nature so diffusively bountiful, 'as to make his sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good, and sends his rain both on the just and on the unjust,' will, undoubtedly, in a more peculiar manner, bless the labours of an honest and industrious man, and provide for those that fear him and keep his commandments. I would not be understood to say, that never any wicked man hath prospered, nor any good man been unsuccessful in this world: it pleases God, many times, for wise and good ends, to suffer the righteous to fall into great perplexities and distresses. However, since the Scriptures assure us, that 'the Lord will bless the righteous, and compass him with favour as with a shield;' Psalm v. 12.—'that wealth and riches shall be in the house of him that feareth the Lord, and delighteth in his commandments;' Psalm cxii. 1, 3.—'that blessings shall be upon his head; that the house of the righteous shall stand, and the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish;' Prov. x. 6; xii. 7; xiv. 11.—'that it shall be well with them that fear God;' Eccles. viii. 12.—and in short,

that 'godliness hath the promise of the life that now is,' as well as 'of that which is to come;' 1 Tim. iv. 8.—we may certainly conclude, that a strict observance of the duties of the Christian religion is the most likely way a man can take to thrive and prosper in the world, and to make his life comfortable and happy.

And of this truth we may be convinced, not only from the testimony of Scripture, but from the reason and nature of things. For, let any one consider, and tell me, whether he, who is just and true in all his dealings, honest and sincere in all his professions, and faithful to his word and promises; who is diligent and industrious in his calling; who makes it his constant rule to do to all men as he would they should do to him; and is so far from endeavouring to overreach and defraud his neighbour, that he chooses rather to forego the greatest gain, than purchase it at the expense of the least injustice: I say, let any one tell me, whether it is not much more probable that such a man should enlarge his fortune in the world, than he that acts the very reverse of all this; that practises all the art of cheating and lying, of overreaching and circumvention, and stoops to every thing, how base and dishonest soever, which he thinks will turn to his present profit; that considers not so much how honest and upright his actions are, as how profitable; and cares not what his neighbour suffers by his injustice, if he himself does but get by it? Such a man, when he comes to be known (as he will not be able long to conceal himself), will certainly lose his credit and reputation; he will become hated and despised, and every person will be afraid to have any dealings with him. On the other hand, the honest and upright man (beside the bless-

ing of God, which he cannot fail of) will be sure to meet with all the love and esteem of all that know him: he will have few, if any, enemies; but will have many friends, and those some of the wisest and best of men, who will be always ready to assist him, and glad of every opportunity of promoting his interest and happiness.

2. Another great blessing of life, and which gives a relish to all other enjoyments, is health: and who is more likely to obtain this blessing than the religious man? For, will not temperance, sobriety, and virtue (duties which he practises), conduce more to a sound and vigorous constitution of body, than surfeiting and drunkenness, lust and intemperance; the mischievous effects of which are too visible to be denied? 'Who hath woe?' said Solomon, 'who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine;' Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. What pains and diseases have some men brought upon themselves, merely by their excesses and debaucheries! diseases which have not terminated with their own lives, but have been entailed upon their unhappy posterity! And how can it be otherwise, unless it should please God to change the nature of things? For if men will run into those excesses which inflame and corrupt their blood, it is no wonder that gout or dropsy, or some more immediately fatal distemper, should proceed from such disorders. And when a vicious or debauched parent has brought rottenness into his own bones, though the children may be free from the vices of the father, yet they frequently feel all their lives the mischievous effects of his transgressions.

3. Again, a cheerful and contented mind, is another great blessing of life; for without it, nothing in this world can make us happy. And by what means shall a man obtain this, but by the practice of religion? That will teach him to resign his will to God, to submit to all the dispensations of his providence, and to be patient and easy, cheerful and satisfied, under every disappointment and trouble he may meet with; as knowing that God is the sovereign disposer of all things; a being of infinite goodness, kindness, and love; that 'he does not willingly afflict the children of men,' but makes 'every thing work together for good to them that love him.' And how quiet, easy, and contented, must such a man be under all events! He has learned, with St. Paul, 'how to abound, and how to want;' and as he is not puffed up with the one, so neither is he cast down when it pleases God to send the other; but goes through the world with a calm, even, and contented mind, undisturbed by that inquietude, impatience, and discontent, from which a proud, envious, and ambitious man is seldom, if ever, free.

4. Peace is another great blessing, highly conducive to the happiness of life; and to this the religious man has the justest claim. He considers, that 'if God so loved us, as to send his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, we ought also to love one another;' 1 John iv. 10, 11; and therefore he is an enemy to no man, but kind, and good-natured, and obliging to all; and if any person is so unreasonable as to reward him evil for good (as the Psalmist complains some had done to himself), yet, in imitation of his blessed Saviour, whose example he continually sets before him, he does 'good to them that hate him, and prays for them that de-

spitefully use him, and persecute him;' Matt. v. 44. 'When he is reviled, he reviles not again; when he suffers, he threatens not, but committeth himself to him that judgeth righteously;' 1 Pet. ii. 23.—He resolves, as St. Paul advises, 'to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice;' Ephes. iv. 31. and endeavours to attain that 'wisdom which is from above;' which is 'first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits;' James iii. 17.—This principle, of love, and charity, and good-will to mankind, as it renders the mind quiet and easy, calm and composed; so it makes a man not only happy in himself, but a blessing and comfort to all about him; and consequently attracts the love, esteem, and admiration of all those that see and feel the kind and benign influences of so divine a temper. 'Great peace,' says the Psalmist, 'have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them;' Psalm cxix. 165. And the prophet assures us, 'that the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effects of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever;' Isaiah xxxii. 17.

But now, on the other hand, the life of an angry and revengeful man is all storm and tempest: he is 'like a troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;' Isaiah lvii. 20.—He is a stranger to peace, and all the blessed fruits and effects of it; for, where 'envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work;' James iii. 16.—His mind is continually restless and uneasy, agitated to and fro with the violent force of unruly passions, which lead him on from one evil to another, and frequently hurry him into those that are of a very mischievous consequence. What misery

and torment must a man feel, who is possessed with a spirit so directly contrary to that of the Gospel! How little can he taste of that true happiness of life, whose mind is always discordant and out of tune! He may, perhaps, possess a great deal of the good things of this world, but can have very little enjoyment: for, what comfort can he find from any thing who has no peace in his own mind; who is at enmity with himself, and with almost every one else; and is capable of being put out of humour by every trifling, cross accident? Is it possible for a man of such a temper to be happy, even in the midst of the greatest prosperity? No, certainly: it is the meek-spirited that our Saviour hath pronounced blessed: 'they shall inherit the earth,' Matt. v. 5. and 'be refreshed,' as the Psalmist speaks, 'in the multitude of peace,' and shall find a real comfort in whatever they possess; which, though it should happen to be but little, yet, being enjoyed in peace and quiet, and with a contented mind, will undoubtedly yield them a much greater and truer satisfaction, than a man of a contrary disposition can reap from large possessions and ample revenues.

5. I shall mention but one advantage more which a good man has above a wicked one as to this world; and that is, in respect of 'dutiful and obedient children;' which is allowed by all to be a great blessing in itself, and is what the former has much more reason to expect and hope for than the latter. For, if it pleases God to bless a good man with children, he begins very early to instil into their tender minds the principles of virtue and religion: he teaches them to 'remember their Creator in the days of their youth;' and brings them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. He sets before them, in

his own conduct, the example of a holy and religious life; and endeavours to wean them from the pride and vanity of the world, and from those hurtful lusts and passions which tend only to make them miserable both here and hereafter. He instructs them in that knowledge which is useful and profitable, which will give them a right understanding of themselves and of their duty, and make them wise unto salvation: and when the grace of God cooperates with these endeavours (as it will not fail to do), what comfortable hopes may not such a parent entertain of reaping the happy fruits of all his labours! Instead of looking upon his children with grief and trouble, and having his gray hairs, by their means, brought down with sorrow to the grave; how much rather may he expect to behold them with pleasure and delight, when he sees them as so many 'olive-branches round about his table,' fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge and love of God?

There is no person, I believe, but will allow, that this is the most likely way a man can take to be happy in his children; and though it should not prove effectual (for success is not in our own power), yet of this he may be assured, that his pious and sincere endeavours to train up his children in a sober, honest, and religious course of life, will certainly recommend him to the favour and love of God; as is manifest from the great regard God expressed for Abraham on this very account. 'And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep

the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him;' Gen. xviii. 17—19.—This is a great encouragement to parents to be very careful in the education of their children: they are making provision for their own happiness at the same time that they are endeavouring to secure that of their children. But, should they be disappointed in these their pious endeavours, they are laying up in store a good foundation of comfort to themselves at least, against the day of trouble: I mean, if it should please God that they should live to see their children wicked and miserable, notwithstanding all the means they have used to make them otherwise. For they will then have the consolation to reflect that they are clear from the guilt of their children's sins; and will be free from those bitter self-reproaches that a wicked man must make, who sees his children ruined by those vices and follies which his example hath taught them, or his carelessness and neglect suffered them to fall into. Bitter reproaches, I say, those must undoubtedly be, which such a parent will make to himself, when he considers that he has his children's sins, as well as his own, to account for; and applies to himself (as he justly may) those dreadful words which God spake to the prophet Ezekiel: 'When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hands;' Ezekiel iii. 18.—O terrible words of most just judgment! How dreadful must they sound in the ears of a wicked parent, whose children have perished through his fault!

I have now considered some of those duties to

which religion obliges us, and endeavoured to shew how conducive they are to our temporal happiness; by which, I hope, it sufficiently appears, how much good men have the advantage of the wicked even as to this world. And here I cannot but take notice of the wonderful love of God to mankind, who, in order to encourage our obedience to his laws, has annexed a present, as well as future, reward to a good life; and has so interwoven our duty and happiness together, that while we are discharging our obligations to the one, we are, at the same time, making the best provision for the other.

How much, then, do they derogate from the honour of God, who represent religion as an unprofitable and unpleasant task! when it is plain to any man, that considers things rightly, and is not under the prejudice of his lusts and passions, that the great design of religion is to make us happy here, as well as hereafter. Accordingly, all its rules and precepts are so admirably suited to this end, that would men be persuaded to live in the practice of them, we should find this world a kind of heaven upon earth.

But, had the practice of our duty been ever so irksome and uneasy, and had nothing but trouble and misery been the lot of good men in this world; yet, when we consider that this life will shortly have an end, and that there is an 'eternal weight of glory' reserved in heaven for those that truly love and serve God; what wise man would not prefer the rugged paths of virtue and religion, which he knows will shortly lead him into an eternity of bliss and happiness, to the ways of sin and wickedness (how pleasant soever he might find them), where he is in danger every moment of falling into the pit of destruction, and which, he is

sure, will, in a little time, bring him into a place of endless misery and torment?

But, since there is nothing in religion but what tends to make our lives easy, cheerful, and contented; nothing but what is suitable to our natures, and agreeable to the dictates of right reason; nothing but what will ennoble our minds, enlarge our understandings, and inspire us with a generous principle of universal love and charity and good-will to mankind; in short, since 'the commands of God are not grievous,' but his 'yoke is easy, and his burden light;' it manifestly follows, that as a good life is the highest wisdom, so a wicked one is the extreme of folly and madness.

A PRAYER.

O MOST gracious God! who, out of thy great love and tender regard for mankind, hast set before us life and death, blessing and cursing; and hast endowed us with a freedom of will, and liberty to choose the one and avoid the other: and, to encourage us to make a right choice, hast annexed a present as well as future reward to our obedience to thy laws, and made the ways of religion ways of pleasantness, and all its paths to be peace: O give me wisdom and understanding, that I may not be carried away by the deceitful pleasures of this world; but may see, and know, and choose, the things which make for my peace, and wherein my true and only happiness doth consist.

Convince me more and more that sin is the greatest of all evils; that guilt and misery are always inseparable; and that there is no other solid and substantial happiness to be attained in this life, but that which results from the testimony of a

good conscience, and the hopes of thy favour and acceptance: and grant that these momentous truths may be so deeply impressed upon my mind, that I may make it the sincere endeavour of my whole life to please and obey Thee, who art my sovereign good and happiness; the only sure foundation of all my hopes, both here and hereafter; and in comparison to whose favour, all the honours, riches, and enjoyments of this world are as nothing.

Deliver me, I beseech thee, from the shame and anguish, the horror and confusion, of a guilty conscience; and give me that comfort and complacency of mind, which arises from the consciousness of having been faithful in thy service, and obedient to thy will. And, since thou hast been graciously pleased to make thy service the most perfect freedom, and the practice of our duty so conducive to our present as well as future well-being, O make me steadfast and immoveable in the ways of thy laws, and in the works of thy commandments; that, having faithfully served thee in this life, I may at last be found meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, through the sole merits and intercession of our eternal advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAP. II.

IN the foregoing chapter I have endeavoured to shew that religion is the only solid foundation of happiness in this world, the only thing that can make us pass the time of our pilgrimage here on earth with any tolerable ease and satisfaction. I

shall now proceed, in the next place, to consider the great advantage of a good life, from the comfortable prospect it gives us when we come to die.

And this is an advantage peculiar to virtue and religion, and to which a life of sin and wickedness never pretended. The most which *that* promises its votaries, is to regale their senses for a little while: it gives them no hopes beyond the grave, nor aims at any thing farther than a short-lived happiness. 'When a wicked man dieth, his expectations shall perish;' Prov. xi. 7. 'For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained' all that this world can give him, 'when God taketh away his soul?' Job xxvii. 8. All his enjoyments are then at an end; and those schemes upon which he has built his happiness will vanish and come to nothing. But with a good man it is far otherwise: he looks beyond this present life, and beholds with an eye of faith the heavenly 'Jerusalem, the city of the living God;' that place of endless bliss and happiness, which God has prepared for them that love him. In the hopes and expectations of this happiness, he considers himself 'as a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth;' and is daily endeavouring, through the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, by a life of virtue and righteousness, to become meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

It must, indeed, be owned, that death is the great king of terrors; that the dissolution of soul and body, and the thoughts of becoming a prey to the devouring worms, carries in it something very shocking to human nature; yet, to a good man, death appears in a quite different view. He considers, that to leave this world is only to quit a place of trouble and vexation, of vanity and emp-

tiness; it is, to leave 'a barren and dry wilderness where no water is,' for the delightful regions of bliss and happiness, where are rivers of pleasure, and a never-ceasing spring of endless comfort, which will satisfy the most longing desires of the soul. He considers, that 'though this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, yet he has a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;' and is assured with Job, 'that his Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and that though his body be destroyed, yet in his flesh *he* shall see God, whom *he* shall see for *himself*, and *his* eyes shall behold, and not another's;' Job xix. 25—27.

This is what religion promises to them, 'who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.' It is the hopes and expectations of this unspeakable happiness that fortify the mind of a good Christian, and give him a courage and resolution which even death itself shall not be able to shake.

It was this that gave holy David such a firmness of mind, as made him say, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me;' Psal. xxiii. 4. He had made God his portion, his hope, and his trust. 'The Lord,' says he, 'is my stony rock and my defence, my Saviour, my God, and my might, in whom I will trust; my buckler, the horn also of my salvation;' Psal. xviii. 2. And though we find him sometimes complaining, 'that the sorrows of death had compassed him, and the overflowings of ungodliness made him afraid; that the pains of hell came about him, and the snares of death overtook him;' yet the great confidence he had in the goodness and love

of God, and the firm belief of a better life after the present, overcame all his fears. 'I had fainted,' says he, 'but that I verily believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living;' Psal. xxvii. 13.

Religion has been the support of good men in all ages. It is certain, whoever leans upon any thing else will find that he trusts to a broken reed, which will bend under him. There is nothing (as I have observed in the former chapter) but the testimony of a good conscience, and the hopes of the favour and love of God, that is able to bear a man up under the weight and pressure of any great calamity; much less will any thing else be a sufficient support at the hour of death. We shall *then* be stripped of all the pleasures and enjoyments of this world, of all those things in which we are now apt to place so great a confidence; and, unless we are fortified 'with a shield of faith, and the breast-plate of righteousness,' unless we have 'put on the Lord Jesus,' and are clothed with the robes of his righteousness, we shall be left naked and defenceless to encounter death, with all its terrors. The sinner, how much soever he may now 'trust in the multitude of his riches,' and 'strengthen himself in his wickedness,' must *then* give up all his dependencies, and descend into the regions of darkness, not only without hope, but (what is yet more terrible) with dreadful expectations. Of what infinite moment then is it to us all, so to live, that 'when the time appointed for our great change shall come,' we may meet death without fear and astonishment, and, with an humble confidence, may look up to God, in an assured hope of his mercy in Christ Jesus!

A good life is, indeed, the sure pledge of a hap-

py death. As it fills our minds with joy and satisfaction while we live, far surpassing all the pleasures of sensual gratifications; so, when we come to die, it gives us that 'peace of God which passeth all understanding.' When a man, in his last hour, can look back upon a life well spent, and can say, with king Hezekiah, 'Remember, now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight,' Isa. xxxviii. 3; what an unspeakable satisfaction must it be to him! How mild and calm will death *then* appear! and with how little concern will he receive its summons! With what cheerfulness will he *then* take leave of this world, and all that was dear to him in it! And how contentedly will he quit his earthly tabernacle, when he considers that he is to exchange it for 'a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!' I say, what an unspeakable comfort must it be to a dying man, when he is entering into the valley of the shadow of death,' to have before him a bright prospect of life and glory; to find the light of God's countenance shining upon his mind, and the comforts of his Holy Spirit cheering and refreshing his soul; to be able to look up to God with a filial confidence, and, with a 'hope full of glory and immortality,' to resign his soul into the hands of his Maker; not doubting but his heavenly Father, whom he has faithfully served in this world, will take care of him, and reward him, in the next; and that the same infinite power and goodness, which has carried him safe through this 'vale of tears and misery,' will conduct him in his passage to a blessed eternity! O, how far more happy must the death of such a one be than the most envied state of the greatest

mortal! Who would not wish 'to die the death of the righteous, and that his last end may be like his!' Especially,

If we consider, in the next place, the miserable condition of a wicked man when death approaches. But how shall I describe the agonies and convulsions of mind which a despairing sinner labours under in his last hour! Who can express the anguish and torment that *he* feels who is under the terror of death and damnation! 'The spirit of a man,' says Solomon, 'will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. xviii. 14. The most exquisite pains and torments of the body are nothing compared with what a dying sinner feels from the stings of his guilty conscience. With what shame and confusion does he *then* look back upon the actions of his past life! How does he tremble and stand confounded at the remembrance of those sins which were once the darling objects of his guilty desires! And what a horrible dread overwhelms his mind, when he considers that he is entering upon that unchangeable state from which he knows there is no redemption! that he is going to give an account of a life, which he cannot reflect upon without horror and amazement, and for which he is justly afraid he shall, in a few moments, be consigned to endless misery and torments! How does he condemn himself, when his conscience reproaches him for having spent that time insignificantly or wickedly, which was given him for noble and excellent purposes; that he has neglected the great and important work of his salvation, and been deaf to all the calls and invitations of God's Holy Spirit; that, instead of laying up in store a good foundation of hope and comfort against the day of trouble, which is now come upon him,

he has heaped up to himself a dreadful load of guilt, which is ready to sink him with its intolerable weight!

O wretched man, what wouldst thou give, were it in thy power to recal those precious moments which thou hast lavished away in sin and vanity! How dost thou wish that thou 'hadst known' in time 'the things that belong to thy peace!' But, alas! 'they are now hidden from thine eyes;' and nothing is left but darkness and despair.

But let us suppose the life of a dying person not to have been so flagrant and vicious as to fill his mind with such black and despairing thoughts; yet if, upon the review of it in his last hour, he finds in it such a mixture of good and evil, that he is in great doubt and uncertainty concerning his eternal welfare, how sad and disconsolate must his condition even *then* be! and what a dreadful anxiety will he labour under, when he considers that he is leaving this world, and going he knows not whither; that he is just launching out into the boundless ocean of eternity, and that the next moment he may sink into the terrible abyss of endless misery and torment! It is, without all question, a most distressful circumstance to be doubtful of a matter, of which it so nearly concerns us to have some highly probable assurance.

O that men would be persuaded seriously to think on these things! That they would 'be wise, and consider their latter end!' Deut. xxxii. 29; and, as the Psalmist advises, would 'keep innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right! for that,' and that only, 'shall bring a man peace at the last;' Psalm xxxvii. 37. And who is there so stupid that would not wish for so invaluable a blessing? What wise man would not rather submit to

the worst that could befal him here in a *short* life, than run the least risk of going out of this world under the terrors of a guilty conscience? It is (whatever those who are carried away by their lusts and passions may think), it is the utmost wisdom of man to prepare for his latter end, by conducting himself according to the will of his great Creator; for it is certain, however some may vainly flatter themselves, there is no leaving this world with any tolerable composure, unless our lives have been such as, through the tender mercies of God and the merits of Christ Jesus, to give us a reasonable hope that we may be found in the number of those whom our great Judge shall at the last day pronounce *blessed*. But this can only be the lot and portion of the righteous; for how can any one, whose life has been a direct contradiction to the will of God, entertain hopes of his favour? Perhaps, when he sees death approaching, he may lament and bewail the folly of his past conduct, and, 'with strong crying and tears,' resolve upon a new course of life, if it should please God to spare him. But, since the gospel hath nowhere assured us that God will accept of a death-bed repentance, or be reconciled to a sinner, who (after having lived a wicked and careless life, and been deaf to all the calls and invitations of the Holy Spirit, the threatenings of the gospel, and the checks of his own conscience) shall at the last, when he is able to gratify his lusts no longer, and begins to fear the sad consequences of his sins, cry out for mercy, and wish that he had been wise in time: I say, since God has nowhere revealed that he will accept of any repentance which is not followed by a thorough change and amendment of life, and a sincere obedience to his commandments;

and since it is impossible for a dying sinner to bring forth such fruits of repentance, how precarious must *his* hopes be that are built upon so uncertain a foundation!

It is true, to repent is all that a man who has led a wicked life can do when he comes to die; and it would be well for his own sake, and for the sake of his sorrowful friends and relations, that he would do this much, and not go out of the world hardened and insensible; for who knows how far infinite mercy may be extended? But, surely, it must be the greatest instance of folly and madness to hazard a matter of such infinite moment upon so uncertain an issue; upon a few, broken, confused, and almost despairing sighs and groans: for, if the remorse and horrors, the solemn vows and resolutions, of such men should not prove a true godly sorrow, 'a repentance to salvation, not to be repented of' (as no man can say they certainly will), they are lost and undone to all eternity.

But suppose we could be assured that a deathbed repentance would be effectual; yet who can tell whether a man may have time for that work in the hour of death? Or, if he could be certain that a lingering sickness would put an end to his days, yet how does he know that God will then vouchsafe him the grace of repentance? and without *that* grace it is impossible he should repent. O, how much rather may such a one fear, lest God should be so provoked, by his many wilful refusals to hearken to the calls and admonitions of the Holy Spirit, as to cut short his day of grace, and deliver him over to a hardened and reprobate mind!

