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STRICTURES
ON THE
MODERN SYSTEM
OF
FEMALE EDUCATION.

WITH
A VIEW OF THE PRINCIPLES AND CONDUCT PREVALENT
AMONG WOMEN OF RANK AND FORTUNE.

By HANNAH MORE.

May you so raise your character that you may help to
make the next age a better thing, and leave posterity
in your debt, for the advantage it shall receive by your
example.

LORD HALIFAX.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

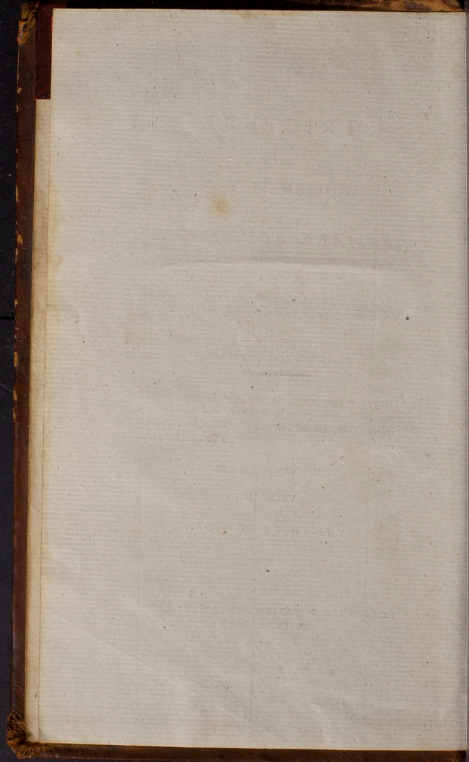
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A
V I E W
OF THE
PRINCIPLES AND CONDUCT
PREVALENT AMONG
WOMEN OF RANK AND FORTUNE.

The Hope and Expectation of the Time
Should not so lavish of their presence be,
Nor so enfeoff'd to Popularity,
That being nightly swallowed by Men's eyes,
They're forfeited with honey, and begin
To loathe the taste of sweetness.

SHAKESPEARE.

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A
V I E W
OF THE
PRINCIPLES AND CONDUCT
PREVALENT AMONG
WOMEN OF RANK AND FORTUNE.

CHAP. XIII.

*The practical uses of female knowledge.—
Sketch of the female character.—A com-
parative view of both sexes.*

THE chief end to be proposed in cultivating the understandings of women, is to qualify them for the practical purposes of life. Their knowledge is not often like the learning of men, to be reproduced in some literary composition, nor ever in any learned profession; but it is to come out in conduct. A lady studies, not that she may qualify herself to become

an orator or a pleader; not that she may learn to debate, but to act. She is to read the best books, not so much to enable her to talk of them, as to bring the improvement which they furnish, to the rectification of her principles, and the formation of her habits. The great uses of study are to enable her to regulate her own mind, and to be useful to others.

To woman therefore, whatever be her rank, I would recommend a predominance of those more sober studies, which, not having display for their object, may make her wise without vanity, happy without witnesses, and content without panegyrist; the exercise of which will not bring celebrity, but improve usefulness. She should pursue every kind of study which will teach her to elicit truth; which will lead her to be intent upon realities; will give precision to her ideas; will make an exact mind; every study which, instead of stimulating her sensibility, will chastise it; which will give her definite notions; will
bring

bring the imagination under dominion; will lead her to think, to compare, to combine, to methodise; which will confer such a power of discrimination that her judgment shall learn to reject what is dazzling if it be not solid; and to prefer, not what is striking, or bright, or new, but what is just. That kind of knowledge which is rather fitted for home consumption than foreign exportation, is peculiarly adapted to women.

It is because the superficial nature of their education furnishes them with a false and low standard of intellectual excellence, that women have sometimes become ridiculous by the unfounded pretensions of literary vanity: for it is not the really learned but the smatterers, who have generally brought their sex into discredit, by an absurd affectation, which has set them on despising the duties of ordinary life. There have not indeed been wanting (but the character is not now common) *precieuses ridicules*, who, assuming a superiority

riority to the sober cares which ought to occupy their sex, have claimed a lofty and supercilious exemption from the dull and plodding drudgeries

Of this dim speck called earth !

who have affected to establish an unnatural separation between talents and usefulness, instead of bearing in mind that talents are the great appointed instruments of usefulness ; who have acted as if knowledge were to confer on woman a kind of fantastic sovereignty, which should exonerate her from female duties ; whereas it is only meant the more eminently to qualify her for the performance of them. For a woman of real sense will never forget, that while the greater part of her proper duties are such as the most moderately gifted may fulfil with credit, (since Providence never makes that to be very difficult, which is generally necessary,) yet the most highly endowed are equally bound to fulfil them ; and the humblest of these
offices,

offices, performed on Christian principles, are wholesome for the minds even of the most enlightened, and tend to the casting down of those high imaginations which women of genius are too much tempted to indulge.