The Scripture assures us that there is a time when men shall call upon God, and he will not

hearken.' 'Because I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices;' Prov. i. 24, &c. The end of the long-suffering and forbearance of God is, 'to lead men to repentance,' Rom. ii. 4; but if, instead of producing that blessed effect, it only hardens them in their sins, and makes them resolved to go on in their wicked courses, vainly presuming they shall repent when they come to die; how just may it be in God to leave them at their last hour, under all the terrors and agonies of a fearful death! 'to laugh at their calamity, and to mock when their fear cometh!'

'O consider this, all ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.' Consider it in due time, before it be too late, before the dreadful hour comes upon you, when all opportunities of reconciling yourselves to your offended God shall be taken from you, and the door of hope shall be for ever shut. Silence the clamour of your passions, and listen to the threatenings of God's holy word, the admonitions of his blessed Spirit, and the checks of your own consciences. Be persuaded to set about the great work

of your salvation 'to-day, while it is called to-day, before the night cometh, when no man can work.' Remember, that though you are now, perhaps, in health and strength, in the prime and vigour of your years, surrounded with the pleasures of a great and splendid fortune, yet the time is coming, and, whether you think of it or not, is hastening on apace, when you must take your leave of all that is desirable upon earth. Nothing will *then* stand you in any stead but a good conscience; neither honours, nor riches, nor any thing else that men are now so fond of, will *then* be able to give you one moment's ease, or afford you one comfortable thought. Nothing will be *then* regarded but the consciousness of having, in some measure, answered the end for which God sent you into the world; by having lived in the fear and love of God, 'and in simplicity and godly sincerity having had your conversation in this world.'

It was this that made St. Paul desire 'to be dissolved, and to be with Christ;' for he had 'fought a good fight, and kept the faith.' And, therefore, he could say with great assurance, when 'the time of his departure was at hand, that there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, should give him at that day;' 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. And it was this that made a late pious divine of our church, when he was near his death, utter these remarkable expressions: 'I am entering upon my last labour: the Lord gave, and he is now taking away; blessed be the name of the Lord! for, I thank my God, I am going without any distrust, without the least misgiving, to a place of rest, and joy, and everlasting bliss. There is no life like a happy death. I have endeavoured, even from my youth, to approve my-

self a faithful servant to my great Master. I have taken some pains in writing several books; I have seriously considered them; and am fully satisfied,' looking on those about him, 'that you may find in them the way to heaven. The Christian duties contained therein have been my practice, as well as study; and now I find the advantage of it. And therefore be careful to read them often and seriously; and live suitably thereunto, that when you come to the condition I am now in, you may die with comfort, as you see me do. I have some little pain, indeed; but my pain is nothing so extraordinary as my hopes: for I have earnestly repented of all my sins, and verily believe that, through the tender mercies of my God, and the merits of my blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, I shall be carried up into Abraham's bosom.' After which, it is said, he made this short prayer: 'I wait, O God, for that everlasting rest which I want at present, but shall not long. I am ready, when thou, my God, callest for me, yet can stay with patience till thou pleasest: for thy time is the best time, and thy pleasure the best pleasure.'

See here the end of a good man. How calm, how serene and comfortable is his death! Is there any thing like *this* in the case of a wicked man in the hour of his dissolution? Alas! no. If you behold such a person in his last extremity (unless he die hardened and impenitent), you will hear little else but bitter reflections, sad bewailings, wretched upbraidings of himself, for the folly and madness of his past life; together with despairing sighs and groans, black and dreadful to himself, and very terrible to all about him. May God, of his infinite mercy, keep every one from such a dreadful hour! 'and teach us all so to number our days, as to ap-

ply our hearts unto wisdom!' that *true* wisdom, which will make us wise unto salvation, fill our minds with comfort and satisfaction while we live; and, what is of infinitely more value, give us, when we come to die, 'that peace of God which passeth all understanding,' through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER.

O MOST great and mighty God! in whose hands are the issues of life and death! Thou orderest all things by thy infinite power and wisdom, and hast appointed for all men once to die; and, after this short life is ended, hast, of thy infinite goodness, provided for thy faithful servants a state of endless bliss and happiness. O! make me truly sensible of the frailty and uncertainty of my life; and teach me so to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto true wisdom. Let not death ever surprise me unawares, or find me in a state unprovided. But grant that I may live in such a constant preparation for my latter end, that, how suddenly soever thou shalt be pleased to take me out of this world, I may be found ready and prepared for that great account which I must one day give before the judgment-seat of Christ. Enable me, by the assistance of thy grace and Holy Spirit, to finish the great work of my salvation before the night comes, when no man can work, and to lay a good foundation of hope and comfort against the hour of my death; that, when the hour of my departure shall come, I may look back upon a well-spent life with joy and comfort, and may meet death without fear.

Look upon me, O most gracious God, when the

time of my dissolution draws nigh, as a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. Speak peace unto my conscience, and say unto my soul, 'I am the God of thy salvation.' Let not the cruel enemy of souls affrighten me with his terrors; but give thy holy angels charge over me, to keep me out of his hands; and let the comforts of thy Holy Spirit cheer and cherish my soul in its passage through this vale of tears and misery to a happy eternity.

O Lord! leave me not to myself in that time of distress, when I shall stand in so much need of thee. Confirm my faith; support me in my dying agonies; and forsake me not when my strength faileth. Let thy merciful ears, O God, be then open to my prayers; and spare me, O Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal! suffer me not at my last hour, through any pains of body, or weakness of mind, to renounce my dependance upon thee. But grant, O merciful Father, that, with an humble reliance on thy mercies, and the infinite merits of my dear Redeemer, and with an entire submission to thy blessed will, I may cheerfully resign up my soul into thy hands, and may be willing, and even desirous, to leave this world, when thou, my God, in thy great wisdom, shalt see it fitting.

O Lord! let me never be separated from thee; but grant that my soul may be so united to thee, who art the fulness of all happiness, by the strongest ties of faith, love, and obedience, that, after a life spent here in thy service, I may dwell with thee in life everlasting, and be received into those mansions of eternal bliss and glory, which thou hast prepared for them that truly love and fear thee.

Grant this, O Lord, through the merits, and for the sake, of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our only Saviour.

CHAP. III.

HITHERTO I have considered the great advantages of religion as they respect only our well-being in this world, and our going comfortably out of it. But, as there are other advantages attending a good life, infinitely beyond all that have been mentioned; namely, that it will entitle us, through the merits of 'Christ Jesus, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away;' I shall endeavour to shew, in the last place, that a serious and conscientious observance of the duties of religion will most certainly be rewarded with eternal happiness in the life to come.

And here I shall not presume so much as to aim at a description of that 'exceeding weight of glory' which God has reserved for those that truly love him. In the Scripture, indeed, the glories of the other world are represented to us, in condescension to our weak capacities, as a 'kingdom and a crown; an eternal kingdom, and a never-fading crown:' but the state is so unknown to us, and so much above our imperfect conceptions, that we shall never be able fully to comprehend it, till we arrive at the actual enjoyment of it. For, though we know that we shall there see God, and the blessed Jesus, who 'loved us, and gave himself for us,' and shall to all eternity enjoy *him* who is the source and fountain of all good; that we shall there converse with saints and angels, and for ever be singing anthems of praise to our great Creator and Redeemer; yet, how great the pleasure of this will

be, and with what extasies and raptures our souls shall then break forth, when they taste of the 'fulness of that joy which is in the presence of God for evermore,' is what our infinite understandings cannot possibly reach. Of this, however, we may rest assured, that the things which God hath reserved for them that love him are such 'as neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.' And as this is sufficient for us, at present, to know, in general, concerning this matter, all curious inquiries into the precise nature of the happiness of the next life will be of small use to us: they may fill our heads with fine speculations, but will signify little to direct our practice. What we are more concerned to know, and in the most explicit manner, is, that our sincere obedience to God's commandments will certainly be rewarded with eternal life and happiness. This, indeed, is a matter which it imports us to be well assured of; that we may not be weary of well-doing, but 'may run with patience the race that is set before us,' Heb. xii. 1. and press towards the mark for the 'prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;' Phil. iii. 14.

There are some, indeed (and a melancholy reflection it is that there are any such), who would have us believe, that we die like the beasts which perish; and that when we leave this world there is an end of our existence. But these, upon inquiry, I believe, will be always found to be persons who first live as if there was no God, and then endeavour to persuade themselves and others, that there really is none; so that, instead of regulating their practice by their faith, they do most preposterously suit their faith to their practice. I shall not concern myself at present with these men; my design

being chiefly for the sake of those who believe the Christian religion, and the revelation of God's will in the holy Scriptures. And surely to such it can be no doubt, but that in those sacred writings 'we have eternal life;' and that the performance of God's commandments is the certain and indispensable condition of obtaining it.

It is true, natural religion will teach us, not only that 'God is, but that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' But it hath pleased God, of his great goodness, not to leave us to the light of nature alone to discover this weighty truth. The rewards of another life are so fully and clearly revealed in the writings of our Saviour and his apostles, and the way to obtain them is there so plainly laid down, that there is no room for any doubt or uncertainty concerning that matter. Whatever dark or imperfect notions the Jews, as well as Gentiles, had of a future state, it is certain, 'that life and immortality is now brought to light by the gospel;' and we may rest assured, that though, when we die, our bodies shall be laid in the cold chambers of the grave, and there become the food of worms, and moulder into dust, yet it will not be long 'ere this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality;' 1 Cor. xv. 53.—'For God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead;' Acts xvii. 31: a day 'wherein we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;' 2 Cor. v. 10.—And then 'all that are in their graves shall hear his

voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation;' John v. 28, 29.

He then who believes the gospel (as every one must that lives under the influence of it, unless he be wretchedly blinded by his lusts and passions), can never doubt of these two great articles of the Christian religion, 'the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.' The possibility of the former hath been made evident by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; and the certainty of the latter appears from the express declarations of God in the holy Scriptures. Indeed, the whole tenor of the Christian religion sufficiently proves it; every precept of which tends to purify and refine our natures, and to fit and prepare us for the society of saints and angels in another life. The apostle assures us, that 'God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us that we should live together with him;' 1 Thes. v. 9, 10.—And St. John tells us, that 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;' John iii. 16.

If then we believe that God is infinitely just and true, we can never doubt that, at the great day of retribution, 'he will render to every man according to his deeds. To them, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality,' he (who is *truth* itself, and cannot *deceive*) hath promised 'eternal life: but to them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,' *he* hath declared that he will pour forth 'indignation and wrath,

tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;' Rom. ii. 6—9.

Our Saviour, in his exposition of the parable of the 'tares,' tells us, that, 'at the end of the world the Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth;' Matt. xiii. 40—42.—And so in his exposition of the parable of the 'net,' in the same chapter, he says, that, at 'the end of the world, the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth;' ver. 49, 50.—Thus again we are told by our Saviour, that 'when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall he say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world,' Matt. xxv. 31—34: 'but to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;' ver. 41.—'And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal;' ver. 46.

This, as it is a plain and lively description of the awful solemnity of that great and tremendous day, 'when the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, to judge the quick and

the dead,' Matt. xvi. 27; so it is sufficient to convince us, that though 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' Heb. xii. 14, yet that every one that believes the gospel, and sincerely obeys the precepts of it, shall assuredly 'enter into the kingdom of heaven.' This was the very purchase of Christ's blood, and the end for which he was contented to be given up into the hands of cruel men, to be buffeted, spit upon, and evil-entreated, and at last to suffer a cruel and ignominious death upon the cross. 'He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity,' Tit. ii. 14, and 'become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him;' Heb. v. 9.—'Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich;' 2 Cor. viii. 9.—'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed;' Isa. liii. 5.

The redemption of mankind was thought a design worthy the Son of God. The souls of men were of so great a value in *his* sight, that he esteemed nothing too much, or too great, to suffer for their sakes. He saw and pitied our misery, and knew that without a Saviour we must be lost for ever; and therefore condescended so far as to humble himself even to the death upon the cross, for us miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death, that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life. So that though we 'were sometimes afar off,' yet being 'now made nigh by the blood of Christ, we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;' Ephes. ii. 18, 19.—And if we are careful to

perform our parts, we may assuredly say with St. Paul, that 'henceforth there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give us at that day;' 2 Tim. iv. 8. —For we have the promise of *him* who is *truth* itself, and cannot deceive us, that, if we are 'faithful unto death, he will give us a crown of life;' Rev. ii. 10.

And what a glorious incitement is this to all men 'to live soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present world!' What can be more effectual to make us 'steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,' than to know, 'that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58; that no good action which we do shall be lost and fruitless; on the contrary, that in a little time all our services will be infinitely rewarded; that every grace and virtue which we exercise in this life, and every degree of them, 'shall receive their just recompense at the resurrection of the just; and that, if we serve God faithfully and sincerely, we may be assured, that, through the tender mercies of our heavenly Father, and the merits of our Redeemer, we shall be received into a place of everlasting rest and peace; where we shall adore and praise the Author of our salvation, and contemplate the glorious perfections of his majesty, with a joy and satisfaction infinitely exceeding all that we can now possibly conceive?

'O blessed time!' (to use the words of Archbishop Tillotson) 'when mortality shall be swallowed up of life! and death and sorrow shall be no more! when we shall be eased of all our pains, and resolved of all our doubts, and be purged from all our sins, and be freed from all our fears, and be happy beyond our hopes! and have all this happi-

ness secured to us beyond the power of time and change!'

As these considerations cannot but at present fill our hearts, 'with joy unspeakable,' and excite us continually 'to give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son,' Col. i. 12, 13; so, when we come to have a nearer and more immediate view of the glories of that kingdom which God hath prepared for us, how will our souls break forth into extasies of love and joy! how will it transport us to see him, whom we have loved and faithfully served! to see him not arraigned for a malefactor, not hanging in a shameful manner upon the cross! but to see him, in all his majesty and glory, sitting in a triumphant manner upon his throne, adored by angels and archangels; 'thousand thousands ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him!' Dan. vii. 10. To see him, I say, not as an angry and incensed judge, but as a merciful Saviour and Redeemer, looking upon his faithful and beloved servants with the tenderest affection, and receiving them into the arms of his everlasting mercy, with those ravishing words, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!' Matt. xxv. 34.

But then, on the other hand, with what anguish and despair will the wicked and ungodly behold the dreadful solemnities of that awful day! how will they tremble and be confounded, when the 'Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel

of our Lord Jesus Christ!' 2 Thes. i. 7, 8.—when they shall see the 'heavens passing away with a great noise, and the elements melting with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, burnt up!' 2 Pet. iii. 10: when they shall behold hell open to receive them, and the great Judge of the world, with terror in his looks, ready to pronounce that dreadful sentence,—'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!' Matt. xxv. 41.

Oh! in what confusion and agonies will those souls be to whom those dreadful words then shall be spoken! How will they 'call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!' Rev. vi. 16.—But, alas! what will that avail them, when 'the great day of his wrath is come?' Whither shall they betake themselves, when 'both the earth and the heavens shall flee from the presence of the Judge!' Rev. xx. 11.—If the Saviour of the world condemns them, who shall intercede in their behalf? If *he*, that once died to purchase their salvation, will not save them (as it is certain he will not save the wicked and impenitent), to whom shall they fly for succour! It will then be too late to cry for mercy, when the time of judgment is come; too late to lament their folly and madness, when the time of working is over: all prayers and entreaties, all tears and repentance, will then be in vain. 'He that is unjust,' must be 'unjust still; and he that is filthy' must be 'filthy still;' Rev. xxii. 11.—'As the tree is fallen, so it must lie' for ever. The time of trial, the day of grace, is ended, 'and there remains no more sacrifice for sin;' but a 'fiery indignation' must 'devour them;' Heb. x. 26, 27.

—The dreadful hour is come, when they must be banished for ever from the enjoyment of him 'in whose presence' alone is 'fulness of joy,' and be doomed to those lakes of fire and brimstone, 'where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;' where they must be bound in everlasting chains, and be 'day and night, for ever and ever,' Rev. xx. 10, 'tormented' by the devil and his accursed spirits (those cruel and unrelenting beings), in the flames of a most outrageous and never to be extinguished fire.

'Could I represent to you,' says archbishop Tillotson, in one of his excellent sermons, 'the horror of that dismal prison into which wicked and impure souls are to be thrust, and the misery they must there endure, without the least spark of comfort, or glimmering of hope; how they wail and groan under the intolerable wrath of God, the insolent scorn and cruelty of devils, the severe lashes and stings, the raging anguish and horrible despair of their own minds, without intermission, without pity, and without hope of ever seeing an end of that misery which yet is insupportable for one moment; could I represent these things to you according to the terror of them, what effect must they have upon us! with what patience could any man bear to think of plunging himself into this misery, and, by his own wilful faults and follies, endanger his coming into this place and state of torments!'

Oh! who, indeed, can think of these things without resolving, in good earnest, to flee from the wrath to come, and to secure a happy eternity, by a life of virtue and righteousness! who, that believes 'the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God,' that considers what

it is to dwell in the most exquisite misery and torments to all eternity; who, I say, that considers these truths will not immediately resolve 'to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,' but give himself up entirely to the service and obedience of the blessed Jesus, with unfeigned resolutions of 'living soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present world!' In a word, who, that is truly wise, and considers that time itself, compared with eternity, is short, and that the time of man is much shorter; that eternity has neither end nor change; and that every man is hastening to an eternal and invariable state, and will soon be summoned to appear before the awful tribunal of God, there to give an account of his actions; and, according as he has behaved himself in this life, be then consigned to a place of endless happiness or misery; who, I say, that reflects upon these great and important truths with that seriousness and concern which they deserve, would ever resign his integrity, and part with that invaluable prize, a *good conscience*, for the greatest happiness this world could promise him! How is it possible that a man, who will give himself time to consider what it is to be under the eternal displeasure of Almighty God, should do any thing wilfully and deliberately, which he knows will provoke his anger! What wise man would not rather submit to the worst that could befal him here in a *short* life, than to run the least risk of offending *him* on whom his welfare and happiness must depend hereafter, as well as at present; not only in this life, but through all eternity; especially when he considers what obligations he is under to approve himself a faithful servant of his great Master, and to direct and govern his whole conduct by the will of his Creator; when he reflects upon the infinite love of God, ma-

nifested in all the works of his creation and providence, but particularly in that stupendous mystery of our redemption; when he thinks 'upon the breadth and length, the height and depth of that love of God,' which moved him to send his only-begotten Son into the world, 'to be the propitiation for our sins,' and to suffer a cruel and ignominious death upon the cross, 'that we might not perish, but have everlasting life!' Oh! how is it possible that any man, with such impressions on his mind, should not be filled with so grateful a sense of what God has done for him, as to endeavour, all that in him lies, to act suitably to the infinite love of so merciful a Father, so kind and loving a Saviour! Surely the love of God must constrain us. But, if there be any one so stupid and insensible as not to be wrought upon by such powerful motives, let him reflect upon 'the terrors of the Lord,' and ask himself seriously this important question, Whether he is able to 'dwell with everlasting burnings!' Let him think upon that terrible day of the Lord, which, whether he thinks of it or not, will most assuredly come, 'when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation,' John v. 28, 29: 'when the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and shall say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of *him* that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;' Rev. vi. 15, 16. Let him revolve in his thoughts the miserable condition of those wretched souls that are now shut up in the regions of everlasting darkness, among an accursed com-

pany of infernal spirits; and then tell me, whether he thinks the short and momentary pleasures of a wicked life will compensate for endless misery and torments.

There is no one, I believe, who thinks at all, but must think otherwise. But the great misfortune is, that many men are so inflamed by their lusts and passions, that they are seldom cool enough for sober reflections. Yet if they would be persuaded frequently to meditate upon death and judgment; if they would represent to their minds what a vast disproportion there is between time and eternity, and consider that the pleasures of sin, at best, 'are but for a season,' whereas its punishment is endless and intolerable; I say, could men be brought to think of these things with any seriousness, I doubt not but such thoughts would in time have their proper effect, and would so thoroughly convince them of the great folly and danger of sin, as to make them in good earnest set about the great work of their salvation.

'The judgment to come is a very amazing consideration: it is a fearful thing to hear of it; but it will be much more terrible to see it, especially to those whose guilt must needs make them so heartily concerned in the dismal consequences of it: and yet, as sure as I stand and you sit here, "this great and terrible day of the Lord will come;" and "who may abide his coming!" What shall we do when that day shall surprise us careless and unprepared! What unspeakable horror and amazement will then take hold of us, when "lifting up our eyes to heaven, we shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory!" when that powerful voice, which shall pierce the ears of the dead, shall ring through the world,

"Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" when the mighty trumpet shall sound, and waken the sleepers of a thousand years, and summon the dispersed parts of the bodies of all men, that ever lived, to rally together, and take their place! and the souls and bodies of men which have been so long strangers to one another, shall meet, and be united again, to receive the doom due to their deeds! What fear shall then surprise sinners! and how will they tremble at the presence of the great Judge, and for the glory of his majesty! How will their consciences fly in their faces, and their own hearts condemn them for their wicked and ungodly lives, and even prevent that sentence, which yet shall certainly be passed and executed upon them!'—*Archbishop Tillotson's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 412.

Oh! let me then entreat every one, with all the earnestness that a matter of such vast importance requires, frequently and seriously to think upon the tremendous day of judgment, and the great account they must then give; to consider with themselves how their accounts stand with respect to another life; and what a dreadful condition they will be in, if they should be called to appear at the 'judgment-seat of Christ' before they have made their peace with God, and secured an interest in the merits and intercession of their great Judge! But especially let me persuade those who, in pursuit of their unlawful pleasures, have plunged themselves in sensuality and wickedness, to stand still a moment, and consider wither they are a going. Let me beg of them, as they have any regard for their present peace and happiness, or any value for their precious souls; as they would not leave this world under the terrors and agonies of a

guilty conscience, nor appear at the last day, in the presence of God, and angels, and of men, under all the circumstances of horror, shame, and confusion; and lastly, as they would not then be banished from the presence of God for ever, and be cast into the bottomless pit of destruction, to be there tormented without measure, and without end; let me, I say, prevail upon them not to delay their repentance one moment, but immediately forsake their evil ways, 'and turn unto the Lord their God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness,' Joel ii. 3; and who has assured us by his prophet, that 'when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive;' Ezek. xviii. 27.

As for those happy Christians who have entered upon a good life, and are engaged in the practice of virtue and religion; who make the glory of God, and the salvation of their own souls, and the souls of all others, their great care and concern; I need only to exhort them to go on in their Christian course with courage and resolution; 'to hold fast their profession,' Heb. iv. 14, and, with an unwearied diligence, 'to press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,' Phil. iii. 14; nothing doubting, but 'that he that hath begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;' Phil. i. 6.—God is faithful, that has promised; and therefore they may rest assured, that he will remember and reward 'their work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Thes. i. 3; and that in due season they shall reap, if they faint not.'

Gal. vi. 9.—'Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come,' Heb. x. 37; 'and his reward is with him, to give to every man according as his work shall be.' Rev. xxii. 12.—'To him that overcometh he will grant to sit with him in his throne; even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father in his throne!' Rev. iii. 21.

O happy, happy time! for those blessed souls 'who have fought the good fight, and kept the faith.' All their labours will then be at an end, that 'crown of life,' Rev. ii. 10, which God hath promised to his faithful servants, will then be bestowed upon them; and they shall be admitted 'to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away;' 1 Pet. i. 4.—They shall then be received into a place of endless bliss and joy, 'where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; but all tears shall be wiped from their eyes,' Rev. xxi. 4: and they shall for ever enjoy the most perfect and consummate happiness, and sing eternal 'Hallelujahs of praise and thanksgiving unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.' Amen.

THE CONCLUSION.

IF a good life be attended with so many advantages as I hope I have shewn it is; if it will make us live happily, die comfortably, and at last entitle us, through the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ, to an eternal inheritance in that kingdom which he has purchased for us with his precious blood; and if, on the other hand, guilt be its own punishment in this world, and everlasting misery will most certainly be the lot and portion of the wicked

and impenitent in the next: 'what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!' and how 'steadfast and immoveable' should this make us in the ways of God's laws, and in the works of his commandments! With what indignation and abhorrence should we look upon sin; and with what speed should we flee from that dreadful enemy of our souls, which would rob us of our present, as well as future happiness! How should the consideration of these things make us 'take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God!' Heb. iii. 11.—And how steadfastly should we resolve to 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,' but to walk as 'children of light' in the ways of true piety and holiness; not delaying for one moment the care of our immortal souls! 'For the day is far spent, the night is at hand,' and there is no time to be lost. We have a great work to do; a work that requires and deserves our utmost care and diligence. If we perform it well, great will be our reward in heaven: for, 'faithful is *he* that has promised.' And we may be assured, that if we are diligent and industrious in the work which God hath assigned to us in this world, 'our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord:' for, if 'we have our fruit unto holiness, our end will be everlasting life.' But if, instead of 'working out our salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. ii. 12, that is, with the greatest care and circumspection, we are negligent and remiss in the service of our great Lord and Master Jesus Christ; if, instead of 'living soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present world,' we lead vicious and wicked lives, and spend our days in sin and vanity; miserable will be our condition both here

and hereafter. For, although God is a being of infinite goodness and mercy, and is patient and long-suffering towards sinners, being 'unwilling that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;' yet we must remember, that he is also infinitely just, and will assuredly vindicate the honour of his laws. All sin and wickedness is an abomination in his sight: 'He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and if his wrath be kindled, yea but a little,' what will become of the wicked and ungodly? Nothing but a sincere repentance, and amendment of life, will be sufficient to secure them from the vengeance which he hath threatened to pour down upon all obstinate and rebellious sinners: and true repentance will most undoubtedly avert his anger. He hath declared himself to be a 'God merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;' and hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that, with hearty repentance and true faith, turn unto him. 'He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live.' In order to assure us of this his great love to mankind, and his desire to reconcile us to himself, 'He hath sent his Son,' his only, his beloved Son, 'into the world, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;' John iii. 16.

It hath pleased God, of his infinite goodness, to establish a most gracious covenant of mercy to mankind through the mediation of his own Son; and the condition of his part of the covenant, namely, the remission of sins, is always ready to be made good, if we fail not, on our part, of sincere repentance, and a thorough reformation of our lives. Our Saviour hath made a full, perfect, and

sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. He hath suffered a cruel and ignominious death upon the cross for our sakes: and by his death and sufferings hath purchased this grace for us, that real repentance, and the sincere endeavour of perfect obedience, shall be accepted instead of innocence; but, without this repentance, and renewed endeavour of perfect obedience, we shall not be accepted upon any terms. The sacrifice which Christ offered upon the cross, although of infinite value, will be of no avail to us, unless, in conformity with his death and resurrection, we die unto sin, and rise again into newness of life. Nothing but a good life will entitle us to the favour and love of God; and, without his favour, 'we are of all creatures the most miserable.' Better had it been for us never to have been born, than to have made God our enemy by leading vicious and wicked lives. Let it then, above all things, be our great and constant endeavour to make *him* our friend, who is the best of beings, the sovereign good and happiness of all his creatures, and the fountain and foundation of all our comforts and enjoyments in this life, and of all our hopes and expectations in that which is to come. Let us make religion the great business of our lives; and, while we have time and opportunity, let us prepare ourselves, by a life of virtue and righteousness, for that great account which we must one day give. Let not the pleasures and vanities of this world, which will shortly have an end, make us unmindful of the great and momentous concerns of eternity. O eternity! how amazing are the thoughts of it! Who, that considers what it is to live for ever in a state of endless happiness or misery, would not labour and strive with

all his might to secure the one and avoid the other! Now, this only can be done by a good life: for 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Heaven is prepared for those, and those only, who fear God, and live in a strict endeavour to perform a perfect obedience to his will. 'There shall in nowise enter into that holy place any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.' And those only are the good and virtuous, who have kept themselves from the pollutions of this wicked world, and have led a life of piety and renewed obedience toward God, and of love and charity towards their neighbours. To all others, that blessed Lamb of God will declare 'he knew them not;' to 'the workers of iniquity,' even that merciful and compassionate Saviour will say, 'Depart from me.' Dreadful words! Whither must such wretched souls go, when they are bidden to depart from the Saviour of the world! Whither, indeed, but to that dismal place of horror and everlasting misery 'prepared for the devil and his angels!'

May God, of his infinite mercy, give all of us grace to see and follow the things that belong to our everlasting peace 'in this our day,' lest they be hidden from our eyes, and all opportunities of reconciling ourselves to our offended God be for ever lost and gone! May every one of us be persuaded to hearken to the advice of Solomon! 'Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil;' Eccles. xii. 13, 14.—And may we always keep in remembrance that merciful caution of our blessed Lord

and Saviour; 'Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh;' Matt. xxv. 15.

A PRAYER.

O MOST glorious Lord God, and merciful Father in Christ Jesus, who hast prepared for them that love thee such good things as pass man's understanding, and hast promised to give eternal life to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; give me, I most humbly beseech thee, a firm and unshaken faith in all thy promises; that, being fully persuaded of those important truths which thou hast revealed to us in the gospel, I may make it the principal care and concern of my whole life to please and obey thee in all things! And, that I may obtain those things which thou dost promise, make me to love that which thou dost command; and grant, that, by the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, I may be enabled to persevere in the practice of a holy life, even to the last moment of my days!

Let the hopes and expectations of that unspeakable happiness hereafter, which thou hast prepared for those who live in obedience to thy commandments, enable me to pass through this vale of tears and misery with cheerfulness and submission to thy blessed will, and to bear with patience whatever troubles thou, in thy great wisdom, shall see fit to lay upon me.

O Lord! give me a heart raised above the vanities and enticements of this world, and free from all its pollutions and defilements. Fix my thoughts, my hopes, and my desires, upon heaven and hea-

venly things; that, having always in view the crown of glory which thou hast promised to thy faithful servants, I may press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and, being strengthened by thy grace, and supported by thy Holy Spirit, I may run with patience the race which thou hast set before us; that, when the great day of retribution shall come, I may look up to my most merciful Judge with joy and comfort, and may hear those ravishing words pronounced unto me, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' Grant this, O merciful Father, through the alone merits, and for the sake of my eternal advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen.

A MORNING PRAYER

FOR A FAMILY.

O MOST gracious God, and kind Father, in all humility of soul and body we present ourselves before the throne of thy majesty and glory, acknowledging that we are thy dependent creatures, and that from thy bountiful hand we have received many and exceeding great blessings.

By thee we were wonderfully made; by thy power we have ever since been preserved; and it is owing to thy great mercy and goodness that we have not been cut off in the midst of our sins, but that thou hast been patient and long-suffering toward us, and hast given us this opportunity of coming into thy presence to renew our praises and acknowledgments to thy divine Majesty. O Lord, thy compassion fails not. By thee we have been

preserved the night past, and to thy goodness we ascribe it, that we are brought in health and safety to the beginning of this day.

Accept, we humbly pray thee, of our unfeigned thanks for all the mercies and blessings which thou hast been pleased to bestow upon us; and pardon, we beseech thee, for the sake of thy Son Christ Jesus, our great unworthiness of what thou hast done for us. Give us such a sense of thy infinite love and kindness, as may engage us more and more to love and obey thee, and make us afraid of every thing that may be displeasing in thy sight.

O Lord! vouchsafe us such a measure of thy grace and Holy Spirit, as may defend us against the snares and temptations of this wicked world, and enable us to overcome all our corrupt and sinful desires. Give us a true sense of the inestimable value of our souls, that we may make it the chief concern of our lives to work out our salvation with the greatest care and diligence, and to secure an interest in thy favour, which is better than life itself.

Withdraw our minds from the love of this world, and place them upon heaven and heavenly things. Give us grace to use the enjoyments which thou art pleased to bestow upon us, with temperance, sobriety, and moderation; with an entire trust and dependence on thy fatherly care and good providence, and with a perfect submission to thy blessed will in all things.

O Lord! root out of our hearts all pride and envy; all hatred, malice, and ill-will. Put away from us all censoriousness and uncharitableness, all lying and slandering, and whatever else is contrary to a truly Christian spirit: and endue us, we

most humbly pray thee, with that meekness and humility which is in thy sight of so great a value, and with all those holy and Christian dispositions which thou lovest and delightest in.

Instruct us in all the particulars of our duty which we owe to thee, our neighbour, and ourselves. Guide us by thy right hand, and conduct us by thy good Spirit, through all the business and affairs of this life. Teach us to act with faithfulness and honesty in every thing that we undertake; and give us such a dread of thy displeasure, and such a sense of thy continual presence with us, as may guard us, by thy grace, against all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

[*The following paragraph is to be omitted on a Sunday morning, and that which follows it may be used instead thereof.*]

Be with us, O Lord, this day, wherever we go, and in whatsoever we do. Preserve us from the dangers of evil company; from the deceitfulness of our own hearts; and more especially from those sins that are most apt to betray and ensnare us. Let thy blessing accompany all our honest labours; and vouchsafe us such a measure of health, and other temporal blessings, as thou seest best and most fitting for us. We desire, O Lord, to leave ourselves, and all our concerns, in thine hands, humbly beseeching thee to take us, and all that belong to us, under the protection of thy good providence; and so to bless, direct, and guide us in this life, that we may at last obtain that greatest of all blessings, the eternal salvation of our immortal souls, through the merits, and for the sake, of thy dear Son, and our alone Saviour, Jesus Christ, for whom our souls adore and praise thy glorious

name, and in whose most holy words we sum up our own and the wants of all mankind, saying, 'Our Father,' &c.

[*The following paragraph is to be used on a Sunday morning instead of the foregoing one.*]

Dispose our hearts, O Lord, we humbly beseech thee, to a serious attendance upon thee in all holy duties. Make us duly mindful of all thy sacred institutions, and grant that we may never so far forget the interest of our souls, as to neglect the religious observance of the Christian Sabbath. And as thou hast brought us to the beginning of this sacred day, so be thou graciously pleased to take us into thy protection, and to assist us in a right discharge of the duties of it. Withdraw our minds from the care, and business, and pleasure of this life, which will shortly have an end, that we may more earnestly attend upon the great concern of that far better life, which is to last for evermore. Give us awful thoughts of thy great Majesty, and a lively sense of our own wants; that our prayers and praises, and all our services, may be offered up in such a serious and devout manner, as may render them acceptable in thy sight. Make us attentive to thy holy word, and to all the good instructions that shall this day be given us; and grant that we may not rest in mere outward performances, but, by a right use of thy holy ordinances, may grow in grace, and become every day better Christians, and so improve in all virtuous and godly living, that, when this short life shall have an end, we may dwell with thee in life everlasting, through the merits of thy son, and our alone Saviour, Jesus Christ: for whom our souls bless and praise thee, and in whose most holy

words we sum up our own, and the wants of all mankind, saying, ' Our Father,' &c.

AN EVENING PRAYER

FOR A FAMILY.

O MOST merciful and gracious Lord God! the creator, preserver, and governor of the world! Thou art infinite in mercy and goodness to all that call upon thee faithfully; and hast promised, that when two or three are gathered together in thy name, thou wilt be in the midst of them. Look down, we humbly beseech thee, upon us thy unworthy creatures, who are here assembled before thee, acknowledging that thou art a God greatly to be feared for thy power and justice, greatly to be beloved for thy infinite perfections and goodness, and greatly to be praised for thy bounty and merciful kindness. But as for ourselves, we confess, O Lord, that we are vile and sinful creatures; that we have, in many things, acted contrary to thy most holy will, and have neither loved thee, feared thee, nor obeyed thee, as we ought to have done. O Lord! if thou shouldst deal with us as we have deserved, we could expect nothing from thee but the severities of thy just wrath and displeasure.

But, O gracious Father, who delightest not in the death of a sinner, look down upon us, we beseech thee, in thy Son Christ Jesus; and, for the sake of his meritorious death and sufferings, pardon our many and great transgressions of thy holy laws; and grant that we may amend whatever we have done amiss, and for the time to come may be more

careful to please thee, and more sincerely devoted to thy service and obedience.

Convince us thoroughly, O Lord, of the great folly and danger of sin; and make us so afraid of offending thee, that we may abstain from all appearance of evil, and do nothing but what is pleasing in thy sight. Let the interest of our immortal souls be our chief care and concern; and grant that we may live as becomes the servants of Christ, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living righteously, soberly, and godlily, in this present world.

But, as without thee we are not able to please thee, grant us the assistance of thy grace and Holy Spirit, that we may pass through all the temptations of this world with peace, and innocence, and safety; and enable us to bear up, with courage and perseverance, against all the assaults of our great adversary the devil, who is daily lying in wait to destroy us.

Suffer us not, O merciful God, to be led away by the vain and foolish customs of this world, nor seduced from our duty by the company and example of the wicked and ungodly; but grant that we may make thy laws the rule of all our actions, and faithfully discharge our duty in the several stations wherein thy providence is pleased to place us.

Make us duly mindful that thou art present every where, and privy to our most secret thoughts: that we may never dare to do any thing but what thou approvest, and of which we may not fear to give an account at the great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus. O fit and prepare us for that solemn time by a virtuous and holy life! that when we shall appear before the great Judge of all the world, we

may be found in the number of those happy souls whom he shall then pronounce blessed.

Extend thy mercy, O God, to all mankind, and bring them to the light and knowledge and practice of thy laws.

Remove, we humbly beseech thee, all errors and corruptions, all divisions and dissensions, from every communion of Christians; and grant that the lives of those who profess themselves the disciples of Christ may be holy and exemplary, and such as are conformable to the gospel of our blessed Saviour.

Reform all things that are amiss in these kingdoms. Root out from among us all irreligion and profaneness, all uncharitableness and animosities. Pardon our great and crying sins; avert the evils that we have deserved; continue the light of thy glorious gospel among us; and give us all grace to turn from the evil of our ways unto thee the Lord our God!

Bless our sovereign lord the king, and all that are in authority under him, both in church and state. Make each of them, in their several places and stations, useful and serviceable to thy glory, and the good and welfare of this church and nation.

And, O thou, who art the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, look down with pity and compassion upon all thy afflicted servants every where; give them courage and patience, comfort and support; and, in thy good time, a joyful deliverance out of all their troubles.

Send down thy blessings, spiritual and temporal, upon all our friends and relations. Do good unto those that have at any time done or wished us evil; and vouchsafe to every one of us, and to all

Christians, whatever thou knowest to be best for our temporal and eternal welfare.

And now, O Lord, we desire, with all humility of soul and body, to adore thy incomprehensible Majesty, and to praise thy great and glorious name, for all thy manifold mercies vouchsafed to us and all mankind; but, above all, for thy astonishing love in reconciling the world unto thyself by the death and sufferings of thy dear Son.

We bless thee for our creation and preservation; for our health, strength, peace, and safety; for the comforts and conveniences of this life, and the hopes and expectations of a far better, through thy tender mercies in Christ Jesus.

O Lord, imprint in our hearts such a deep sense of thy mercies, that we may shew forth thy praises not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives.

We confess, O Lord, that we are unworthy of the least of all thy favours; but, in confidence of thy infinite mercy and goodness, we do in great humility recommend ourselves, our souls and bodies, and all that belong to us, to thy fatherly care and good providence; humbly beseeching thee, who art our only safety and defence, to take us this night under thy almighty protection, and to give thy holy angels charge over us, that no evil come near to hurt us.

Refresh our bodies with quiet rest and sleep, and our souls with the comforts of thy Holy Spirit: and when thou shalt think fit to take us out of this world, give us everlasting rest and peace in thy eternal kingdom, through the merits, and for the sake, of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ,

who hath taught us, when we pray, to say, 'Our Father,' &c.

A MORNING PRAYER

FOR A PERSON IN PRIVATE.

O MOST great, most mighty, and most glorious Lord God! look down from the habitation of thy holiness upon me, thy unworthy creature, who am come into thy presence to adore thy incomprehensible Majesty, and to present before thee the morning sacrifice of my unfeigned praises, for the many and undeserved mercies thou hast bestowed upon me.

O Lord, I acknowledge, that to thee of right belong eternal honour, glory, praise, and adoration; for thou art the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, by whom all things were made, and by whose infinite power and goodness they are preserved and kept in being.

Blessed be thy unspeakable goodness, which hath advanced me to such a degree of being, that I am in some measure capable to know thee, to love thee, to serve thee, and to obey thee.

Blessed be thy name, O Lord, that I was born of Christian parents, and early dedicated to thee by baptism; that by thy grace and goodness I have been preserved to this moment; and that I have in any measure escaped the pollutions of this wicked world.

I bless thee, likewise, O Lord, for all thy temporal mercies, and in particular for the refreshments of the night past: for protecting me from all evil accidents, and for raising me up in health and safety to praise thy goodness.

Pardon, O most gracious God, all the unworthy returns I have made for thy exceeding kindness and mercy; and vouchsafe me such a sense of thy infinite love, as may inspire me with more vigorous and hearty endeavours to serve thee for the time to come.

O Lord, I acknowledge that I am a weak and frail creature, and that without thy help I am not able to bear up against the trials and temptations of this world. But since thou hast promised to give thy Holy Spirit to them that ask it, I am emboldened to implore its divine assistance to strengthen my weakness, to help my infirmities, and so to fortify my mind, that I may not be tempted above what I am able to bear, nor seduced from my duty to thee, by the deceitful enticements of the world, the flesh, or the devil.

Root out of my heart, O God, all pride and vainglory, all bitterness, and uncharitableness, all envy, hatred, and malice; and suffer me not to be led away by any of the foolish customs and false maxims of this world. And, O merciful Father, be thou pleased, of thy great goodness, to endue me with that wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, and then peaceable; with that meekness and humility, which is in thy sight of so great price; and with that truly Christian temper and disposition, which thou lovest and delightest in.

Lord, sanctify unto me all thy fatherly dispensations, and let every thing thou shalt think fit to send me prove a blessing and advantage to my soul. Give me grace to be entirely submissive and contented under all the afflictions, trials, and disappointments, which thy wisdom shall judge proper, in order to bring me to thyself; and grant, that by every adversity that shall befall me, I may

be weaned from this world, and more closely united unto thee.

Make me always mindful of my own frailty, of the shortness and uncertainty of this life, and of the eternity of the next. Give me grace so to live, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die. Let not sickness or death ever surprise me unawares, or find me in a state unprepared; but grant that I may finish the great work which thou hast given me to do, before the night cometh when no man can work. O let me live in such a constant preparation for my latter end, that how suddenly soever thou shalt be pleased to take me out of this world, I may be found ready for my great account, through the merits of my blessed Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

[*The following paragraph is to be omitted on a Sunday morning, and that which follows it may be used instead thereof.*]

Be with me, O Lord, this day in all places and upon all occasions. Direct and guide, sanctify and preserve me. Keep me both outwardly in my body and inwardly in my soul. Let thy blessing accompany all my honest designs and undertakings; and grant that I may undertake nothing but what is agreeable to thy blessed will. Give unto me, and all that belong to me, such a measure of health, and other temporal blessings, as thou seest best and most fitting for us: but, above all things, give us thy grace and favour, that our lives may be holy, our deaths comfortable, and our eternal state happy and glorious with thee, through the merits of thy Son and our only Saviour, Jesus Christ the righteous; in whose most holy words I sum up my own, and the wants of all mankind, saying, 'Our Father,' &c.

[*The following paragraph may be used on a Sunday morning instead of the preceding one.*]

Accept, I beseech thee, O most gracious God, my hearty desires to glorify thee in an especial manner on this day, which thou hast peculiarly sanctified for thy worship and service.

I bless thy holy name, O Lord, who, by thy almighty power, madest the heavens and the earth, and all that therein is, and preservest and governest all that thou hast made.

I bless thee, O Lord, who madest man after thine own image, enduing him with understanding, reason, and liberty; and making him capable of knowing, of loving, and of enjoying thee, his Creator.

Above all, I bless and magnify thy holy name, O Lord, heavenly Father, that thou hast given thine only Son, Jesus Christ, for the redemption of mankind; that he took our nature upon him; that he died for our sakes; that he is risen again from the dead: that he ascended into heaven, and that he there sitteth at thy right hand, to make intercession for us; that he hath made known to us the way to eternal life, giving us his word for our direction, and his Holy Spirit for our guide and assistance.

Blessed be thy holy name, that thou hast appointed this day, not only for a rest from our ordinary labours and employments, but chiefly for a perpetual commemoration of those thy favours, and for giving us stated opportunities for thy worship and service, and for the care of our immortal souls.

My soul desires to bless thee, that thou hast made me a partaker of all these inestimable advantages.

O Lord, prepare my heart for attending upon thee in thy house, and afford me thy gracious assistance in all the parts of thy service.

Let thy word make deep and lasting impressions on me. Help me diligently to improve all opportunities that shall be afforded me this day, whether public or private, to the glory of thy great name, and the benefit and comfort of my soul, through Jesus Christ my Saviour. Amen.

AN EVENING PRAYER

FOR A PERSON IN PRIVATE.

MOST great and mighty God! thou art the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, the creator, the preserver, and governor of all things; thou dwellest in that light which no mortal eye can approach, and yet disdainest not to behold the children of men. Look down, I beseech thee, upon me thy unworthy creature, who am come into thy presence, adoring thy majesty, and acknowledging that my dependence is wholly upon thee, who art the author of my being, and the foundation of all my hopes, both here and hereafter.

O Lord, I confess that I am a weak and frail creature: my nature is corrupt, and miserably prone to offend thee. I find a law in my members warring against the law in my mind; which, I confess with sorrow, hath too often prevailed against me. The pleasures and profits of the world are too apt to engage my affections, and to make me cold and remiss in the great and important work of my salvation. I have been guilty of manifold neglects and omissions of my duty towards thee, and have not served thee with that purity of inten-

tion, with that sincerity of heart, with that fervency of spirit, with that zeal for thy glory, with that care, and diligence, and constancy, that I ought to have done.

O Lord, if thou shouldst be extreme to mark what is done amiss, if thou shouldst call me to a strict account for my life past, what could I say unto thee; or how should I be able to stand in thy sight? If thou shouldst deal with me as I have deserved, I could expect nothing from thee but the severities of thy wrath and displeasure: but, O gracious Father, thou hast revealed thyself to the sons of men, as a God merciful and gracious, forgiving the transgressions and iniquities of the repentant sinner: remember, then, I beseech thee, thy tender mercies, which have been ever of old; and for the sake and merits of my blessed Saviour, forgive, I humbly pray thee, all the sins and vanities, the follies and indiscretions, of my life past. O! reserve not my sins to be punished in the day of thy wrath and displeasure, but blot them out of thy remembrance, that they may never rise up to my confusion here, nor to my condemnation hereafter.

O! enable me, by the assistance of thy grace, to reform whatever thou seest amiss in the temper and disposition of my mind, or in any of the actions of my life; that I may love thee more, and serve thee better, and do thy will with greater care and diligence than I have yet done.