For instance; ladies whose natural vanity has been aggravated by a false education, may look down on *æconomy* as a vulgar attainment, unworthy of the attention of an highly cultivated intellect; but this is the false estimate of a shallow mind. *Œconomy*, such as a woman of fortune is called on to practise, is not merely the petty detail of small daily expences, the shabby curtailments and stinted parsimony of a little mind operating on little concerns; but it is the exercise of a sound judgment exerted in the comprehensive outline of order, of arrangement, of distribution; of regulations by which alone well governed societies, great and small, subsist. She who has the best regulated mind will, other

things being equal, have the best regulated family. As in the superintendence of the universe, wisdom is seen in its *effects*; and as in the visible works of Providence that which goes on with such beautiful regularity is the result not of chance but of design; so that management which seems the most easy is commonly the consequence of the best concerted plan. A sound œconomy is a sound understanding brought into action: it is calculation realized; it is the doctrine of proportion reduced to practice; it is foreseeing consequences and guarding against them; it is expecting contingencies and being prepared for them. The difference is, that to a narrow minded vulgar œconomist the details are continually present; she is overwhelmed by their weight, and is perpetually bespeaking your pity for her labours and your praise for her exertions; she is afraid you will not see how much she is harassed. Little events, and trivial operations, engross her

4 whole

whole soul; while a woman of sense, having provided for their probable recurrence, guards against the inconveniencies, without being disconcerted by the casual obstructions which they offer to her general scheme.

Superior talents however are not so common, as, by their frequency, to offer much disturbance to the general course of human affairs; and many a lady, who tacitly accuses herself of neglecting her ordinary duties because she is a *genius*, will perhaps be found often to accuse herself as unjustly as good St. Jerome, when he laments that he was beaten by the Angel for being too Ciceronian in his style*.

The truth is, women who are so puffed up with the conceit of talents as to neglect the plain duties of life, will not frequently be found to be women of the best abilities. And here may the author be

* See Dr. Owen.

allowed the gratification of observing, that those women of real genius and extensive knowledge, whose friendship have conferred honour and happiness on her own life, have been in general eminent for œconomy, and the practice of domestic virtues; and greatly superior to the poor affectation of despising the duties and the knowledge of common life.

A romantic girl with a pretension to sentiment, which her still more ignorant friends mistake for genius, (for in the empire of the blind the one-eyed are kings,) and possessing something of a natural ear, has perhaps in her childhood exhausted all the images of grief and love, and fancy, picked up in her desultory poetical reading, in an elegy on a sick linnet or a dead lap-dog; she begins thenceforward to be considered as a prodigy in her little circle; surrounded with flatterers, she has no opportunity of getting to know that her fame is derived not from her powers, but her position; and that when an im-
partial

partial critic shall have made all the necessary deductions, such as—that she is a neighbour, that she is a relation, that she is a female, that she is young, that she has had no advantages, that she is pretty perhaps—when her verses come to be stripped of all their extraneous appendages, and the fair author is driven off her 'vantage-ground of partiality, sex, and favour, she will commonly sink to the level of ordinary capacities; while those quieter women, who have meekly sat down in the humble shades of prose and prudence, by a patient perseverance in rational studies, rise afterwards much higher in the scale of intellect, and acquire a stock of sound knowledge for far better purposes than mere display. And, though it may seem a contradiction, yet it will generally be found true, that girls who take to scribbling are the least studious. They early acquire a false confidence in their own unassisted powers; it becomes more gratifying to their natural vanity to
be

be always pouring out their minds on paper, than to be drawing into them fresh ideas from richer sources. The original stock, small perhaps at first, is soon spent; and the subsequent efforts grow more and more faint, if the mind which is continually exhausting itself, be not also continually replenished; till the latter compositions become little more than reproductions of the same images, a little varied and modified perhaps, and not a little diluted and enfeebled.