O Lord! keep up in my mind a lively sense of my duty towards thee, and of that great account which I must one day give. Suffer me not, I beseech thee, to fall into a careless and unthinking state, nor to be unmindful of that one thing needful, the salvation of my immortal soul. Make me

so sensible of those dreadful threatenings which thou hast denounced against sinners, that whatever else I leave undone, I may make it my chief care and concern to secure an interest in thy favour. And, O merciful Father, be thou pleased, of thy great goodness, so to assist my weak and feeble endeavours, that I may not be unsuccessful in a matter of such vast concern.

Root out of my heart, O God, by the powerful efficacy of thy grace, all sinful and corrupt affections. Wean me from the vanities and pleasures of this world, and give me a full conviction of the uncertainty and insufficiency of all things here below. O! let me never seek for rest and happiness in the enjoyments of this life; but grant that I may daily aspire after that eternal and unchangeable state of happiness hereafter, which thou hast preserved for thy faithful servants; and to which I beseech thee, of thy infinite love and mercy, to bring me, through the merits, and for the sake of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Extend thy mercy, O God, to all mankind. In a more particular manner, I pray thee to be gracious to these sinful nations to which I belong; to pardon our great and crying sins; to avert the judgment which we have most justly deserved; and to put away from us the spirit of profaneness and infidelity, of malice and uncharitableness, that thou mayest delight to dwell amongst us, and be our God, and we thy people.

Bless and preserve our sovereign lord King George, and grant that all who are in authority under him may faithfully endeavour to promote thy glory, and the good and welfare of this church and nation.

Look with pity and compassion upon all thy af-

flicted servants; be a Father to the fatherless; heal the sick; supply the wants of the poor and needy; and grant that whatsoever is wanting of outward comforts to any one, may be abundantly made up by the inward consolations of thy Holy Spirit.

Bless all my friends and relations, especially ———; reward all who have done me good, and forgive all who have done or wished me evil; and vouchsafe to every one of us, from the highest to the lowest, whatever in thy great wisdom thou knowest to be needful both for our souls and bodies.

And now, O most merciful Father, from an humble sense of thy great goodness, I adore and praise thy glorious name, for all the manifestations of thy love and kindness vouchsafed unto me. I bless thee for my being, for my reason, and all the endowments and faculties of my soul and body; for my health, friends, food, and raiment, and all the other comforts and conveniences I enjoy; for thy continual care and watchful providence over me through the whole course of my life: and, particularly, for the preservation and protection of me the day past.

Give me grace, I beseech thee, to make a right improvement of all thy blessings; and be thou graciously pleased to take me, and all that belong to me, this night, under the care and protection of thy fatherly providence. Give thy holy angels charge over us; and grant us such refreshment of soul and body as may enable us cheerfully to go through the duties of that station wherein thou hast placed us. And when thou shalt be pleased to call us out of this world, O! let us be found in the number of thy faithful servants, through the

merits of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ: for whom my soul doth bless and praise thee, and in whose most holy words I sum up all our wants, saying, 'Our Father,' &c.

A PRAYER WHICH MAY BE ADDED TO THE DAILY EVENING PRAYER ON THE LORD'S DAY.

I AGAIN return my most humble and hearty thanks to thee, O Lord my God, for the special blessings of this thy sacred day; that I have been admitted to the great privilege of joining with thy faithful people, in their assemblies for public worship, to offer up my praises and prayers to thy divine Majesty, in the name of our blessed Redeemer; to hear thy holy word read and preached by the ministers of thy gospel; and that I have had farther opportunities for employing myself more privately in thy worship and the care of my immortal soul.

I earnestly beseech thee, O Lord, to pardon all the wanderings and disorders of my mind, and whatsoever else thou hast seen amiss in my attendance upon thee; and graciously to accept my sincere, though weak, endeavours to serve thee.

Cause thy word, which I have heard or read, to abide in my heart, and to bring forth the fruits of a holy and religious life.

Help me, by the use of all the means of grace and salvation, to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, fitting me more and more for seeing and enjoying thee, my God, and my blessed Redeemer, in the life to come: and grant, when I shall cease to praise and serve thee with thy saints on earth, that I may

continue to be so employed with the blessed spirits in heaven.

I heartily beg the same blessings for all my fellow-christians, recommending them and myself to thee my heavenly Father, in the words, and through the intercession, of Jesus Christ thy Son, our only Mediator and Advocate. 'Our Father,' &c.

A MORNING PRAYER

FOR A YOUNG PERSON.

O LORD, my heavenly Father, I humbly adore thee, as the maker and governor of the world, the author of my being, the preserver of my life, and the giver of every good thing.

I heartily thank thee for the comfortable rest which I have enjoyed the night past; that thou hast preserved me in safety, and raised me up in health.

I bless thee for all thy goodness to me ever since I came into the world, and especially for the advantages thou hast given me, by the instruction and improvement of my mind in the knowledge of thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, my Lord.

Grant, O good God! that the sense of thy favours may so deeply affect my heart, that I may shew forth my thankfulness in the whole course of my life. I am thine, O Lord, by creation, by redemption, by my baptism and Christian profession, and by all the obligations which thou hast laid upon me. I desire to be thine, also, by a willing dedication of myself to thee every day of my life, and by a constant and faithful endeavour to approve myself to thee.

I beseech thee, in thy great mercy, through the mediation of my blessed Redeemer, to pardon all my past offences, and to enable me, by thy grace, to discern and to amend whatsoever is amiss in me.

Help me ever to remember the Christian principles which I have learned, and the pious instructions which have been given me; and never to depart from the good way in which I have been taught to walk.

Incline my heart to all that is good. Grant that I may be modest and humble in my carriage and behaviour; chaste and pure in all my thoughts, words, and actions; true and just in all my dealings; respectful and obedient to my superiors; innocent and inoffensive in my whole conversation; faithful and diligent in the discharge of all the duties of that state and condition of life wherein thou hast placed me; and teach me to fear and love thee, my God, above all things, and to do to all others as I would they should do unto me.

Make me perfectly contented with my condition, and thankful to thee, who hast given me all things necessary for life and godliness. Let thy good providence always take care of me, and let me never place my trust and confidence in any thing but thee.

Take me, I beseech thee, into thy protection this day; keep me, if it be thy good will, in health and safety. Preserve me from the vanity of my own heart, and from the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Help me (through a sense of thy constant presence with me, and of the account I am to give unto thee) so to govern all my thoughts, words, and actions, that I may reflect upon them with satisfaction at the close of this day.

Let thy blessing be upon every member of this family, upon all my relations and friends, upon all whom I ought and whom I desire to pray for.

I humbly commit both myself and them to thee, O my God, in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour, and in the words which he himself has taught me. 'Our Father,' &c.

AN EVENING PRAYER

FOR A YOUNG PERSON.

MOST gracious God, my heavenly Father, as I began, so I desire always to end the day, with blessing thy holy name, and imploring thy favour.

Honour and worship, praise and thanksgiving, are due to thee from every understanding and reasonable creature. I heartily bless thee, that I am in that number whom thou hast made to serve and love thee, and that thou hast moreover revealed thyself to me, by thy Son Jesus Christ my Redeemer, and encouraged me to call upon thee in his name.

I humbly thank thee for thy daily care of me, and particularly for that good providence which hath been over me the day past; that thou hast preserved me from the many evils to which I am justly liable; and hast bestowed upon me so many good things which I have not deserved; especially for whatsoever thou hast enabled me to do, which is acceptable in thy sight, and which I can reflect upon with satisfaction.

I humbly bewail, O Lord, the great weakness and corruption of my nature, and the many errors and transgressions of my life. I humbly beg thy mercy in the pardon of all my sins, through the mediation

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of my blessed Redeemer; particularly of whatsoever thou hast seen amiss in me this day, either in my thoughts, words, or actions.

Grant, O Lord, that the sense of my unworthiness may always keep me humble, and work in me an unfeigned repentance of all my sins; and let the remembrance of them ever excite me to a greater care and watchfulness for the time to come. Strengthen in me every good purpose and resolution. Whatsoever part of my duty I know not, do thou teach me; and wherein I have done amiss, help me to do so no more.

Leave me not, O Lord, at any time to myself, nor in the hands of my spiritual enemies. Preserve me from those circumstances that would prove a snare or temptation to me. Let thy good spirit continually enlighten and sanctify my mind, directing and assisting me through the whole course of my life.

Fill me with a sense of my constant and entire dependance upon thee, that I may always commit myself to thy care, and be ever satisfied with thy disposal of me.

Teach me so to number my days, that I may apply my heart to true and heavenly wisdom. Help me to live in a daily preparation for my great change, keeping my conscience void of offence, both towards thee and towards men: and grant that I may be always so employed, as I shall wish I had been when I come to die; that whensoever thou shalt think fit to call me out of this world, I may readily and thankfully exchange it for a better.

Take me, I beseech thee, into thy gracious protection this night. Preserve me, if it be thy good will, in health and safety; and grant me that rest

which may refresh my body, and dispose me to serve thee cheerfully, both in body and mind, the ensuing day.

I heartily desire the good of all mankind; and pray unto thee for the purity, the peace, and the enlargement of thy holy church; for thy direction and assistance of all its governors and pastors, particularly those under whose guidance I am placed; for the welfare of my country; for a blessing upon the king, and all in authority under him; for the relief and comfort of all that are in affliction; for all my friends and relations; beseeching thee to hear and to accept me, and all that call upon thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour, who has taught me thus to pray: 'Our Father,' &c.

THE

ECONOMY OF HUMAN LIFE.

THE

ECONOMY OF HUMAN LIFE.

INTRODUCTION.

Bow down your heads unto the dust, O ye inhabitants of earth! be silent and receive, with reverence, instruction from on high.

Wheresoever the sun doth shine, wheresoever the wind doth blow, wheresoever there is an ear to hear, and a mind to conceive; there let the precepts of life be made known, let the maxims of truth be honoured and obeyed.

All things proceed from God. His power is unbounded, his wisdom is from eternity, and his goodness endureth for ever.

He sitteth on his throne in the centre, and the breath of his mouth giveth life to the world.

He toucheth the stars with his finger, and they run their course rejoicing.

On the wings of the wind he walketh abroad, and performeth his will through all the regions of unlimited space.

Order, and grace, and beauty, spring from his hand.

The voice of wisdom speaketh in all his works; but the human understanding comprehendeth it not.

The shadow of knowledge passeth over the mind

of man as a dream; he seeth as in the dark; he reasoneth, and is often deceived.

But the wisdom of God is as the light of heaven; he reasoneth not; his mind is the fountain of truth.

Justice and mercy wait before his throne; benevolence and love enlighten his countenance for ever.

Who is like unto the Lord in glory? Who in power shall contend with the Almighty? Hath he any equal in wisdom? Can any in goodness be compared unto him?

He it is, O man! who hath created thee: thy station on earth is fixed by his appointment: the powers of thy mind are the gift of his goodness: the wonders of thy frame are the work of his hand.

Hear then his voice, for it is gracious; and he that obeyeth, shall establish his soul in peace.

DUTIES THAT RELATE TO MAN CONSIDERED AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

CONSIDERATION.

COMMUNE with thyself, O man! and consider wherefore thou wast made.

Contemplate thy powers, thy wants, and thy connexions; so shalt thou discover the duties of life, and be directed in all thy ways.

Proceed not to speak or act, before thou hast weighed thy words, and examined the tendency of every step thou shalt take; so shall disgrace fly far from thee, and in thy house shall shame be a stranger; repentance shall not visit thee, nor sorrow dwell upon thy cheek.

The thoughtless man bridleth not his tongue; he speaketh at random, and is entangled in the foolishness of his own words.

As one that runneth in haste, and leapeth over a fence, may fall into a pit on the other side, which he doth not see; so is the man that plungeth suddenly into any action, before he hath considered the consequences thereof.

Hearken therefore unto the voice of Consideration; her words are the words of wisdom, and her paths shall lead thee to truth and safety.

MODESTY.

WHO art thou, O man! that presumest on thine own wisdom? or why dost thou vaunt thyself on thine own acquirements?

The first step towards being wise, is to know that thou art ignorant; and if thou wouldst not be esteemed foolish in the judgment of others, cast off the folly of being wise in thine own conceit.

As a plain garment best adorneth a beautiful woman, so a decent behaviour is the greatest ornament of wisdom.

The speech of a modest man giveth lustre to truth, and the diffidence of his words absolveth his error.

He relieth not on his own wisdom; he weigheth the counsels of a friend, and receiveth the benefit thereof.

He turneth away his ear from his own praise, and believeth it not; he is the last in discovering his own perfections.

Yet as a veil addeth to beauty, so are his virtues set off by the shade which his modesty casteth upon them.

But behold the vain man, and observe the arrogant: he clotheth himself in rich attire; he walketh in the public street; he casteth round his eyes, and courteth observation.

He tosseth up his head, and overlooketh the poor; he treateth his inferiors with insolence, and his superiors in return look down on his pride and folly with laughter.

He despiseth the judgment of others; he relieth on his own opinion, and is confounded.

He is puffed up with the vanity of his imagination: his delight is to hear and to speak of himself all the day long.

He swalloweth with greediness his own praise, and the flatterer in return eateth him up.

APPLICATION.

SINCE the days that are past are gone for ever, and those that are to come may not come to thee; it behoveth thee, O man! to employ the present time, without regretting the loss of that which is past, or too much depending on that which is to come.

This instant is thine; the next is in the womb of futurity, and thou knowest not what it may bring forth.

Whatsoever thou resolvest to do, do it quickly. Defer not till the evening what the morning may accomplish.

Idleness is the parent of want and of pain; but the labour of virtue bringeth forth pleasure.

The hand of diligence defeateth want; prosperity and success are the industrious man's attendants.

Who is he that hath acquired wealth, that hath risen to power, that hath clothed himself with honour, that is spoken of in the city with praise, and that standeth before the king in his council? Even he that hath shut out idleness from his house; and hath said unto Sloth, thou art mine enemy.

He riseth up early, and lieth down late; he exerciseth his mind with contemplation, and his body with action, and preserveth the health of both.

The slothful man is a burden to himself; his hours hang heavy on his head; he loitereth about, and knoweth not what he would do.

His days pass away like the shadow of a cloud, and he leaveth behind him no mark for remembrance.

His body is diseased for want of exercise; he wisheth for action, but hath not power to move; his mind is in darkness; his thoughts are confused; he longeth for knowledge, but hath no application.

He would eat of the almond, but hateth the trouble of breaking its shell.

His house is in disorder, his servants are wasteful and riotous, and he runneth on towards ruin; he seeth it with his eyes, he heareth it with his ears, he shaketh his head and wisheth, but hath no resolution; till ruin cometh upon him like a whirlwind, and shame and repentance descend with him to the grave.

EMULATION.

If thy soul thirsteth for honour, if thy ear hath any pleasure in the voice of praise, raise thyself from the dust whereof thou art made, and exalt thy aim to something that is praiseworthy.

The oak that now spreadeth its branches towards the heavens, was once but an acorn in the bowels of the earth.

Endeavour to be first in thy calling, whatever it be; neither let any one go before thee in well doing; nevertheless, do not envy the merits of another; but improve thine own talents.

Scorn also to depress thy competitor by any dishonest or unworthy method: strive to raise thyself above him only by excelling him; so shall thy contest for superiority be crowned with honour, if not with success.

By a virtuous emulation, the spirit of a man is exalted within him; he panteth after fame, and rejoiceth as a racer to run his course.

He riseth like the palm-tree in spite of oppression; and as an eagle in the firmament of heaven, he soareth aloft, and fixeth his eye upon the glories of the sun.

The examples of eminent men are in his visions

by night, and his delight is to follow them all the day long.

He formeth great designs, he rejoiceth in the execution thereof, and his name goeth forth to the ends of the world.

But the heart of the envious man is gall and bitterness, his tongue spitteth venom; the success of his neighbour breaketh his rest.

He sitteth in his cell repining, and the good that happeneth to another, is to him an evil.

Hatred and malice feed upon his heart, and there is no rest in him.

He endeavours to depreciate those that excel him, and putteth an evil interpretation on all their doings.

He lieth on the watch, and meditates mischief; but the detestation of man pursueth him, and he is crushed as a spider in his own web.

PRUDENCE.

HEAR the words of Prudence, give heed unto her counsels, and store them in thine heart; her maxims are universal, and all the virtues lean upon her; she is the guide and mistress of human life.

Put a bridle on thy tongue: set a guard before thy lips, lest the words of thine own mouth destroy thy peace.

Let him that scoffeth at the lame, take care that he halt not himself: whosoever speaketh of another's failings with pleasure, shall hear of his own with bitterness of heart.

Of much speaking cometh repentance, but in silence is safety.

A talkative man is a nuisance to society; the ear

is sick of his babbling, the torrent of his words overwhelmeth conversation.

Boast not of thyself, for it shall bring contempt upon thee; neither deride another, for it is dangerous.

A bitter jest is the poison of friendship; and he that cannot restrain his tongue, shall have trouble.

Furnish thyself with the proper accommodations belonging to thy condition; yet spend not to the utmost of what thou canst afford, that the providence of thy youth may be a comfort to thy old age.

Let thine own business engage thy attention; leave the care of the state to the governors thereof.

Let not thy recreations be expensive, lest the pain of purchasing them exceed the pleasure thou hast in their enjoyment.

Neither let prosperity put out the eyes of circumspection, nor abundance cut off the hands of frugality; he that too much indulgeth in the superfluities of life, shall live to lament the want of its necessaries.

From the experience of others, do thou learn wisdom; and from their failings correct thine own faults.

When thou hast proved a man to be honest, lock him up in thine heart as a treasure! regard him as a jewel of inestimable price.

Refuse the favours of a mercenary man; they will be a snare unto thee; thou shalt never be quit of the obligation.

Use not to-day what to-morrow may want; neither leave that to hazard which foresight may provide for, or care prevent.

Yet expect not even from prudence infallible suc-

cess; for the day knoweth not what the night may bring forth.

The fool is not always unfortunate, nor the wise man always successful; yet never had a fool a thorough enjoyment; never was a wise man wholly unhappy.

FORTITUDE.

PERILS, and misfortunes, and want, and pain, and injury, are more or less the certain lot of every man that cometh into the world.

It behoveth thee, therefore, O child of calamity! early to fortify thy mind with courage and patience, that thou mayest support, with a becoming resolution, thy allotted portion of human evil.

As the camel beareth labour, and heat, and hunger, and thirst, through deserts of sand, and fainteth not; so the fortitude of man shall sustain him through all perils.

A man of a noble spirit disdaineth the malice of fortune; greatness of soul is not to be cast down.

He hath not suffered his happiness to depend on her smiles, and therefore with her frowns he shall not be dismayed.

As a rock on the sea-shore he standeth firm, and the dashing of the waves disturbeth him not.

He raiseth his head like a tower on a hill, and the arrows of fortune drop at his feet.

In the instant of danger the courage of his heart sustaineth him; and the steadiness of his mind beareth him out.

He meeteth the evils of life as a man that goeth forth into battle, and returneth with victory in his hand.

Under the pressure of misfortunes, his calmness

alleviates their weight, and his constancy shall surmount them.

But the dastardly spirit of a timorous man betrayeth him to shame.

As a reed is shaken with a breath of air, so the shadow of evil maketh him tremble.

In the hour of danger he is embarrassed and confounded; in the day of misfortune he sinketh, and despair overwhelmeth his soul.

CONTENTMENT.

FORGET not, O man! that thy station on earth is appointed by the wisdom of the Eternal: who knoweth thy heart, who seeth the vanity of all thy wishes, and who often, in mercy, denieth thy requests.

Yet for all reasonable desires, for all honest endeavours, his benevolence hath established, in the nature of things, a probability of success.

The uneasiness thou feelest, the misfortunes thou bewailest, behold the root from whence they spring; even thine own folly, thine own pride, thine own distempered fancy.

Murmur not therefore at the dispensations of God, but correct thine own heart: neither say within thyself, if I had wealth, or power, or leisure, I should be happy; for know, they all bring to their several possessors their peculiar inconveniences.

The poor man seeth not the vexations and anxieties of the rich, he feeleth not the difficulties and perplexities of power, neither knoweth he the wearisomeness of leisure; and therefore it is that he repineth at his own lot.

But envy not the appearance of happiness in any man, for thou knowest not his secret griefs.

To be satisfied with a little is the greatest wisdom; and he that increaseth his riches, increaseth his cares; but a contented mind is a hidden treasure, and trouble findeth it not.

Yet if thou sufferest not the allurements of fortune to rob thee of justice, or temperance, or charity, or modesty, even riches themselves shall not make thee unhappy.

But hence shalt thou learn, that the cup of felicity, pure and unmixed, is by no means a draught for mortal man.

Virtue is the race which God hath set him to run, and happiness the goal, which none can arrive at till he hath finished his course, and received his crown in the mansions of eternity.

TEMPERANCE.

THE nearest approach thou canst make to happiness on this side the grave, is to enjoy from heaven understanding and health.

These blessings if thou possessest, and wouldst preserve to old age, avoid the allurements of Voluptuousness, and fly from her temptation.

When she spreadeth her delicacies on the board, when her wine sparkleth in the cup, when she smileth upon thee, and persuadeth thee to be joyful and happy; then is the hour of danger, then let Reason stand firmly on her guard.

For if thou hearkenest unto the words of her adversary, thou art deceived and betrayed.

The joy which she promiseth, changeth to madness, and her enjoyments lead on to diseases and death.

Look round her board; cast thine eyes upon her guests, and observe those who have been allured by her smiles, who have listened to her temptations.

Are they not meagre or bloated? are they not sickly? are they not spiritless?

Their short hours of jollity and riot are followed by tedious days of pain and dejection. She hath debauched and palled their appetites, that they have no relish for their nicest dainties; her votaries are become her victims; the just and natural consequence which God hath ordained, in the constitution of things, for the punishment of those who abuse his gifts.

But who is she that with graceful steps, and with a lively air, trips over yonder plain?

The rose blusheth on her cheeks, the sweetness of the morning breatheth from her lips; joy, tempered with innocence and modesty, sparkleth in her eyes, and from the cheerfulness of her heart she singeth as she walks.

Her name is Health; she is the daughter of Exercise and Temperance; their sons inhabit the mountains of the northern regions.

They are brave, active, and lively, and partake of all the beauties and virtues of their sister.

Vigour stringeth their nerves, strength dwelleth in their bones, and labour is their delight all the day long.

The employments of their father excite their appetites, and the repasts of their mother refresh them.

To combat the passions is their delight; to conquer evil habits their glory.

Their pleasures are moderate, and therefore they endure; their repose is short, but sound and undisturbed.

Their blood is pure, their minds are serene, and the physician findeth not the way to their habitations.

But safety dwelleth not with the sons of men, neither is security found within their gates.

Behold them exposed to new dangers from without, while a traitor within lurketh to betray them.

Their health, their strength, their beauty and activity, have raised desire in the bosom of lascivious love.

She standeth in her bower, she courteth their regard, she spreadeth her temptations.

Her limbs are soft and delicate; her attire is loose and inviting. Wantonness speaketh in her eyes, and on her bosom sits temptation. She beckoneth them with her finger, she wooeth them with her looks, and by the smoothness of her tongue, she endeavoureth to deceive.

Ah! fly from her allurements, stop thy ears to her enchanting words. If thou meetest the languishing of her eyes; if thou hearest the softness of her voice; if she casteth her arms about thee, she bindeth thee in chains for ever:

Shame followeth, and disease, and want, and care, and repentance.

Enfeebled by dalliance, with luxury pampered, and softened by sloth, strength shall forsake thy limbs, and health thy constitution; thy days shall be few, and those inglorious: thy griefs shall be many, yet meet with no compassion.

THE PASSIONS.

HOPE AND FEAR.

THE promises of hope are sweeter than roses in the bud, and far more flattering to expectation; but the threatenings of fear are a terror to the heart.

Nevertheless let not hope allure, nor fear deter thee from doing that which is right; so shalt thou be prepared to meet all events with an equal mind.

The terrors even of death are no terrors to the good: he that committeth no evil hath nothing to fear.

In all thy undertakings let a reasonable assurance animate thy endeavours; if thou despairest of success, thou shalt not succeed.

Terrify not thy soul with vain fears, neither let thy heart sink within thee from the phantoms of imagination.

From fear proceedeth misfortune; but he that hopeth, helpeth himself.

As the ostrich, when pursued, hideth his head, but forgetteth his body; so the fears of a coward expose him to danger.

If thou believest a thing impossible, thy despondency shall make it so; but he that persevereth, shall overcome difficulties.

A vain hope flattereth the heart of a fool; but he that is wise pursueth it not.

In all thy desires let reason go along with thee, and fix not thy hopes beyond the bounds of probability, so shall success attend thy undertakings, thy heart shall not be vexed with disappointment.

JOY AND GRIEF.

LET not thy mirth be so extravagant as to intoxicate thy mind, nor thy sorrow so heavy as to depress thy heart. This world affordeth no good so transporting, nor inflicteth any evil so severe, as should raise thee far above, or sink thee much beneath, the balance of moderation.

Lo! yonder standeth the house of Joy. It is painted on the outside, and looketh gay; thou mayest know it from the continual noise of mirth and exultation that issueth from it.

The mistress standeth at the door, and calleth aloud to all that pass by; she singeth, and shouteth, and laugheth without ceasing.

She inviteth them to go in and taste the pleasures of life, which she telleth them are nowhere to be found but beneath her roof.

But enter not thou into her gate: neither associate thyself with those who frequent her house.

They call themselves the sons of Joy; they laugh and seem delighted: but madness and folly are in all their doings.

They are linked with mischief hand in hand, and their steps lead down to evil. Dangers beset them round about, and the pit of destruction yawneth beneath their feet.

Look now on the other side, and behold, in that vale overshadowed with trees, and hid from the sight of men, the habitation of Sorrow.

Her bosom heaveth with sighs, her mouth is filled with lamentation! she delighteth to dwell on the subject of human misery.

She looketh on the common accidents of life and weepeth: the weakness and wickedness of man is the theme of her lips.

All nature to her teemeth with evil, every object she seeth is tinged with the gloom of her own mind, and the voice of complaint saddeneth her dwelling day and night.

Come not near her cell; her breath is contagious; she will blast the fruits, and wither the flowers, that adorn and sweeten the garden of life.

In avoiding the house of Joy, let not thy feet betray thee to the borders of this dismal mansion: but pursue with care the middle path, which shall lead thee by a gentle ascent to the bower of Tranquillity.

With her dwelleth Peace, with her dwelleth Safety and Contentment. She is cheerful, but not gay; she is serious, but not grave; she vieweth the joys and sorrows of life with an equal and steady eye.

From hence, as from an eminence, shalt thou behold the folly and the misery of those, who, led by the gaiety of their hearts, take up their abode with the companions of Jollity and riotous Mirth; or infected with Gloominess and Melancholy, spend all their days in complaining of the woes and calamities of human life.

Thou shalt view them both with pity, and the error of their ways shall keep thy feet from straying.

ANGER.

As the whirlwind in its fury teareth up trees, and deformeth the face of nature, or as an earthquake in its convulsions overturneth whole cities; so the rage of an angry man throweth mischief around him. Danger and destruction wait on his hand.

But consider, and forget not thine own weakness; so shalt thou pardon the failings of others.

Indulge not thyself in the passion of anger; it is whetting a sword to wound thine own breast, or murder thy friend.

If thou bearest slight provocations with patience, it shall be imputed unto thee for wisdom; and if thou wipest them from thy remembrance, thy heart shall not reproach thee.

Seest thou not that the angry man loseth his understanding? Whilst thou art yet in thy senses, let the wrath of another be a lesson to thyself.

Do nothing in a passion. Why wilt thou put to sea in the violence of a storm?

If it be difficult to rule thine anger, it is wise to prevent it: avoid therefore all occasions of falling into wrath; or guard thyself against them whenever they occur.

A fool is provoked with insolent speeches, but a wise man laugheth them to scorn.

Harbour not revenge in thy breast, it will torment thy heart, and warp its best inclinations.

Be always more ready to forgive, than to return an injury: he that watches for an opportunity of revenge, lieth in wait against himself; and draweth down mischief on his own head.

A mild answer to an angry man, like water cast upon the fire, abateth his heat, and from an enemy he shall become thy friend.

Consider how few things are worthy of anger, and thou wilt wonder that any but fools should be wroth.

In folly or weakness it always beginneth; but remember, and be well assured, it seldom concludeth without repentance.

On the heels of folly treadeth shame: at the back of anger standeth remorse.

PITY.

As blossoms and flowers are strewed upon earth by the hand of spring, as the kindness of summer produceth in perfection the bounties of harvest; so the smiles of Pity shed blessings on the children of misfortune.

He who pitieth another, recommendeth himself; but he who is without compassion, deserveth it not.

The butcher relenteth not at the bleating of the lamb; neither is the heart of the cruel moved with distress.

But the tears of the compassionate are sweeter than dew-drops falling from roses on the bosom of the spring.

Shut not thine ear therefore against the cries of the poor; neither harden thine heart against the calamities of the innocent.

When the fatherless call upon thee, when the widow's heart is sunk, and she imploreth thy assistance with tears of sorrow; O pity her affliction, and extend thy hand to those who have none to help them.

When thou seest the naked wanderer of the street, shivering with cold, and destitute of habitation; let bounty open thine heart, let the wings of charity shelter him from death, that thine own soul may live.

Whilst the poor man groaneth on the bed of sickness, whilst the unfortunate languish in the horrors of a dungeon, or the hoary head of age lifts up a feeble eye to thee for pity; O how canst thou riot in superfluous enjoyments, regardless of their wants, unfeeling of their woes.

DESIRE AND LOVE.

BEWARE, young man, beware of the allurements of wantonness, and let not the harlot tempt thee to her delights.

The madness of desire shall defeat its own pursuits; from the blindness of its rage thou shalt rush upon destruction.

Therefore give not up thy heart to her enticements, neither suffer thy soul to be enslaved by her delusions.

The fountain of health, which must supply the stream of pleasure, shall quickly be dried up, and every spring of joy shall be exhausted.

In the prime of thy life old age shall overtake thee; thy sun shall decline in the morning of thy days.

But when virtue and modesty enlighten her charms, the lustre of a beautiful woman is brighter than the stars of heaven, and the influence of her power it is in vain to resist.

The whiteness of her bosom transcendeth the lily; her smile is more delicious than a garden of roses.

The innocence of her eye is like that of the turtle; simplicity and truth dwell in her heart.

The kisses of her mouth are sweeter than honey; the perfumes of Arabia breathe from her lips.

Shut not thy bosom to the tenderness of love: the purity of its flame shall ennoble thy heart, and soften it to receive the fairest impressions.

WOMAN.

GIVE ear, fair daughter of love, to the instructions of prudence, and let the precepts of truth sink

deep in thy heart, so shall the charms of thy mind add lustre to the elegance of thy form; and thy beauty, like the rose it resembleth, shall retain its sweetness when its bloom is withered.

In the spring of thy youth, in the morning of thy days, when the eyes of men gaze on thee with delight, and nature whispereth in thine ear the meaning of their looks: ah! hear with caution their seducing words; guard well thy heart, nor listen to their soft persuasions.

Remember that thou art made man's reasonable companion, not the slave of his passion; the end of thy being is not merely to gratify his loose desire, but to assist him in the toils of life, to soothe him with thy tenderness, and recompense his care with soft endearments.

Who is she that winneth the heart of man, that subdueth him to love, and reigneth in his breast?

Lo! yonder she walketh in maiden sweetness, with innocence in her mind, and modesty on her cheek.

Her hand seeketh employment, her foot delighteth not in gadding abroad.

She is clothed with neatness, she is fed with temperance; humility and meekness are as a crown of glory circling her head.

On her tongue dwelleth music, the sweetness of honey floweth from her lips.

Decency is in all her words, in her answers are mildness and truth.

Submission and obedience are the lessons of her life, and peace and happiness are her reward.

Before her steps walketh prudence, and virtue attendeth at her right hand.

Her eye speaketh softness and love; but discretion with a sceptre sitteth on her brow.

The tongue of the licentious is dumb in her presence, the awe of her virtue keepeth them silent.

When scandal is busy, and the fame of her neighbour is tossed from tongue to tongue: if charity and good-nature open not her mouth, the finger of silence resteth on her lip.

Her breast is the mansion of goodness, and therefore she suspecteth no evil in others.

Happy were the man that should make her his wife; happy the child that shall call her mother.

She presideth in the house and there is peace: she commandeth with judgment, and is obeyed.

She ariseth in the morning, she considers her affairs, and appointeth to every one their proper business.

The care of her family is her whole delight, to that alone she applieth her study: and elegance with frugality is seen in her mansions.

The prudence of her management is an honour to her husband, and he heareth her praise with a secret delight.

She informeth the minds of her children with wisdom; she fashioneth their manners from the example of her own goodness.

The word of her mouth is the law of their youth, the motion of her eye commendeth their obedience.

She speaketh, and her servants fly; she pointeth, and the thing is done: for the law of love is in their hearts, and her kindness addeth wings to their feet.

In prosperity she is not puffed up; in adversity she healeth the wounds of fortune with patience.

The troubles of her husband are alleviated by her counsels, and sweetened by her endearments: he putteth his heart in her bosom, and receiveth comfort.

CONSANGUINITY, OR NATURAL RELATIONS.

HUSBAND.

TAKE unto thyself a wife, and obey the ordinance of God: take unto thyself a wife, and become a faithful member of society.

But examine with care, and fix not suddenly. On thy present choice depends thy future happiness.

If much of her time is destroyed in dress and adornments; if she is enamoured with her own beauty, and delighteth in her own praise; if she laugheth much, and talketh loud; if her foot abideth not in her father's house, and her eyes with boldness rove on the faces of men: though her beauty were as the sun in the firmament of heaven, turn thy face from her charms, turn thy feet from her paths, and suffer not thy soul to be ensnared by the allurements of imagination.

But when thou findest sensibility of heart joined with softness of manners; an accomplished mind, with a form agreeable to thy fancy; take her home to thy house; she is worthy to be thy friend, thy companion in life, the wife of thy bosom.

O cherish her as a blessing sent thee from heaven
Let the kindness of thy behaviour endear thee to her heart.

She is the mistress of thy house; treat her therefore with respect, that thy servants may obey her.

Oppose not her inclinations without cause; she is the partner of thy cares, make her also the companion of thy pleasures.

Reprove her faults with gentleness; exact not her obedience with rigour.

Trust thy secrets in her beast; her counsels are sincere, thou shalt not be deceived.

Be faithful to her bed; for she is the mother of thy children.

When pain and sickness assault her, let thy tenderness soothe her affliction: a look from thee of pity and love shall alleviate her grief, or mitigate her pain, and be of more avail than ten physicians.

Consider the tenderness of her sex, the delicacy of her frame; and be not severe to her weakness, but remember thine own imperfections.

FATHER.

CONSIDER thou, who art a parent, the importance of thy trust: the being thou hast produced, it is thy duty to support.

Upon thee also it may depend, whether the child of thy bosom shall be a blessing or a curse to thyself; an useful or a worthless member to the community.

Prepare him early with instruction, and season his mind with the maxims of truth.

Watch the bent of his inclination, set him right in his youth, and let no evil habit gain strength with his years.

So shall he rise like a cedar on the mountains; his head shall be seen above the trees of the forest.

A wicked son is a reproach to his father: but he that doth right is an honour to his gray hairs.

The soil is thine own, let it not want cultivation: the seed which thou sowest, that also expect to reap.

Teach him obedience, and he shall bless thee: teach him modesty, and he shall not be ashamed.

Teach him gratitude, and he shall receive benefits: teach him charity, and he shall gain love.

Teach him temperance, and he shall have health: teach him prudence, and fortune shall attend him.

Teach him justice, and he shall be honoured by the world: teach him sincerity, and his own heart shall not reproach him.

Teach him diligence, and his wealth shall increase: teach him benevolence, and his mind shall be exalted.

Teach him science, and his life shall be useful: teach him religion, and his death shall be happy.

SON.

FROM the creatures of God let man learn wisdom, and apply to himself the instructions they give.

Go to the desert, my son: observe the young stork of the wilderness: let him speak to thy heart. He beareth on his wings his aged sire: he lodgeth him with safety, and supplieth him with food.

The piety of a child is sweeter than the incense of Persia offered to the sun; yea more delicious than odours wafted from a field of Arabian spices by the western gales.

Be grateful then to thy father, for he gave thee life; and to thy mother, for she sustained thee.

Hear the words of his mouth, for they are spoken for thy good: give ear to his admonition, for it proceedeth from love.

He hath watched for thy welfare, he hath toiled for thy ease: do honour therefore to his age, and let not his gray hairs be treated with irreverence.

Forget not thy helpless infancy, nor the forwardness of thy youth, and indulge the infirmities of

thy aged parents; assist and support them in the decline of life.

So shall their hoary heads go down to the grave in peace; and thine own children, in reverence of thy example, shall repay thy piety with filial love.

BROTHERS.

YE are the children of one father, provided for by his care; and the breast of one mother hath given you suck.

Let the bonds of affection, therefore, unite you, that peace and happiness may dwell in your father's house.

And when you separate in the world, remember the relation that bindeth you to love and unity; and prefer not a stranger to your own blood.

If thy brother is in adversity, assist him: if thy sister is in trouble, forsake her not.

So shall the fortunes of thy father contribute to the support of his whole race; and his care be continued to you all in your love to each other.

PROVIDENCE; OR THE ACCIDENTAL DIFFERENCES IN MEN.

WISE AND IGNORANT.

THE gifts of the understanding are the treasures of God; and he appointeth to every one his portion, in what measure seemeth good unto himself.

Hath he endued thee with wisdom? hath he enlightened thy mind with the knowledge of truth? Communicate it to the ignorant, for their instruc-

tion; communicate it to the wise, for thine own improvement.

True wisdom is less presuming than folly. The fool is obstinate, and doubteth not; he knoweth all things but his own ignorance.

The pride of emptiness is an abomination; and to talk much is the foolishness of folly. Nevertheless, it is the part of wisdom to bear impertinence with patience, and to pity absurdity.

Yet be not puffed up with thine own conceit, neither boast of superior understanding; the clearest human knowledge is but blindness and folly.

The wise man feeleth his imperfections, and is humbled; he laboureth in vain for his own approbation: but the fool peepeth in the shallow stream of his own mind, and is pleased with the pebbles which he sees at the bottom; he bringeth them up, and sheweth them as pearls; and with the applause of his brethren delighteth he himself.

He boasteth attainments in things that are of no worth: but where it is a shame to be ignorant, there he hath no understanding.

Even in the path of wisdom he toileth after folly; and shame and disappointment are the reward of his labour.

But the wise man cultivates his mind with knowledge: the improvement of arts is his delight, and their utility to the public crowneth him with honour.

Nevertheless the attainment of virtue he accounteth as the highest learning; and the science of happiness is the study of his life.

RICH AND POOR.

THE man to whom God hath given riches, and blessed with a mind to employ them aright, is peculiarly favoured, and highly distinguished.

He looketh on his wealth with pleasure, because it affordeth him the means to do good.

He seeketh out objects of compassion: he inquireth into their wants; he relieveth with judgment, and without ostentation.

He assisteth and rewardeth merit: he encourageth ingenuity, and liberally promoteth every useful design.

He carrieth on great works; his country is enriched, and the labourer is employed: he formeth new schemes, and the arts receive improvement.

He considereth the superfluities of his table as belonging to the poor of his neighbourhood; and he defraudeth them not.

The benevolence of his mind is not checked by his fortune; he rejoiceth therefore in riches, and his joy is blameless.

But woe unto him that heapeth up wealth in abundance, and rejoiceth alone in the possession thereof:

That grindeth the face of the poor, and considereth not the sweat of their brows.

He thriveth on oppression without feeling: the ruin of his brother disturbeth him not.

The tears of the orphan he drinketh as milk: the cries of the widow are music to his ear.

His heart is hardened with the love of wealth: no grief nor distress can make impression upon it.

But the curse of iniquity pursueth him: he liveth in continual fear: the anxiety of his mind, and the rapacious desires of his own soul, take vengeance upon him for the calamities he has brought upon others.

O what are the miseries of poverty, in comparison with the gnawings of this man's heart!

Let the poor man comfort himself, yea, rejoice; for he hath many reasons.

He sitteth down to his morsel in peace; his table is not crowded with flatterers and devourers.

He is not embarrassed with a train of dependants, nor teased with the clamours of solicitation.

Debarred from the dainties of the rich, he escapeth also their diseases.

The bread that he eateth, is it not sweet to his taste? the water he drinketh, is it not pleasant to his thirst? yea, far more delicious than the richest draughts of the luxurious.

His labour preserveth his health, and procureth him a repose, to which the downy bed of sloth is a stranger.

He limiteth his desires with humility, and the calm of contentment is sweeter to his soul than all the acquirements of wealth and grandeur.

Let not the rich therefore presume on his riches, nor the poor despond in his poverty; for the providence of God dispenseth happiness to them both.

MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

REPINE not, O man, at the state of servitude: it is the appointment of God, and hath many advantages; it removeth thee from the cares and solicitudes of life.

The honour of a servant is his fidelity: his highest virtues are submission and obedience.

Be patient, therefore, under the reproofs of thy master; and when he rebuketh thee answer not again. The silence of thy resignation shall not be forgotten.

Be studious of his interest, be diligent in his affairs, and faithful to the trust which he reposeth in thee.

Thy time and thy labour belong unto him. Defraud him not thereof, for he payeth thee for them.

And thou who art a master, be just to thy servant, if thou expectest from him fidelity; and reasonable in thy commands, if thou expectest a ready obedience.

The spirit of a man is in him; severity and rigour may create fear, but can never command his love.

Mix kindness with reproof, and reason with authority: so shall thy admonitions take place in his heart, and his duty shall become his pleasure.

He shall serve thee faithfully from the motive of gratitude; he shall obey thee cheerfully from the principle of love: and fail not thou, in return, to give his diligence and fidelity their proper reward.

MAGISTRATES AND SUBJECTS.

O THOU, favourite of heaven, whom the sons of men, thy equals, have agreed to raise to sovereign power, and set as a ruler over themselves; consider the ends and importance of their trust, far more than the dignity and height of thy station.

Thou art clothed in purple, and seated on a throne; the crown of majesty investeth thy temples; the sceptre of power is placed in thy hand; but not for thyself were these ensigns given; not meant for thine own, but the good of thy kingdom.

The glory of a king is the welfare of his people; his power and dominion rest on the hearts of his subjects.

The mind of a great prince is exalted with the grandeur of his situation: he revolveth high things, and searcheth for business worthy of his power.

He calleth together the wise men of his kingdom, he consulteth amongst them with freedom, and heareth the opinions of them all,

He looketh among his people with discernment; he discovereth the abilities of men, and employeth them according to their merits.

His magistrates are just, his ministers are wise, and the favourite of his bosom deceiveth him not.

He smileth on the arts, and they flourish: the sciences improve beneath the culture of his hand.

With the learned and ingenious he delighteth himself; he kindleth in their breasts emulation, and the glory of his kingdom is exalted by their labours.

The spirit of the merchant, who extendeth his commerce; the skill of the farmer, who enricheth his lands; the ingenuity of the artist, the improvement of the scholar; all these he honoureth with his favour, or rewardeth with his bounty.

He planteth new colonies, he buildeth strong ships, he openeth rivers for convenience, he formeth harbours for safety; his people abound in riches, and the strength of his kingdom increaseth.

He frameth his statutes with equity and wisdom; his subjects enjoy the fruits of their labour in security; and their happiness consists in the observance of the law.

He foundeth his judgments on the principles of mercy; but in the punishment of offenders he is strict and impartial.

His ears are open to the complaints of his subjects; he restraineth the hand of their oppressors, and delivereth them from their tyranny.

His people therefore look up to him as a father, with reverence and love; they consider him as the guardian of all they enjoy.

Their affection unto him begetteth in his breast a love of the public; the security of their happiness, is the object of his care.

No murmurs against him arise in their hearts:

the machinations of his enemies endanger not his state.

His subjects are faithful, and firm in his cause; they stand in his defence as a wall of brass; the army of a tyrant flieth before them as chaff before the wind.

Security and peace bless the dwellings of his people; glory and strength encircle his throne for ever.

THE SOCIAL DUTIES.

BENEVOLENCE.

WHEN thou considerest thy wants, when thou beholdest thy imperfections, acknowledge his goodness, O son of humanity! who honoured thee with reason, endued thee with speech, and placed thee in society, to receive and confer reciprocal helps and mutual obligations.

Thy food, thy clothing, thy convenience of habitation; thy protection from the injuries, thy enjoyments of the comforts and the pleasures of life: all these thou owest to the assistance of others, and couldst not enjoy but in the bands of society.

It is thy duty therefore to be a friend to mankind, as it is thy interest that man should be friendly to thee.

As the rose breatheth sweetness from its own nature, so the heart of a benevolent man produceth good works.

He enjoyeth the ease and tranquillity of his own breast, and rejoiceth in the happiness and prosperity of his neighbour.

He openeth not his ear unto slander: the faults and the failings of men give a pain to his heart.

His desire is to do good, and he searcheth out the occasions thereof; in removing the oppressions of another he relieveth himself.

From the largeness of his mind, he comprehendeth in his wishes the happiness of all men; and from the generosity of his heart, he endeavoureth to promote it.

JUSTICE.

THE peace of society dependeth on justice; the happiness of individuals, on the safe enjoyment of all their possessions.

Keep the desires of thy heart, therefore, within the bounds of moderation: let the hand of justice lead them aright.

Cast not an evil eye on the goods of thy neighbour; let whatever is his property be sacred from thy touch.

Let no temptation allure thee, nor any provocation excite thee, to lift up thy hand to the hazard of his life.

Defame him not in his character; bear no false witness against him.

Corrupt not his servant to cheat or forsake him; and the wife of his bosom, O tempt not to sin.

It will be a grief to his heart, which thou canst not relieve; an injury to his life, which no reparation can atone for.

In thy dealings with men, be impartial and just; and do unto them as thou wouldst they should do unto thee.

Be faithful to thy trust, and deceive not the man who relieth upon thee; be assured it is less evil in the sight of God to steal, than to betray.

Oppress not the poor, and defraud not of his hire the labouring man.

When thou sellest for gain, hear the whisperings

of conscience, and be satisfied with moderation; nor from the ignorance of the buyer make any advantage.