These self-taught, and self-dependent scribblers pant for the unmerited praise of fancy and of genius, while they disdain the commendation of judgment, knowledge, and perseverance which would be within their reach. To extort admiration they are accustomed to boast of an impossible rapidity in composing; and while they insinuate how little time their performances cost them, they intend you should infer how perfect they might have made them had they condescended to the drudgery of applica-

application. They take superfluous pains to convince you that there was neither learning nor labour employed in the work for which they solicit your praise: the judicious eye too soon perceives it! though it does *not* perceive that native strength and mother-wit, which in works of real genius make some amends for the negligence, which yet they do not justify. But instead of extolling these effusions for their facility, it would be kind in friends rather to blame them for their crudeness: and when the young pretenders are eager to prove in how short a time such a poem has been struck off, it would be well to regret that they had not either taken a longer time, or forborne from writing at all; as in the former case the work would have been less defective, and in the latter the writer would have discovered more humility and self-distrust.

A general capacity for knowledge, and the cultivation of the understanding at large, will always put a woman into the
best

best state for directing her pursuits into those particular channels which her destination in life may afterwards require. But she should be carefully instructed that her talents are only a means to a still higher attainment, and that she is not to rest in them as an end; that merely to exercise them as instruments for the acquisition of fame and the promoting of pleasure, is subversive of her delicacy as a woman, and contrary to the spirit of a christian.

Study, therefore, is to be considered as the means of strengthening the mind, and of fitting it for higher duties, just as exercise is to be considered as an instrument for strengthening the body for the same end. And the valetudinarian who is religiously punctual in the observance of his daily rides to promote his health, and rests in that as an end, without so much as intending to make his improved health an instrument of increased usefulness, acts on the same low and selfish principle with her who reads merely for pleasure and for
fame,

fame, without any design of devoting the more enlarged and invigorated mind to the glory of the Giver.

But there is one *human* consideration which would perhaps more effectually tend to damp in an aspiring woman the ardours of literary vanity (I speak not of real genius) than any which she will derive from motives of humility, or propriety, or religion; which is, that in the judgment passed on her performances, she will have to encounter the mortifying circumstance of having her sex always taken into account, and her highest exertions will probably be received with the qualified approbation, *that it is really extraordinary for a woman*. Men of learning, who are naturally inclined to estimate works in proportion as they appear to be the result of art, study, and institution, are apt to consider even the happier performances of the other sex as the spontaneous productions of a fruitful but shallow soil; and to give them the same sort of praise which we bestow

bestow on certain fallads, which often draw from us a sort of wondering commendation; not indeed as being worth much in themselves, but because by the lightness of the earth, and a happy knack of the gardener, these indifferent cresses spring up in a night, and therefore one is ready to wonder they are no worse.

As to men of sense, however, they need be the less inimical to the improvement of the other sex, as they themselves will be sure to be gainers by it; the enlargement of the female understanding being the most likely means to put an end to those petty cavils and contentions for equality which female smatterers so anxiously maintain. I say smatterers, for between the first class of both sexes the question is much more rarely and always more temperately agitated. Co-operation and not competition is indeed the clear principle we wish to see reciprocally adopted by those higher minds in each sex which really approximate the nearest to each other. The more a woman's

man's understanding is improved, the more obviously she will discern that there can be no happiness in any society where there is a perpetual struggle for power; and the more her judgment is rectified, the more accurate views will she take of the station she herself was born to fill, and the more readily will she accommodate herself to it; while the most vulgar and ill-informed women are ever most inclined to be tyrants, and those always struggle most vehemently for power, who would not fail to make the worst use of it when attained. Thus the weakest reasoners are always the most positive in debate; and the cause is obvious, for *they* are unavoidably driven to maintain their pretensions by violence who want arguments and reasons to prove that they are in the right.

There is this singular difference between a woman vain of her wit, and a woman vain of her beauty; that the beauty, while she is anxiously alive to her own fame, is
often

often indifferent enough about the beauty of other women ; and provided she herself is sure of your admiration, she does not insist on your thinking that there is another handsome woman in the world : while she who is vain of her genius, more liberal at least in her vanity, is jealous for the honour of her whole sex, and contends for the equality of their pretensions, in which she feels that her own are involved. The beauty vindicates her own rights, the wit, the rights of women ; the beauty fights for herself, the wit for a party ; and while the more selfish though moderate beauty

would but be Queen for life,

the public spirited wit struggles to abrogate the Salique law of intellect, and to enthron

a whole sex of Queens.