Pay the debts which thou owest, for he who gave thee credit, relied upon thine honour: and to withhold from him his due, is both mean and unjust.

Finally, O son of society! examine thy heart, call remembrance to thy aid; and if in any of these things thou findest thou hast transgressed, take sorrow and shame to thyself, and make speedy reparation to the utmost of thy power.

CHARITY.

HAPPY is the man who hath sown in his breast the seeds of benevolence; the produce thereof shall be charity and love.

From the fountain of his heart shall rise rivers of goodness; and the streams shall overflow for the benefit of mankind.

He assisteth the poor in their trouble; he rejoiceth in furthering the prosperity of all men.

He censureth not his neighbour, he believeth not the tales of envy and malevolence, neither repeateth he their slanders.

He forgiveth the injuries of men, he wipeth them from his remembrance; revenge and malice have no place in his heart.

For evil he returneth not evil; he hateth not even his enemies, but requiteth their injustice with friendly admonition.

The griefs and anxietes of men excite his compassion; he endeavoureth to alleviate the weight of their misfortunes, and the pleasure of success rewardeth his labour.

He calmeth the fury, he healeth the quarrels of angry men, and preventeth the mischiefs of strife and animosity

He promoteth in his neighbourhood peace and good-will, and his name is repeated with praise and benedictions.

GRATITUDE.

As the branches of a tree return their sap to the root from whence it arose; as a river poureth his streams to the sea, where his spring was supplied; so the heart of a grateful man delighteth in returning a benefit received.

He acknowledgeth his obligations with cheerfulness; he looketh on his benefactor with love and esteem.

And if to return it be not in his power, he nourisheth the memory of it in his breast with kindness, he forgetteth it not all the days of his life.

The hand of the generous man is like the clouds of heaven, which drop upon the earth, fruits, herbage, and flowers: but the heart of the ungrateful is like a desert of sand, which swalloweth with greediness the showers that fall, and burieth them in its bosom, and produceth nothing.

Envy not thy benefactor, neither strive to conceal the benefit he hath conferred; for though the act of generosity commandeth admiration, yet the humility of gratitude toucheth the heart, and is amiable in the sight both of God and man.

But receive not a favour from the hands of the proud; to the selfish and avaricious have no obligation: the vanity of pride shall expose thee to shame, the greediness of avarice shall never be satisfied.

SINCERITY.

O THOU who art enamoured with the beauties of Truth, and hast fixed thy heart on the simplicity of her charms, hold fast thy fidelity unto her, and for-

sake her not; the constancy of thy virtue shall crown thee with honour.

The tongue of the sincere is rooted in his heart; hypocrisy and deceit have no place in his words.

He blusheth at falsehood, and is confounded: but in speaking the truth he hath a steady eye.

He supporteth as a man the dignity of his character; to the arts of hypocrisy he scorneth to stoop.

He is consistent with himself; he is never embarrassed; he hath courage enough for truth, but to lie he is afraid.

He is far above the meanness of dissimulation; the words of his mouth are the thoughts of his heart.

Yet with prudence and caution he openeth his lips; he studieth what is right, and speaketh with discretion.

He adviseth with friendship, he reproveth with freedom: and whatsoever he promiseth shall surely be performed.

But the heart of the hypocrite is hid in his breast; he masketh his words in the semblance of truth, while the business of his life is only to deceive.

He laugheth in sorrow, he weepeth in joy; and the words of his mouth have no interpretation.

He worketh in the dark as a mole, and fancieth he is safe; but he blundereth into light, and is betrayed and exposed, with his dirt on his head.

He passeth his days with perpetual constraint: his tongue and his heart are for ever at variance.

He laboureth for the character of a righteous man; and huggeth himself in the thoughts of his cunning.

O fool, fool! the pains which thou takest to hide what thou art, are more than would make thee what thou wouldst seem; and the children of wis-

dom shall mock at thy cunning, when, in the midst of security, thy disguise is stripped off, and the finger of derision shall point thee to scorn.

RELIGION.

THERE is but one God, the author, the creator, the governor of the world, almighty, eternal, and incomprehensible.

The sun is not God, though his noblest image. He enliveneth the world with his brightness, his warmth giveth life to the products of the earth: admire him as the creature, the instrument of God; but worship him not.

To the One who is supreme, most wise and beneficent, and to him alone, belong worship, adoration, thanksgiving, and praise!

Who hath stretched forth the heavens with his hand; who hath described with his finger the courses of the stars.

Who setteth bounds to the ocean, that it cannot pass; and saith unto the stormy winds, Be still.

Who shaketh the earth, and the nations tremble: who darteth his lightnings, and the wicked are dismayed.

Who calleth forth worlds by the word of his mouth; who smiteth with his arm, and they sink into nothing.

O reverence the Majesty of the Omnipotent; and tempt not his anger, lest thou be destroyed!

The providence of God is over all his works: he ruleth and directeth with infinite wisdom.

He hath instituted laws for the government of the world; he hath wonderfully varied them in his beings; and each by his nature, conformeth to his will.

In the depths of his mind he revolveth all knowledge; the secrets of futurity lie open before him.

The thoughts of thy heart are naked to his view: he knoweth thy determinations before they are made.

With respect to his prescience, there is nothing contingent: with respect to his providence, there is nothing accidental.

Wonderful is he in all his ways; his counsels are inscrutable; the manner of his knowledge transcendeth thy conception.

Pay therefore to his wisdom all honour and veneration; and bow down thyself in humble and submissive obedience to his supreme direction.

The Lord is gracious and beneficent: he hath created the world in mercy and love.

His goodness is conspicuous in all his works: he is the fountain of excellence, the centre of perfection.

The creatures of his hand declare his goodness, and all their enjoyments speak his praise: he clotheth them with beauty, he supporteth them with food, he preserveth them with pleasure from generation to generation.

If we lift up our eyes to the heavens, his glory shineth forth; if we cast them down upon the earth, it is full of his goodness: the hills and the valleys rejoice and sing; fields, rivers, and woods resound his praise.

But thou, O man, he hath distinguished with peculiar favour; and exalted thy station above all creatures.

He hath endued thee with reason, to maintain thy dominion: he hath fitted thee with language, to improve by society; and exalted thy mind with the powers of meditation, to contemplate and adore his inimitable perfections.

And in the laws he hath ordained as the rule of thy life, so kindly hath he suited thy duty to thy

nature, that obedience to his precepts is happiness to thyself.

O praise his goodness with songs of thanksgiving, and meditate in silence, on the wonders of his love; let thy heart overflow with gratitude and acknowledgment; let the language of thy lips speak praise and adoration; let the actions of thy life shew thy love to his law.

The Lord is just and righteous, and will judge the earth with equity and truth.

Hath he established his laws in goodness and mercy, and shall he not punish the transgressors thereof?

O think not, bold man! because thy punishment is delayed, that the arm of the Lord is weakened: neither flatter thyself with hopes that he winketh at thy doings.

His eye pierceth the secrets of every heart, and he remembereth them for ever: he respecteth not the persons or the stations of men.

The high and the low, the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, when the soul hath shaken off the cumbrous shackles of this mortal life, shall equally receive from the sentence of God a just and everlasting retribution, according to their works.

Then shall the wicked tremble and be afraid; but the heart of the righteous shall rejoice in his judgments.

O fear the Lord, therefore, all the days of thy life, and walk in the paths which he hath opened before thee. Let prudence admonish thee, let temperance restrain, let justice guide thy hand, and benevolence warm thy heart, and gratitude to heaven inspire thee with devotion. These shall give thee happiness in thy present state, and bring thee to the mansions of eternal felicity, in the paradise of God.

This is the true ECONOMY of HUMAN LIFE.

MAN CONSIDERED IN THE GENERAL.

OF THE HUMAN FRAME AND STRUCTURE.

WEAK and ignorant as thou art, O man! humble as thou oughtest to be, O child of the dust! wouldst thou raise thy thoughts to infinite wisdom? wouldst thou see Omnipotence displayed before thee? contemplate thine own frame.

Fearfully and wonderfully art thou made: praise therefore thy Creator with awe, and rejoice before him with reverence.

Wherefore of all creatures art thou only erect, but that thou shouldst behold his works! wherefore art thou to behold, but that thou mayest admire them! wherefore to admire, but that thou mayest adore their and thy Creator!

Wherefore is consciousness reposed in thee alone? and whence is it derived to thee?

It is not in flesh to think; it is not in bones to reason. The lion knoweth not that worms shall eat him; the ox perceiveth not that he is fed for slaughter.

Something is added to thee unlike to what thou seest: something informs thy clay, higher than all that is the object of thy senses. Behold, what is it?

Thy body remaineth perfect after it is fled, therefore it is no part of it; it is immaterial; therefore it is eternal; it is free to act, therefore it is unaccountable for its actions.

Knoweth the ass the use of food, because his teeth mow down the herbage? or standeth the crocodile erect, although his back bone is as strait as thine.

God formed thee as he had formed these: after them all wast thou created: superiority and com-

mand were given thee over all; and of his own breath did he communicate to thee thy principle of knowledge.

Know thyself then the pride of his creation, the link uniting divinity and matter; behold a part of God himself within thee: remember thine own dignity, nor dare to descend to evil or meanness.

Who planted terror in the tail of the serpent? who clothed the neck of the horse with thunder? even he who hath instructed thee to crush the one under thy feet, and to tame the other to thy purposes.

OF THE USE OF THE SENSES.

VAUNT not of thy *body*, because it was first formed; nor of thy *brain*, because therein thy soul resideth. *Is not the* master of the *house more honourable than* its walls?

The ground must be prepared before corn can be planted; the potter must build his furnace before he can make his porcelain.

As the breath of Heaven sayeth unto the waters of the deep, This way shall thy billows roll, and no other; thus high and no higher, shall they raise their fury; so let thy spirit, O man, actuate and direct thy flesh; so let it repress its wildness.

Thy soul is the monarch of thy frame; suffer not its subjects to rebel against it.

Thy body is as the globe of the earth, thy bones the pillars that sustain it on its basis.

As the ocean giveth rise to springs, whose waters return again into its bosom through the rivers, so runneth thy life from thy heart outwards, and so runneth it into its place again.

Do not both retain their course for ever? Behold, the same God ordaineth them.

Is not thy nose the channel to perfumes? thy

mouth the path to delicacies? Yet know thou, that perfumes long smelt become offensive, that delicacies destroy the appetite they flatter.

Are not thine eyes the centinels that watch for thee? yet how often are they unable to distinguish truth from error?

Keep thy soul in moderation, teach thy spirit to be attentive to its good: so shall these its ministers be always open to the conveyances of truth.

Thine hand is it not a miracle? is there in the creation aught like unto it? wherefore was it given thee, but that thou mightest stretch it out to the assistance of thy brother?

Why of all things living art thou alone made capable of blushing? The world shall read thy shame upon thy face: therefore do nothing shameful.

Fear and dismay, why rob they the countenance of its ruddy splendour. Avoid guilt, and thou shalt know that fear is beneath thee; that dismay is unmanly.

Wherefore to thee alone speak shadows in the visions of thy pillow? Reverence them, for know, that dreams are from on high.

Thou man alone canst speak. Wonder at thy glorious prerogative; and pay to him who gave it thee a rational and welcome praise, teaching thy children wisdom, instructing the offspring of thy loins in piety.

THE SOUL OF MAN, ITS ORIGIN AND AFFECTIONS.

THE blessings, O man! of thy external part, are health, vigour, and proportion. The greatest of these is health. What health is to the body, even that is honesty to the soul.

That thou hast a soul, is of all knowledge the most certain, of all truths the most plain unto thee.

Be meek, be grateful for it. Seek not to know it, it is inscrutable.

Thinking, understanding, reasoning, willing, call not these the soul! They are its actions, but they are not its essence.

Raise it not too high, that thou be not despised. Be not thou like unto those who fall by climbing: neither debase it to the sense of brutes; nor be thou like unto the horse, and the mule, in whom there is no such understanding.

Search it by its faculties; know it by its virtues. They are more in number than the hairs of thy head; the stars of heaven are not to be counted with them.

Think not with Arabia, that one soul is parted among all men; neither believe thou with the sons of Egypt, that every man hath many; know, that as thy heart, so also thy soul is one.

Doth not the sun harden the clay? doth it not also soften the wax? As it is one sun that worketh both, even so it is one soul that willeth contraries.

As the moon retaineth her nature, though darkness spread itself before her face as a curtain, so the soul remaineth perfect, even in the bosom of a fool.

She is immortal; she is unchangeable; she is alike in all. Health calleth her forth to shew her loveliness, and application anointeth her with the oil of wisdom.

Although she shall live after thee, think not she was born before thee. She was concreated with thy flesh, and formed with thy brain.

Justice could not give her to thee exalted by virtues, nor mercy deliver her to thee deformed by vices. These must be thine, and thou must answer for them.

Suppose not death can shield thee from examination; think not corruption can hide thee

from inquiry. He who formed thee of thou knowest not what, can he not raise thee to thou knowest not what again?

Perceiveth not the cock the hour of midnight? Exalteth he not his voice, to tell thee it is morning? Knoweth not the dog the footsteps of his master? and flieth not the wounded goat unto the herb that healeth him? Yet when these die, their spirit returneth to the dust: thine alone surviveth.

Envy not these their senses, because quicker than thine own. Learn that the advantage lieth not in possessing good things, but in knowing how to use them.

Hadst thou the ear of a stag, or were thine eye as strong and piercing as the eagle's; didst thou equal the hound in smell, or could the ape resign to thee his taste, or the tortoise her feeling; yet without reason, what would they avail thee? Perish not all these like their kindred?

Hath any one of them the gift of speech? Can any say unto thee, Therefore did I so?

The lips of the wise are as the doors of a cabinet; no sooner are they opened, but treasures are poured out before thee.

Like unto trees of gold arranged in beds of silver, are wise sentences uttered in due season.

Canst thou think too greatly of thy soul? or can too much be said in its praise? It is the image of him who gave it.

Remember thou its dignity for ever; forget not how great a talent is committed to thy charge.

Whatsoever may do good, may also do harm. Beware that thou direct her course to virtue.

Think not that thou canst lose her in the crowd; suppose not that thou canst bury her in thy closet. Action is her delight, and she will not be withheld from it.

Her motion is perpetual; her attempts are universal; her agility is not to be suppressed. Is it at the uttermost parts of the earth; she will have it: is it beyond the region of the stars, yet will her eye discover it.

Inquiry is her delight. As one who traverseth the burning sands in search of water, so is the soul that searcheth after knowledge.

Guard her, for she is rash; restrain her, for she is is irregular; correct her, for she is outrageous; more supple is she than water, more flexible than wax, more yielding than air. Is there aught can bind her?

As a sword in the hand of a madman, even so is the soul to him who wanteth discretion.

The end of her search is truth; her means to discover it are reason and experience. But are not these weak, uncertain, and fallacious? How then shall she attain unto it?

General opinion is no proof of truth, for the generality of men are ignorant.

Perceivest thou of thyself, the knowledge of him who created thee, the sense of the worship thou owest unto him? are not these plain before thy face? And behold! what is there more that man needeth to know?

OF THE PERIOD AND USES OF HUMAN LIFE.

As the eye of morning to the lark, as the shade of evening to the owl, as honey to the bee, or as the carcase to the vulture; even such is life unto the heart of man.

Thongh bright, it dazzleth not; though obscure, it displeaseth not; though sweet, it cloyeth not; though corrupt, it forbiddeth not; yet who is he that knoweth its true value?

Learn to esteem life as it ought; then art thou near the pinnacle of wisdom.

Think not with the fool, that nothing is more valuable; nor believe with the pretended wise, that thou oughtest to contemn it. Love it not for itself, but for the good it may be of to others.

Gold cannot buy it for thee, neither can mines of diamonds purchase back the moments thou hast now lost of it. Employ the succeeding ones in virtue.

Say not, that it were best not to have been born; or if born, that it had been best to die early: neither dare thou to ask of thy Creator, 'Where had been the evil if I had not existed? Good is in thy power; the want of good is evil; and if the question be just; lo! it condemneth thee.

Would the fish swallow the bait if he knew the hook was hidden therein? would the lion enter the toils if he saw they were prepared for him? so neither, were the soul to perish with this clay, would man wish to live; neither would a merciful God have created him: know hence thou shalt live afterward.

As the bird is inclosed in the cage before he seeth it, yet teareth not his flesh against its sides; so neither labour thou vainly to run from the state thou art in; but know it is allotted thee, and be content with it.

Though its ways are uneven, yet are they not all painful. Accommodate thyself to all; and where there is least appearance of evil, suspect the greatest danger.

When thy bed is straw, thou sleepest in security; but when thou stretchest thyself on roses, beware of the thorns.

A good death is better than an evil life; strive therefore to live as long as thou oughtest; while thy life is to others worth more than thy death, it it is thy duty to preserve it.

Complain not with the fool of the shortness of

thy time: remember that with thy days, thy cares are shortened.

Take from the period of thy life the useless parts of it, and what remaineth? Take off the time of thine infancy, the second infancy of age, thy sleep, thy thoughtless hours, thy days of sickness: and even at the fulness of years how few seasons hast thou truly numbered.

He who gave thee life as a blessing, shortened it to make it more so. To what end would longer life have served thee? Wishest thou to have had an opportunity of more vices? As to the good, will not he who limited thy span, be satisfied with the fruits of it.

To what end, O child of sorrow! wouldst thou live longer; to breathe, to eat, to see the world? All this thou hast done often already. Too frequent repetition, is it not tiresome? or is it not superfluous?

Wouldst thou improve thy wisdom and thy virtue? Alas! what art thou to know? or who is it that shall teach thee? Badly thou employest the little that thou hast, dare not, therefore, to complain that more is not given thee.

Repine not at the want of knowledge; it must perish with thee in the grave. Be honest here, and thou shalt be wise hereafter.

Say not unto the crow, Why numberest thou seven times the age of thy lord? or to the fawn, why are thine eyes to see my offspring to an hundred generations? Are these to be compared with thee in the abuse of life? are they riotous? are they cruel? are they ungrateful? Learn from them rather, that innocence of life and simplicity of manners are the paths to a good old age.

Knowest thou to employ life better than these? then less of it may suffice thee.

Man who dares enslave the world when he knows he can enjoy his tyranny but a moment, what would he not aim at if he were immortal?

Enough hast thou of life, but thou regardest it not: thou art not in want of it, O man! but thou art prodigal: thou throwest it lightly away, as if thou hadst more than enough; and yet thou repinest that it is not gathered again unto thee.

Know that it it not abundance which maketh rich, but economy.

The wise continueth to live from his first period; the fool is always beginning.

Labour not after riches first, and think thou afterwards wilt enjoy them. He who neglecteth the present moment, throweth away all he hath. As the arrow passeth through the heart, while the warrior knew not that it was coming; so shall his life be taken away before he knoweth that he hath it.

What then is life, that man should desire it? what breathing, that he should covet it?

Is it not a scene of delusion, a series of misadventures, a pursuit of evils linked on all sides together? In the beginning it is ignorance, pain is in its middle, and its end is sorrow.

As one wave pusheth on another till both are involved in that behind them, even so succeedeth evil to evil in the life of man; the greater and the present swallow up the lesser and the past. Our terrors are real evils: our expectations look forward into improbabilities.

Fools, to dread as mortals, and to desire as if immortal!

It is said, gray hairs are revered, and in length of days is honour. Virtue can add reverence to the bloom of youth; and without it age plants more wrinkles in the soul than on the forehead.

Is age respected because it hateth riot? What justice is in this, when it is not age that despiseth pleasure, but pleasure that despiseth age.

Be virtuous while thou art young, so shall thine age be honoured.

MAN CONSIDERED IN REGARD TO HIS INFIRMITIES, AND THEIR EFFECTS.

VANITY.

INCONSTANCY is powerful in the heart of man; intemperance swayeth it whither it will; despair engrosseth much of it; and fear proclaimeth, Behold, I sit unrivalled therein! but vanity is beyond them all.

Weep not therefore at the calamities of the human state; rather laugh at its follies. In the hands of the man addicted to vanity, life is but the shadow of a dream.

The hero, the most renowned of human characters, what is he but the bubble of this weakness! The public is unstable and ungrateful; why should the man of wisdom endanger himself for fools?

The man who neglecteth his present concerns, to revolve how he will behave when greater, feedeth himself with wind, while his bread is eaten by another.

Act as becometh thee in thy present station; and in more exalted ones thy face shall not be ashamed.

What blindeth the eye, or what hideth the heart of a man from himself, like vanity? Lo! when thou seest not thyself, then others discover thee most plainly.

As the tulip that is gaudy without smell, con-

spicuous without use; so is the man who setteth himself up on high, and hath not merit.

The heart of the vain is troubled while it seemeth content; his cares are greater than his pleasures.

His solicitude cannot rest with his bones; the grave is not deep enough to hide it; he extendeth his thoughts beyond his being: he bespeaketh praise to be paid when he is gone: but whoso promiseth it, deceiveth him.

As the man that engageth his wife to remain in widowhood, that she disturb not his soul; so is he who expecteth that praise shall reach his ears beneath the earth, or cherish his heart in its shroud.

Do well while thou livest; but regard not what is said of it. Content thyself with deserving praise, and thy posterity shall rejoice in hearing it.

As the butterfly, who seeth not her own colours; as the jessamine which feeleth not the scent it casteth around: so is the man who appeareth gay, and biddeth others to take note of it.

To what purpose, said he, is my vesture of gold? to what end are my tables filled with dainties, if no eye gaze upon them; if the world know it not? Give thy raiment to the naked, and thy food unto the hungry; so shalt thou be praised, and feel that thou deservest it.

Why bestowest thou on every man the flattery of unmeaning words? Thou knowest when returned thee, thou regardest it not. He knoweth he lieth unto thee; yet he knoweth thou wilt thank him for it. Speak in sincerity, and thou shalt hear with instruction.

The vain delighteth to speak of himself; but he seeth not that others like not to hear him.

If we have done any thing worth praise, if he possess that which is worthy of admiration, his joy is to proclaim it, his pride is to hear it reported.

The desire of such a man defeateth itself. Men say not, Behold, he hath done it: or, See, he possesseth it: but, Mark how proud he is of it.

The heart of man cannot attend at once to many things. He who fixeth his soul on show, loseth reality. He pursueth bubbles which soon break, while he treads to earth what would do him honour.

INCONSTANCY.

NATURE urgeth thee to inconstancy, O man! therefore guard thyself at all times against it.

Thou art from the womb of thy mother various and wavering. From the loins of thy father inheritest thou instability; how then shalt thou be firm?

Those who gave thee a body, furnished it with weakness; but he who gave thee a soul, armed thee with resolution. Employ it, and thou art wise; be wise, and thou art happy.

Let him who doeth well, beware how he boasteth of it.

Beware of irresolution in the intent of thy actions; beware of instability in the execution; so shalt thou triumph over two great failings of thy nature.

What reproacheth reason more than to act contrarieties? What can suppress the tendencies to these, but firmness of mind?

The inconstant feeleth that he changeth, but he knoweth not why; he seeth that he escapeth from himself, but he perceiveth not how. Be thou incapable of change in that which is right, and men will rely upon thee.

Establish unto thyself principles of action, and see that thou ever act according to them.

First know that thy principles are just, and then be thou inflexible in the path of them.

How should his actions be right who hath no rule of life? Nothing can be just which proceedeth not from reason.

The inconstant hath no peace in his soul; neither can any be at ease whom he concerneth himself with.

His life is unequal; his motions are irregular; his mind changeth with the weather.

To-day he loveth thee, to-morrow thou art detested by him: and why? himself knoweth not wherefore he loved, or wherefore he now hateth.

To-day he is the tyrant; to-morrow thy servant is less humble: and why? he who is arrogant without power, will be servile where there is no subjection.

To-day he is profuse, to-morrow he grudgeth unto his mouth that which it should eat. Thus it is with him who knoweth not moderation.

Who shall say of the chamelion, He is black, when the moment after, the verdure of the grass overspreadeth him!

Who shall say of the inconstant, He is joyful, when his next breath shall be spent in sighing?

What is the life of such a man but the phantom of a dream? In the morning he riseth happy, at noon he is on the rack; this hour he is a god, the next below a worm; one moment he laugheth, the next he weepeth; he now willeth, in an instant he willeth not, and in another he knoweth not whether he willeth or no.

Yet neither ease nor pain have fixed themselves on him; neither is he waxed greater, nor become less; neither hath he had cause for laughter, nor reason for his sorrow: therefore shall none of them abide with him.

The happiness of the inconstant is as a palace

built on the surface of the sand: the blowing of the wind carrieth away its foundation; what wonder then that it falleth?

But what exalted form is this, that hitherwards directs its even, its uninterrupted course? whose foot is on the earth, whose head is above the clouds?

On his brow sitteth majesty; steadiness is in his port; and in his heart reigneth tranquillity.

Though obstacles appear in the way, he deigneth not to look down upon them, though heaven and earth oppose his passage, he proceedeth.

The mountains sink beneath his tread; the waters of the ocean are dried up under the sole of his foot.

The tiger throweth himself across his way in vain; the spots of the leopard glow against him unregarded.

He marcheth through the embattled legions; with his hand he putteth aside the terrors of death.

Storms roar against his shoulders, but are not able to shake them; the thunder bursteth over his head in vain; the lightnings serveth but to shew the glories of his countenance.

His name is RESOLUTION! He cometh from the utmost parts of the earth; he seeth happiness afar off before him; his eye discovereth her temple beyond the limits of the pole.

He walketh up to it, he entereth boldly, and he remaineth there for ever.

Establish thy heart, O man! in that which is right; and then know the greatest of human praise is to be immutable.

WEAKNESS.

VAIN and inconstant as thou art, O child of imperfection! how canst thou but be weak? Is not in-

constancy connected with frailty? Can there be vanity without infirmity? avoid the danger of the one, and thou shalt escape the mischiefs of the other.

Wherein art thou most weak? in that wherein thou seemest most strong; in that wherein thou most gloriest: even in possessing the things which thou hast: in using the good that is about thee.

Are not thy desires also frail? or knowest thou even what it is thou wouldst wish? When thou hast obtained what most thou soughtest after, behold it contenteth thee not.

Wherefore loseth the pleasure that is before thee its relish? and why appeareth that which is yet to come the sweeter? Because thou art wearied with the good of this, because thou knowest not the evil of that which is not with thee. Know that to be content is to be happy.

Couldst thou choose for thyself, would thy Creator lay before thee all that thine heart could ask for? would happiness then remain with thee? or would joy dwell always in thy gates?

Alas! thy weakness forbiddeth it; thy infirmity declareth against it. Variety is to thee in the place of pleasure; but that which permanently delighteth must be permanent.

When it is gone, thou repentest the loss of it, though, while it was with thee, thou despisest it.

That which succeedeth it, hath no more pleasure for thee: and thou afterwards quarrellest with thyself for preferring it; behold the only circumstance in which thou errest not!

Is there any thing in which thy weakness appeareth more than in desiring things! It is in the possessing, and in the using them.

Good things cease to be good in our enjoyment of them. What nature meant pure sweets, are

sources of bitterness to us; from our delights arise pain, from our joys, sorrow.

Be moderate in the enjoyment, and it shall remain in thy possession; let thy joy be founded on reason; and to its end shall sorrow be a stranger.

The delights of love are ushered in by sighs, and they terminate in languishment and dejection.

The object thou burnest for, nauseates with satiety; and no sooner hast thou possessed it, but thou art weary of its presence.

Join esteem to thy admiration, unite friendship with thy love: so shalt thou find in the end, content so absolute, that it surpasseth raptures; tranquillity is more worth than extasy.

God hath given thee no good without its admixture of evil; but he hath given thee also the means of throwing off the evil from it.

As joy is not without the alloy of pain, so neither is sorrow without its portion of pleasure. Joy and grief, though unlike, are united. Our own choice only can give them us entire.

Melancholy itself often giveth delight, and the extremity of joy is mingled with tears.

The best things in the hands of a fool may be turned to his destruction; and out of the worst the wise will find the means of good.

So blended is weakness in thy nature, O man; that thou hast not strength either to be good, or to be evil entirely. Rejoice that thou canst not excel in evil, and let the good that is within thy reach content thee.

The virtues are allotted to various stations. Seek not after impossibilities, nor grieve that thou canst not possess them at all.

Wouldst thou at once have the liberality of the rich and the contentment of the poor? or

shall the wife of thy bosom be despised, because she sheweth not the virtues of the widow?

If thy father sinks before thee in the division of thy country, can at once thy justice destroy him, and thy duty save his life?

If thou beholdest thy brother in the agonies of a slow death, is it not mercy to put a period to his life; and is it not also death to be his murderer?

Truth is but one; thy doubts are of thine own raising. He who made virtues what they are, planted also in thee a knowledge of their pre-eminence.

OF THE INSUFFICIENCY OF KNOWLEDGE.

IF there is any thing lovely, if there is any thing desirable, if there is any thing within the reach of man that is worthy of praise, is it not knowledge? and yet who is he that attaineth unto it?

The statesman proclaimeth that he hath it; the ruler of the people claimeth the praise of it; but findeth the subject that he possesseth it?

Evil is not requisite to man; neither can vice be necessary to be tolerated: yet how many evils are permitted by the connivance of the laws? how many crimes committed by the decrees of the council?

But be wise, O ruler! and learn, O thou that art to command the nations! One crime authorized by thee, is worse than the escape of ten from punishment.

When thy people are numerous, when thy sons increase about thy table; sendest thou them not out to slay the innocent, and to fall before the sword of him whom they have not offended?

If the object of thy desires demandeth the lives of a thousand, sayest thou not, I will have it? Surely thou forgettest that he who created thee, created also these: and that their blood is as rich as thine.

Sayest thou, that justice cannot be executed without wrong? surely thine own words condemn thee.

Thou who flatterest with false hopes the criminal, that he may confess his guilt; art not thou unto him a criminal? or is thy guilt the less, because he cannot punish it?

When thou commandest to the torture him who is but suspected of ill, darest thou to remember, that thou mayest rack the innocent?

Is thy purpose answered by the event? is thy soul satisfied with his confession? Pain will enforce him to say what is not, as easy as what is; and anguish hath caused innocence to accuse herself.

That thou mayest not kill him without cause, thou dost worse than kill him: that thou mayest prove if he be guilty, thou destroyeth him innocent.

O blindness to all truth! O insufficiency of the wisdom of the wise! Know when thy Judge shall bid thee account for this, thou shalt wish ten thousand guilty to have gone free, rather than one innocent then to stand forth against thee.

Insufficient as thou art to the maintenance of justice, how shalt thou arrive at the knowledge of truth? how shalt thou ascend to the footstep of her throne?

As the owl is blinded by the radiance of the sun, so shall the brightness of her countenance dazzle thee in thy approaches.

If thou wouldst mount up into her throne, first bow thyself at her footstool: If thou wouldst arrive at the knowledge of her, first inform thyself of thine own ignorance.

More worth is she than pearls, therefore seek her carefully: the emerald, and the sapphire, and the ruby, are as dirt beneath her feet; therefore pursue her manfully.

The way to her is labour; attention is the pilot that must conduct thee into her ports. But weary not in the way; for when thou art arrived at her, the toil shall be to thee for pleasure.

Say not unto thyself, Behold, truth breedeth hatred, and I will avoid it; dissimulation raiseth friends, and I will follow it. Are not the enemies made by truth, better than the friends obtained by flattery?

Naturally doth man desire the truth, yet when it is before him, he will not apprehend it; and if it force itself upon him, is he not offended at it?

The fault is not in truth, for that is amiable; but the weakness of man beareth not its splendour.

Wouldst thou see thine own insufficiency more plainly? view thyself at thy devotions! To what end was religion instituted, but to teach thee thine infirmities, to remind thee of thy weakness, to shew thee that from heaven alone thou art to hope for good?

Doth it not remind thee that thou art dust? doth it not tell thee that thou art ashes? And behold repentance is not built on frailty!

When thou givest on oath, when thou swearest thou wilt not deceive; behold it spreadeth shame upon thy face, and upon the face of him that receiveth it. Learn to be just, and repentance may be forgotten; learn to be honest, and oaths are unnecessary.

The shorter follies are, the better: say not therefore to thyself, I will not play the fool by halves.

He hath heareth his own faults with patience, shall reprove another with boldness.

He that giveth a denial with reason, shall suffer a repulse with moderation.

If thou art suspected, answer with freedom: whom should suspicion affright, except the guilty?

The tender of heart is turned from his purpose by supplications, the proud is rendered more obstinate by entreaty: the sense of thine insufficiency commandeth thee to hear; but to be just, thou must hear without thy passions.

MISERY.

FEEBLE and insufficient as thou art, O man! in good; frail and inconstant as thou art in pleasure; yet there is a thing which is the character of thy being, its name is Misery. And behold, what is its source, but thine own passions?

He who gave thee these, gave thee also reason to subdue them: exert it, and thou shalt trample them under thy feet.

Custom cannot alter the nature of truth; neither can the opinion of men destroy justice.

There is but one way for man to be produced: There are a thousand by which he may be destroyed.

There is no praise, nor honour, to him who giveth being to another; but triumphs and empire are often the rewards of murder.

Yet he who hath many children, hath as many blessings; and he who hath taken away the life of another, shall not enjoy his own.

While the savage curseth the birth of his son, and blesseth the death of his father, doth he not call himself a monster!

Enough of evil is allotted unto man; but he maketh it more while he lamenteth it.

The greatest of all human ills is sorrow; too much of this thou art born unto; add not unto it by thy own perverseness.

Grief is natural to thee, and is always near thee; pleasure is a stranger, and visiteth thee but by times; use well thy reason, and sorrow shall be

cast behind thee; be prudent, and the visits of joy shall remain long with thee.

Every part of thy frame is capable of pain, but few are the paths that lead to delight.

Pleasures can be admitted only simply; but pains rush in a thousand at a time.

As the blaze of straw fadeth as soon as it is kindled, so passeth away the brightness of joy, and thou knowest not what is become of it.

Sorrow is frequent; pleasure is rare; pain cometh of itself; delight must be purchased; grief is unmixed; but joy wanteth not its allay of bitterness.

As the soundest health is less perceived than the slightest malady, so the highest joy toucheth us less deep than the smallest sorrow.

We are in love with anguish; we often fly from pleasure: when we purchase it, costeth it not more than it is worth?

Reflection is the business of man: a sense of his state is his first duty; but who remembereth himself in joy? Is it not in mercy then that sorrow is allotted unto us?

Man foreseeth the evil that is to come; he remembereth it when it is past: he considereth not that the thought of affliction woundeth deeper than the affliction itself. Think not of thy pain, but when it is upon thee, and thou shalt avoid what most would hurt thee.

He who weepeth before he needeth, weepeth more than he needeth: and why, but that he is the child of fear.

The stag weepeth not till the spear is lifted up against him; nor do the tears of the beaver fall, till the hound is ready to seize him: man anticipateth death, by the apprehensions of it; and the fear is greater misery than the event itself.

Be always prepared to give an account of thine actions; and the best death is that which is least premeditated.

OF JUDGMENT.

THE greatest bounties given to man, are judgment and will; happy is he who misapplieth them not.

As the torrent that rolleth down the mountains, destroyeth all that is borne away by it; so doth common opinion overwhelm reason in him who submitteth to it, without saying, What is thy foundation?

See that what thou receivest as truth be not the shadow of it; what thou acknowledgest as convincing, is often but plausible. Be firm, be constant, determine for thyself; so shalt thou be answerable only for thine own weakness.

Say not that the event proveth the wisdom of the action: remember man is not above the reach of accidents.

Condemn not the judgment of another, because it differeth from thine own; may not even both be in an error?

When thou esteemest a man for his titles, and contemnest the stranger because he wanteth them, judgest thou not of the camel by his bridle?

Think not thou art revenged of thine enemy when thou slayest him: thou puttest him beyond thy reach, thou givest him quiet, and thou takest from thyself all means of hurting him.

Was thy mother incontinent, and grieveth it thee to be told of it? Is frailty in thy wife, and art thou pained at the approach of it? He who despiseth thee for it, condemneth himself. Art thou answerable for the vices of another?

Disregard not a jewel, because thou possessest it; neither enhance thou the value of a thing, be-

cause it is another's; possession to the wise addeth to the price of it.

Honour not thy wife the less, because she is in thy power; and despise him that hath said, Wouldst thou love her less? marry her! What hath put her into thy power, but her confidence in thy virtue? Shouldst thou love her less for being more obliged to her?

If thou wert just in thy courtship of her, though thou neglectest her while thou hast her, yet shall her loss be bitter to thy soul.

He who thinketh another blest, only because he possesseth her; if he be not wiser than thou, at least he is more happy.

Weigh not the loss thy friend has suffered by the tears he sheddeth for it; the greatest griefs are above these expressions of them.

Esteem not an action because it is done with noise and pomp; the noblest soul is that which doeth great things, and is not moved in the doing of them.

Fame astonisheth the ear of him who heareth it; but tranquillity rejoiceth the heart that is possessed of it.

Attribute not the good actions of another to bad causes: thou canst not know his heart; but the world will know by this, that thine is full of envy.

There is not in hypocrisy more vice than folly; to be honest is as easy as to seem so.

Be more ready to acknowledge a benefit than to revenge an injury; so shalt thou have more benefits than injuries done unto thee.

Be more ready to love than to hate; so shalt thou be loved by more than hate thee.

Be willing to commend, and be slow to censure; so shall praise be upon thy virtues, and the eye of enmity shall be blind to thy imperfections.

When thou doest good, do it because it is good; not because men esteem it: when thou avoidest evil, fly it because it is evil; not because men speak against it: be honest for love of honesty, and thou shalt be uniformly so: he that doeth it without principle, is wavering.

Wish rather to be reproved by the wise, than to be applauded by him who hath no understanding; when they tell thee of a fault, they suppose thou canst improve; the other, when he praiseth thee, thinketh thee like unto himself.

Accept not an office for which thou art not qualified, lest he who knoweth more of it despise thee.

Instruct not another in that wherein thyself art ignorant; when he seeth it, he will upbraid thee.

Expect not a friendship with him who hath injured thee; he who suffereth the wrong, may forgive it; but he who doeth it, never will be well with him.

Lay not too great obligations on him thou wishest to be thy friend; behold! the sense of them will drive him from thee; a little benefit gaineth friendship; a great one maketh an enemy.

Nevertheless, ingratitude is not in the nature of man; neither is his anger irreconcileable: he hateth to be put in mind of a debt he cannot pay; he is ashamed in the presence of him whom he hath injured.

Repine not at the good of a stranger; neither rejoice thou in the evil that befalleth thine enemy: wishest thou that others should do thus by thee?

Wouldst thou enjoy the good-will of all men, let thine own benevolence be universal. If thou obtainest it not by these, no other means could give it thee; and know, though thou hast it not, thou hast the greater pleasure of having merited it.

PRESUMPTION.

PRIDE and meanness seem incompatible; but man reconcileth contrarieties; he is at once the most miserable and the most arrogant of all creatures.

Presumption is the bane of reason; it is the nurse of error; yet it is congenial with reason in us.

Who is there that judgeth not either too highly of himself, or thinketh too meanly of others?

Our Creator himself escapeth not our presumption; how then shall we be safe from one another?

What is the origin of superstition? and whence ariseth false worship? from our presuming to reason about what is above our reach, to comprehend what is incomprehensible.

Limited and weak as our understandings are, we employ not even their little forces as we ought. We soar not high enough in our approaches to God's greatness; we give not wing enough to our ideas, when we enter into the adoration of divinity.

Man who fears to breathe a whisper against his earthly sovereign, trembles not to arraign the dispensations of his God: he forgetteth his majesty, and rejudgeth his judgments.

He who dareth not repeat the name of his prince without honour, yet blusheth not to call that of his Creator to be witness to a lie.

He who would hear the sentence of the magistrate with silence, yet dareth to plead with the Eternal; he attempeth to soothe him with entreaties, to flatter him with promises, to agree with him upon conditions: nay, to brave and murmur at him if his request be not granted.

Why art thou unpunished, O man! in thy impiety, but that this is not thy day of retribution.

Be not like unto those who fight with the thunder; neither dare thou to deny thy Creator thy prayers,

because he chastiseth thee. Thy madness in this is on thine own head; thy impiety hurteth no one but thyself.

Why boasteth man that he is the favourite of his Maker, yet neglecteth to pay his thanks and his adorations for it? How suiteth such a life with a belief so haughty?

Man, who is truly but a mote in the wide expanse, believeth the whole earth and heaven to be created for him: he thinketh the whole frame of nature hath interest in his well being.

As the fool, while the images tremble on the bosom of the water, thinketh that trees, towns, and the wide horizon, are dancing to do him pleasure; so man, while nature performs her destined course, believes that all her motions are but to entertain his eye.

While he courts the rays of the sun to warm him, he supposeth it made only to be of use to him; while he traceth the moon in her nightly path, he believeth that she was created only to do him pleasure.

Fool to thine own pride! be humble! know thou art not the cause why the world holdeth its course; for thee are not made the vicissitudes of summer and winter.

No change would follow if thy whole race existed not; thou art but one among millions that are blessed in it.

Exalt not thyself to the heavens; for, lo, the angels are above thee: nor disdain thy fellow-inhabitants of the earth, though they are inferior to thee. Are they not the work of the same hand?

Thou who art happy by the mercy of thy Creator, how darest thou in wantonness put others of his creatures to torture? Beware that cruelty return not upon thee.

Serve they not all the same universal Master with thee? Hath he not appointed unto each its laws? Hath he not care of their preservation? and darest thou to infringe it?

Set not thy judgment above that of all the earth; neither condemn as falsehood what agreeth not with thine own apprehension. Who gave thee the the power of determining for others? or who took from the world the right of choice?

How many things have been rejected, which are now received as truths? How many now received as truths, shall in their turn be despised?

Of what then can man be certain?

Do the good that thou knowest, and happiness shall be unto thee. Virtue is more thy business here than wisdom.

Truth and falsehood, have they not the same appearance in what we understand not? what then but our presumption can determine between them?

We easily believe what is above our comprehension; or we are proud to pretend it, that it may appear we understand it. Is not this folly and arrogance?

Who is he that affirms most boldly? who is he that holds his opinion most obstinately? Even he who hath most ignorance, for he also hath most pride.

Every man, when he layeth hold of an opinion, desireth to remain in it; but most of all he who hath most presumption. He contenteth not himself to betray his own soul: but he will impose on others to believe in it also.

Say not that truth is established by years, or that in a multitude of believers there is certainty.

One human proposition hath as much authority as another, if reason maketh not the difference.

OF THE AFFECTIONS OF MAN, WHICH ARE HURTFUL TO HIMSELF AND OTHERS.

COVETOUSNESS.

RICHES are not worthy a strong attention: therefore an earnest care of obtaining them is unjustifiable.

The desire of what man calleth good, the joy he taketh in possessing it, is grounded only in opinion. Form not thy opinion from the vulgar; examine the worth of things thyself, and thou shalt not be covetous.

An immoderate desire of riches is a poison lodged in the soul. It contaminates and destroys every thing that was good in it. It is no sooner rooted there, than all virtue, all honesty, all natural affection, fly before the face of it.

The covetous would sell his children for gold; his parent might die ere he would open his coffer; nay, he considereth not himself in respect of it. In the search of happiness he maketh himself unhappy.

As the man who selleth his house to purchase ornaments for the embellishment of it, even so is he who giveth up peace in the search of riches, in hope that he may be happy in enjoying them.

Where covetousness reigneth, know that the soul is poor. Whoso accounteth riches the principal good of man, will throw away all other goods in the pursuit of them.

Whoso feareth poverty as the greatest evil of his nature, will purchase to himself all other evils in the avoiding of it.

Thou fool, is not virtue more worth than riches? is not guilt more base than poverty? Enough for

his necessities is in the power of every man; be content with it, and thy happiness shall smile at the sorrows of him who heapeth up more.

Nature hath hidden gold beneath the earth, as if unworthy to be seen; silver hath she placed where thou tramplest it under thy feet. Meaneth she not by this to inform thee, that gold is not worthy thy regard, that silver is beneath thy notice?

Covetousness burieth under the ground millions of wretches; these dig for their hard masters what returneth the injury; what maketh them more miserable than their slaves.

The earth is barren of good things where she hoardeth up treasure: where gold is in her bowels, there no herb groweth.

As the horse findeth not there his grass, nor the mule his provender; as the fields of corn laugh not on the sides of the hills; as the olive holdeth not forth there her fruits, nor the vine her clusters; even so no good dwelleth in the breast of him whose heart broodeth over his treasure.

Riches are servants to the wise; but they are tyrants over the soul of the fool.

The covetous serveth his gold; it serveth not him. He possesseth his wealth as the sick doth a fever; it burneth and tortureth him, and will not quit him until death.

Hath not gold destroyed the virtue of millions? Did it ever add to the goodness of any?

Is it not most abundant with the worst of men? wherefore then shouldst thou desire to be distinguished by possessing it?

Have not the wisest been those who have had least of it? and is not wisdom happiness?

Have not the worst of thy species possessed the greatest portions of it? and hath not their end been miserable?

Poverty wanteth many things; but covetousness denieth itself all.

The covetous can be good to no man; but he is to none so cruel as to himself.

If thou art industrious to procure gold, be generous in the disposal of it. Man never is so happy as when he giveth happiness to another.

PROFUSION.

If there be a vice greater than the hoarding up of riches, it is the employment of them to useless purposes.

He that prodigally lavisheth that which he hath to spare, robbeth the poor of what nature giveth them a right unto.

He who squandereth away his treasure, refuseth the means to do good: he denieth himself the practice of virtues whose reward is in their hand, whose end is no other than his own happiness.

It is more difficult to be well with riches, than to be at ease under the want of them. Man governeth himself much easier in poverty than in abundance.

Poverty requireth but one virtue, patience to support it; the rich if he have not charity, temperance, prudence, and many more, is guilty.

The poor hath only the good of his own state committed unto him; the rich is intrusted with the welfare of thousands.

He that giveth away his treasure wisely, giveth away his plagues: he that retaineth their increase, heapeth up sorrows.

Refuse not unto the stranger that which he wanteth; deny not unto thy brother even that which thou wantest thyself.

Know there is more delight in being without what thou hast given, than in possessing millions which thou knowest not the use of.

REVENGE.

THE root of revenge is in the weakness of the soul: the most abject and timorous are the most addicted to it.

Who torture those they hate, or murder those they rob, but cowards?

The feeling of an injury, must be previous to the revenging of it; but the noble mind disdaineth to say, It hurts me.

If the injury is not below thy notice, he that doeth it unto thee, in that, maketh himself so: Wouldst thou enter the lists with thine inferior?

Disdain the man who attempteth to wrong thee; contemn him who would give thee disquiet.

In this thou not only preservest thine own peace, but thou inflictest all the punishment of revenge, without stooping to employ it against him.

As the tempest and the thunder affect not the sun or the stars, but spend their fury on stones and trees below: so injuries ascend not to the souls of the great, but waste themselves on such as are those who offer them.

Poorness of spirit will actuate revenge; greatness of soul despiseth the offence; nay, it doeth good unto him who intended to have disturbed it.

Why seekest thou vengeance, O man! with what purpose is it that thou pursuest it? Thinkest thou to pain thine adversary by it? Know that thyself feelest its greatest torments.

Revenge gnaweth the heart of him who is infected with it, while he against whom it is intended, remaineth easy.

It is unjust in the anguish it inflicts; therefore nature intended it not for thee: needeth he who is injured more pain? or ought he to add force to the affliction which another has cast upon him?

The man who meditateth revenge is not content

with the mischief he hath received; he addeth to his anguish the punishment due unto another: while he whom he seeketh to hurt, goeth his way laughing; he maketh himself merry at this addition to his misery.

Revenge is painful in the intent, and it is dangerous in the execution: seldom doth the axe fall where he who lifted it up intended; and, lo, he remembereth not that it must recoil against himself.

While the revengeful seeketh his enemy's hurt, he oftentimes procureth his own destruction: while he aimeth at one of the eyes of his adversary, lo, he putteth out both his own.

If he attain not his end, he lamenteth it; if he succeed, he repenteth of it: the fear of justice taketh away the peace of his own soul; the care to hide him from it, destroyeth that of his friend.

Can the death of thine adversary satiate thy hatred? can the setting him at rest restore thy peace?

Wouldst thou make him sorry for his offence, conquer him and spare him: in death he owneth not thy superiority; nor feeleth he more the power of thy wrath.

In revenge there should be a triumph of the avenger; and he who hath injured him, should feel his displeasure; he should suffer pain from it, and should repent him of the cause.

This is the revenge inspired from anger; but that which makes thee great, is contempt.

Murder for an injury ariseth only from cowardice: he who inflicteth it, feareth that the enemy may live and avenge himself.

Death endeth the quarrel; but it restoreth not the reputation.

There is nothing so easy as to revenge an offence; but nothing is so honourable as to pardon it.

The greatest victory man can obtain, is over himself: he that disdaineth to feel an injury, retorteth it upon him who offereth it.

When thou meditatest revenge, thou confessest that thou feelest the wrong; when thou complainest, thou acknowledgest thyself hurt by it: meant thou to add this triumph to the pride of thine enemy?

That cannot be an injury which is not felt; how then can he who despiseth it revenge it?

If thou think it dishonourable to bear offence, more is in thy power; thou mayest conquer it.

Good offices will make a man ashamed to be thine enemy: greatness of soul will terrify him from the thought of hurting thee.

The greater the wrong, the more glory there is in pardoning it; and by how much more justifiable would be revenge, by so much the more honour is in clemency.

Hast thou a right to be a judge in thine own cause; to be party in the act, and yet to pronounce sentence on it? Before thou condemnest, let another say it is just.

The revengeful is feared, and therefore he is hated; but he that is endued with clemency, is adored: the praise of his actions remaineth for ever; and the love of the world attendeth him.

CRUELTY, HATRED, AND ENVY.

REVENGE is detestable: what then is cruelty? Lo, it possesseth the mischiefs of the other; but it wanteth even the pretence of its provocations.

Men disown it as not of their nature; they are ashamed of it as a stranger to their hearts: do they not call it inhumanity?

Whence then is her origin? unto what that is human oweth she her existence? Her father is Fear; and behold Dismay, is it not her mother?

The hero lifteth his sword against the enemy that resisteth; but no sooner doth he submit, than he is satisfied.

It is not in honour to trample on the object that feareth: it is not in virtue to insult what is beneath it: subdue the insolent, and spare the humble; and thou art at the height of victory.

He who wanteth virtue to arrive at this end, he who hath not courage to ascend thus into it; lo, he supplieth the place of conquest by murder, of sovereignty by slaughter.

He who feareth all, striketh at all: why are tyrants cruel, but because they live in terror.

Civil wars are the most bloody, because those who fight in them are cowards: conspirators are murderers, because in death there is silence. Is it not fear that telleth them they may be betrayed?

The cur will tear the carcase, though he dared not look it in the face while living: the hound that hunteth it to the death, mangleth it not afterwards.

That thou mayest not be cruel, set thyself up too high for hatred; that thou mayest not be inhuman, place thyself above the reach of envy.

Every man may be viewed in two lights; in one he will be troublesome, in the other less offensive: choose to see him in that which he least hurteth thee; then shalt thou not do hurt unto him.

What is there that a man may not turn unto his good? In that which offendeth us most, there is more ground for complaint than hatred. Man would be reconciled to him of whom he complaineth: whom murdereth he, but him whom he hateth?

If thou art prevented of a benefit, fly not into rage: the loss of thy reason is the want of a greater.

When thou enviest the man who possesseth honours; when his titles and his greatness raise thy indignation; seek to know whence they came

unto him; inquire by what means he was possessed of them, and thine envy will be turned into pity.

If the same fortune were offered unto thee at the same price, be assured, if thou wert wise, thou wouldst refuse it.

What is the pay for titles, but flattery? how doth man purchase power, but by being a slave to him who giveth it?

Wouldst thou lose thine own liberty, to be able to take away that of another? or canst thou envy him who doeth so?

Man purchaseth nothing of his superiors but for a price; and that price is it not more than the value? Wouldst thou pervert the customs of the world? wouldst thou have the purchase and the price also?

As thou canst not envy what thou wouldst not accept, disdain this cause of hatred; and drive from thy soul this occasion of the parent of cruelty.

If thou possessest honour, canst thou envy that which is obtained at the expense of it? If thou knowest the value of virtue, pitiest thou not those who have bartered it so meanly?

When thou hast taught thyself to bear the seeming good of men without repining, thou wilt hear of their real happiness with pleasure.

If thou seest good things fall to one who deserveth them, thou wilt rejoice in it: for virtue is happy in the prosperity of the virtuous.

He who rejoiceth in the happiness of another, increaseth his own.

HEAVINESS OF HEART.

THE soul of the cheerful forceth a smile upon the face of affliction; but the despondence of the sad deadeneth even the brightness of joy.

What is the source of sadness, but a feebleness of the soul? what giveth it power but the want of spirit? Rouse thyself to the combat, and she quitteth the field before thou strikest.

Sadness is an enemy to thy race, therefore drive her from thy heart: she poisoneth the sweets of life, therefore suffer her not to enter thy dwelling.

She raiseth the loss of a straw to the destruction of thy fortune. While she vexeth thy soul about trifles, she robbeth thee of thine attendance to the things of consequence: behold, she but prophesieth what she seemeth to relate unto thee.

She spreadeth drowsiness as a veil over thy virtues; she hideth them from those who would honour thee in beholding them; she entangleth and keepeth them down, while she maketh it most necessary for thee to exert them.

Lo, she oppresseth thee with evil; and she tieth down thine hands, when they would throw the load from off thee.

If thou wouldst avoid what is base, if thou wouldst disdain what is cowardly, if thou wouldst drive from thy heart what is unjust, suffer not sadness to lay hold upon it.

Suffer it not to cover itself with the face of piety; let it not deceive thee with a show of wisdom. Religion payeth honour to thy Maker; let it not be clouded with melancholy.

Wisdom maketh thee happy: know then, that sorrow in her sight is as a stranger.

For what should man be sorrowful, but for afflictions? Why should his heart give up joy, when the causes of it are not removed from him? Is not this being miserable for the sake of misery?

As the mourner who looketh sad because he is hired to do so, who weepeth because his tears are paid for; such is the man who suffereth his heart

to be sad, not because he suffereth aught, but because he is gloomy.

It is not the occasion that produceth the sorrow; for behold, the same thing shall be to another rejoicing.

Ask men if their sadness maketh things better, and they will confess to thee that it is folly; nay, they will praise him who beareth his ills with patience, who maketh head against misfortune with courage. Applause shall be followed by imitation.

Sadness is against nature, for it troubleth her motions: lo, it rendereth distorted whatsoever nature hath made amiable.

As the oak falleth before the tempest, and raiseth not its head again; so boweth the heart of man to the force of sadness, and returneth unto his strength no more.

As the snow melteth upon the mountains, from the rain that trickleth down their sides, even so is beauty washed from off the cheek by tears; and neither the one nor the other restoreth itself again. As the pearl is dissolved by the vinegar, which seemeth at first only to obscure its surface; so is thy happiness, O man! swallowed up by heaviness of heart, though at first it seemeth only to cover it as with its shadow.

Behold Sadness in the public streets: cast thine eye upon her in the places of resort; avoideth she not every one? and doth not every one fly from her presence?

See how she droopeth her head, like the flower whose root is cut asunder! see how she fixeth her eyes upon the earth! see how they serve her to no purpose but for weeping!

Is there in her mouth discourse? is there in her heart the love of society? is there in her soul, rea-

son? Ask her the cause, she knoweth it not: inquire the occasion, and behold there is none!

Yet doth her strength fail her; lo, at length she sinketh into the grave; and no one saith, What is become of her?

Hast thou understanding, and seest thou not this? hast thou piety, and perceivest thou not thine error?

God created thee in mercy: had he not intended thee to be happy, his beneficence would not have called thee into existence; how darest thou then to fly in the face of Majesty?

Whilst thou art most happy with innocence, thou doest him most honour; and what is thy discontent but murmuring against him?

Created he not all things liable to changes; and darest thou to weep at their changing?

If we know the law of nature, wherefore do we complain of it? If we are ignorant of it, what shall we accuse but our blindness to what every moment giveth us proof of?

Know that it is not thou that art to give laws to the world; thy part is to submit to them as thou findest them. If they distress thee, thy lamentation but addeth to thy torment.

Be not deceived with fair pretences, nor suppose that sorrow healeth misfortune. It is a poison under the colour of a remedy: while it pretendeth to draw the arrow from thy breast, lo, it plungeth it into thine heart.

While sadness separateth thee from thy friends, doth it not say, Thou art unfit for conversation? while she driveth thee into corners, doth she not proclaim that she is ashamed of herself?

It is not in thy nature to meet the arrows of ill-fortune unhurt; nor doth reason require it of thee:

it is thy duty to bear misfortune like a man; but thou must first also feel it like one.

Tears may drop from thine eyes, though virtue falleth not from thine heart; be thou careful only that there is cause, and that they flow not too abundantly.

What is there that weakeneth the soul like grief? what depresseth it like sadness.

Is the sorrowful prepared for noble enterprises? or armeth he himself in the cause of virtue?

Subject not thyself to ills, where there are no advantages in return; neither sacrifice thou the means of good unto that which is in itself an evil.

OF THE ADVANTAGES MAN MAY ACQUIRE OVER HIS FELLOW-CREATURES.

NOBILITY AND HONOUR.

NOBILITY resideth not but in the soul; nor is there true honour except in virtue.

The favour of princes may be bought by vice; rank and titles may be purchased for money: but these are not true honour.

Crimes cannot exalt the man who commits them, to real glory: neither can gold make men noble.

When titles are the reward of virtue, when the man is set on high who hath served his country; he who bestoweth the honours hath glory, like as he who receiveth them; and the world is benefited by it.

Wouldst thou wish to be raised, and men know not for what? or wouldst thou that they should say, Why is this?

When the virtues of the hero descend to his children, his titles accompany them well; but when he

who possesseth them is unlike him who deserved them, lo, do they not call him degenerate?

Hereditary honour is accounted the most noble; but reason speaketh in the cause of him who hath acquired it.

He who, meritless himself, appealeth to the actions of his ancestors for his greatness, is like the thief who claimeth protection by flying to the pagod.

What good is it to the blind, that his parents could see? what benefit is it to the dumb, that his grandfather was eloquent? even so, what is it to the mean, that their predecessors were noble?

A mind disposed to virtue maketh great the possessor; and without titles it will raise him above the vulgar.

He will acquire honour while others receive it: and will he not say unto them, Such were the men whom ye glory in being derived from?

As the shadow waiteth on the substance, even so true honour attendeth upon virtue.

Say not that honour is the child of boldness, nor believe thou that the hazard of life alone can pay the price of it: it is not to the action that it is due, but to the manner of performing it.

All are not called to guide the helm of state; neither are their armies to be commanded by every one: do well in that which is committed to thy charge, and praise shall remain unto thee.

Say not that difficulties are necessary to be conquered, or that labour and danger must be in the way of renown. The woman who is chaste, is she not praised? the man who is honest, deserveth he not to be honoured?

The thirst of fame is violent; the desire of honour is powerful; and he who gave them to us, gave them for great purposes.

When desperate actions are necessary to the

public, when our lives are to be exposed for the good of our country, what can add force to virtue but ambition?

It is not the receiving of honour that delighteth the noble mind; its pride is the deserving of it.

Is it not better that men should say, Why hath not this man a statue? than that they should ask, Why he hath one?

The ambitious will always be first in the crowd; he presseth forward, he looketh not behind him.

More anguish is it to his soul, to see one before him, than joy to leave thousands at a distance.

The root of ambition is in every man; but it riseth not in all: fear keepeth it down in some; in many it is suppressed by modesty.

It is the inner garment of the soul; the first thing put on by it with the flesh, and the last it layeth down at its separation from it.

It is an honour to thy nature when worthily employed; when thou directest it to wrong purposes, it shameth and destroyeth thee.

In the breast of the traitor ambition is covered; hypocrisy hideth its face under her mantle; and cool dissimulation furnisheth it with smooth words; but in the end men shall see what it is.

The serpent loseth not his sting though benumbed with the frost; the tooth of the viper is not broken though the cold closeth his mouth: take pity on his state, and he will shew thee his spirit; warm him in thy bosom, and he will requite thee with death.

He that is truly virtuous, loveth virtue for herself; he disdaineth the applause which ambition aimeth after.

How pitiable were the state of virtue, if she could not be happy but from another's praise! she is too noble to seek recompense, and no more will, than can be rewarded.

The higher the sun riseth, the less shadow doth he make: even so the greater is the virtue, the less doth it covet praise: yet cannot it avoid its reward in honours.

Glory, like a shadow, flieth him who pursueth it: but it followeth at the heels of him who would fly from it; if thou courtest it without merit, thou shalt never attain unto it; if thou deservest it, though thou hidest thyself, it will never forsake thee.

Pursue that which is honourable; do that which is right; and the applause of thine own conscience will be more joy to thee, than the shouts of millions who know not that thou deserveth them.

SCIENCE AND LEARNING.

THE noblest employment of the mind of man, is the study of the works of his Creator.

To him whom the science of nature delighteth, every object bringeth a proof of his God; every thing that proveth it, giveth cause of adoration.

His mind is lifted up to heaven every moment; his life is one continual act of devotion.

Casteth he his eye towards the clouds, findeth he not the heavens full of his wonders? Looketh he down to the earth, doth not the worm proclaim to him, Less than omnipotence could not have formed me?

While the planets perform their courses; while the sun remaineth in his place; while the comet wandereth through the liquid air, and returneth to its destined road again; who but thy God, O man! could have formed them? what but infinite wisdom could have appointed them their laws?

Behold how awful their splendour! yet do they not diminish: lo, how rapid their motions! yet one runneth not in the way of another.

Look down upon the earth, and see her produce;

examine her bowels, and behold what they contain: hath not wisdom and power ordained the whole?

Who biddeth the grass to spring up? who watereth it at its due seasons? Behold the ox croppeth it; the horse and the sheep, feed they not upon it? Who is he that provideth it for them?

Who giveth increase to the corn that thou sowest? who returneth it to thee a thousand fold?

Who ripeneth for thee the olive in its time? and the grape, though thou knowest not the cause of it?

Can the meanest fly create itself? or wert thou aught less than God, couldst thou have fashioned it?

The beasts feel that they exist, but wonder not at it; they rejoice in their life, but they know not that it shall end: each performeth its course in succession; nor is there a loss of one species in a thousand generations.

Thou who seest the whole as admirable as its parts, canst thou better employ thine eye, than in tracing out thy Creator's greatness in them; thy mind, than in examining their wonders?

Power and mercy are displayed in their formation; justice and goodness shine forth in the provision that is made for them; all are happy in their several ways; nor envieth one the other.

What is the study of words compared with this? In what science is knowledge, but in the study of nature?

When thou hast adored the fabric, inquire into its use; for know the earth produceth nothing but may be of good to thee. Are not food and raiment, and the remedies for thy diseases, all derived from this source alone?

Who is wise then, but he that knoweth it? who hath understanding, but he that contemplateth it? For the rest, whatever science hath most utility,

whatever knowledge hath least vanity, prefer these unto the others; and profit from them for the sake of thy neighbour.

To live, and to die; to command, and to obey; to do, and to suffer; are not these all that thou hast farther to care about? Morality shall teach thee these; the Economy of Life shall lay them before thee.

Behold, they are written in thine heart, and thou needest only to be reminded of them: they are easy of conception; be attentive, and thou shalt retain them.

All other sciences are vain, all other knowledge is boast; lo, it is not necessary or beneficial to man, nor doth it make him more good, or more honest.

Piety to thy God, and benevolence to thy fellow-creatures, are they not thy great duties?

What shall teach thee the one, like the study of his works? what shall inform thee of the other, like understanding thy dependencies?

ON NATURAL ACCIDENTS.

PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY.

LET not prosperity elate thine heart above measure; neither depress thy soul unto the grave, because fortune beareth hard against thee.

Her smiles are not stable, therefore build not thy confidence upon them; her frowns endure not for ever, therefore let hope teach thee patience.

To bear adversity well, is difficult; but to be temperate in prosperity, is the height of wisdom.

Good and ill are the tests by which thou art to know thy constancy; nor is there aught else that can tell thee the powers of thine own soul: be therefore upon the watch when they are upon thee.

Behold prosperity, how sweetly she flattereth thee; how insensibly she robbeth thee of thy strength and thy vigour!

Though thou hast been constant in ill fortune, though thou hast been invincible in distress; yet by her thou art conquered: not knowing that thy strength returneth not again; and yet that thou again mayest need it.

Affliction moveth our enemies to pity; success and happiness cause even our friends to envy.

Adversity is the seed of well doing; it is the nurse of heroism and boldness; who that hath enough, will endanger himself to have more? who that is at ease, will set his life on the hazard?

True virtue will act under all circumstances; but men see most of its effects when accidents concur with it.

In adversity man seeth himself abandoned by others; he findeth that all his hopes are centered within himself; he rouseth his soul, he encountereth his difficulties, and they yield before him.

In prosperity he fancieth himself safe; he thinketh he is beloved by all that smile about his table: he groweth careless and remiss; he seeth not the danger that is before him; he trusteth to others, and in the end they deceive him.

Every man can advise his own soul in distress; but prosperity blindeth the truth.

Better is the sorrow that leadeth to contentment, than the joy that rendereth man unable to endure distress, and after plungeth himself into it.

Our passions dictate to us in all our extremes: moderation is the effect of wisdom.

Be upright in thy whole life; be content in all its changes; so shalt thou make thy profit out of all occurrences; so shall every thing that happeneth unto thee be the source of praise.

The wise maketh every thing the means of advantage; and with the same countenance beholdeth he all the faces of fortune: he governeth the good, he conquereth the evil: he is unmoved in all.

Presume not in prosperity, neither despair in adversity: court not dangers, nor meanly fly from before them: dare to despise whatever will not remain with thee.

Let not adversity tear off the wings of hope; neither let prosperity obscure the light of prudence.

He who despaireth of the end, shall never attain unto it; and he who seeth not the pit, shall perish therein.

He who calleth prosperity his good; who hath said unto her, With thee will I establish my happiness; lo! he anchoreth his vessel in a bed of sand, which the return of the tide washeth away.

As the water that passeth from the mountains kisseth, in its way to the ocean, every field that bordereth the rivers; as it tarrieth not in any place; even so fortune visiteth the sons of men; her motion is incessant, she will not stay; she is unstable as the winds, how then wilt thou hold her? When she kisseth thee, thou art blessed; behold, as thou turneth to thank her she is gone unto another.

PAIN AND SICKNESS.

THE sickness of the body affecteth even the soul: the one cannot be in health without the other.

When thy constancy faileth thee, call in thy reason: when thy patience quitteth thee, call in thy hope.

To suffer, is a necessity entailed upon thy nature; wouldst thou that miracles should protect thee from it? or shalt thou repine, because it happeneth unto thee, when lo, it happeneth unto all?

It is injustice to expect exemption from that thou wast born unto; humbly submit to the laws of thy condition.

Wouldst thou say to the seasons, Pass not on, lest I grow old? is it not better to suffer well that which thou canst not avoid?

Pain that endureth long, is moderate; blush therefore to complain of it: that which is violent, is short: behold thou seest the end of it.

The body was created to be subservient to the soul; while thou afflictest the soul for its pains, behold thou settest that above it.

As the wise afflicteth not himself because a thorn teareth his garment; so the patient grieveth not his soul, because that which covereth it is injured.

DEATH.

DEATH is the test of our lives, the assay which sheweth the standard of all our actions.

Wouldst thou judge of a life, examine the period of it; the end crowneth the attempt: and where dissimulation is no more, there the truth appeareth.

He hath not spent his life ill, who knoweth to die well; neither can he have lost all his time, who employeth the last portion of it to his honour.

He was not born in vain who dieth as he ought; neither hath he lived unprofitably who dieth happily.

He that considereth he is to die, is content while he liveth: he who striveth to forget it, hath no pleasure in any thing; his joy appeareth to him a jewel which he expecteth every moment he shall lose.

Wouldst thou learn to die nobly? let thy vices die before thee. Happy is he who endeth the business of his life before his death: who, when the hour of it cometh, hath nothing to do but to die;

who wisheth not delay, because he hath no longer use for time.

Avoid not death, for it is a weakness; fear it not, for thou understandest not what it is: all that thou certainly knowest, is, that it putteth an end to thy present sorrows.

Think not the longest life the happiest: that which is best employed, doeth man the most honour; himself shall rejoice after death in the advantages of it.

This is the complete ECONOMY of HUMAN LIFE.

THE END.

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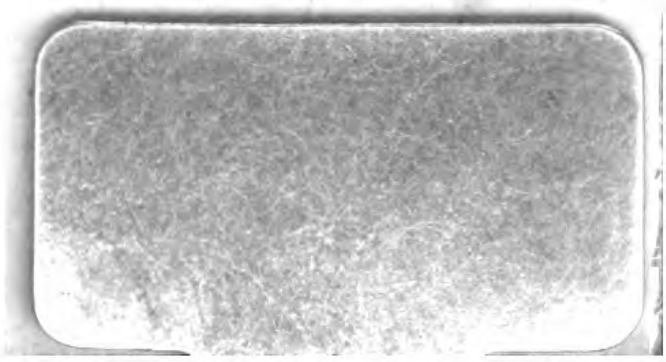

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