At the revival of letters in the sixteenth and the following century, the controversy about this equality was agitated with more warmth

warmth than wisdom; and the process was instituted and carried on, on the part of the female complainant, with that sort of acrimony which always raises a suspicion of the justice of any cause. The novelty of that knowledge which was then bursting out from the dawn of a long dark night, kindled all the ardours of the female mind, and the ladies fought zealously for a portion of that renown which the reputation of learning was beginning to bestow. Besides their own pens, they had for their advocates all those needy authors who had any thing to hope from their power, their riches, or their influence; and so giddy did some of these literary ladies become by the adulation of their numerous panegyrists, that through these repeated draughts of inebriating praise, they grew to despise the equality for which they had before contended, as a state below their merit and unworthy of their acceptance. They now scorned to litigate for what they already thought they so obviously possessed, and

nothing short of the palm of superiority was at length considered as adequate to their growing claims. When court-ladies and princeſſes were the candidates, they could not long want champions to ſupport their cauſe ; by theſe champions female authorities were produced as if paramount to facts ; quotations from theſe female authors were conſidered as proofs, and their point-blank aſſertions ſtood for ſolid and irrefragable arguments. In thoſe parasites who offered this homage to female genius, the homage was therefore the effect neither of truth, nor of juſtice, nor of conviction. It aroſe rather out of gratitude, or it was a reciprocation of flattery ; it was ſometimes vanity, it was often diſtreſs, which prompted the adulation ; it was the want of a patroness ; it was the want of a dinner. When a lady, and eſpecially as it then often happened, when one who was noble or royal, ſat with gratifying docility at the foot of a profeſſor's chair ; when ſhe admired the philoſopher

losopher, or took upon her to protect the theologian, whom his rivals among his own sex were tearing to pieces, what could the grateful professor or delighted theologian do less in return than make the apotheosis of her who had had the penetration to discern his merit and the spirit to reward it? Thus in fact it was not so much *her* vanity as his own that he was often flattering, though she was the dupe of her more deep and designing panegyrist.

But it is a little unlucky for the perpetuity of that fame which the encomiast had made over to his patroness, in the never-dying records of his verses and orations, that in the revolution of a century or two the very names of the flattered are now almost as little known as the works of the flatterers. *Their memorial is perished with them**: an instructive lesson, that whoever bestows, or assumes a reputation dis-

* See Brantome, Pere le Moine, Monsr. Thomas, &c.

proportioned to the merit of the claimant, will find it as little durable as solid. For this literary warfare which engaged such troops of the second-hand authors of the age in question in such continual skirmishes, and not a few pitched battles ; which provoked so much rancour, so many volumes, and so little wit ; so much vanity and so much flattery, produced no useful or lasting effect. Those who promised themselves that their names would outlive “ one half “ of round eternity,” did not reach the end of the century in which the boast was made ; and those who offered the incense, and those who greedily snuffed up its fumes, are buried in the same blank oblivion !

But when the temple of Janus seemed to have been closed, or when at worst the peace was only occasionally broken by a flight and random shot from the hand of some single straggler ; it appears that though open rebellion had ceased, yet the
female

female claim had not been renounced ; it had only (if we may change the metaphor) lain in abeyance. The contest has recently been revived with added fury, and with multiplied exactions ; for whereas the ancient demand was merely a kind of imaginary prerogative, a speculative importance, a mere titular right, a shadowy claim to a few unreal acres of Parnassian territory ; the revived contention has taken a more serious turn, and brings forward political as well as intellectual pretensions : and among the innovations of this innovating period, the imposing term of *rights* has been produced to sanctify the claim of our female pretenders, with a view not only to rekindle in the minds of women a presumptuous vanity dishonourable to their sex, but produced with a view to excite in their hearts an impious discontent with the post which God has assigned them in this world.

But *they* little understand the true in-

terests of woman who would lift her from the important duties of her allotted station, to fill with fantastic dignity a loftier but less appropriate niche. Nor do they understand her true happiness, who seek to annihilate distinctions from which she derives advantages, and to attempt innovations which would depreciate her real value. Each sex has its proper excellencies, which would be lost were they melted down into the common character by the fusion of the new philosophy. Why should we do away distinctions which increase the mutual benefits and enhance the satisfactions of life? Whence, but by carefully preserving the original marks of difference stamped by the hand of the Creator, would be derived the superior advantage of mixed society? Have men no need to have their rough angles filed off, and their harshnesses and asperities smoothed and polished by assimilating with beings of more softness and refinement? Are the ideas of
women

women naturally so *very* judicious, are their principles so *invincibly* firm, are their views so *perfectly* correct, are their judgments so *completely* exact, that there is occasion for no additional weight, no superadded strength, no increased clearness, none of that enlargement of mind, none of that additional invigoration which may be derived from the aids of the stronger sex? What identity could advantageously supersede an enlivening opposition and an interesting variety of character? Is it not then more wise as well as more honourable to move contentedly in the plain path which Providence has obviously marked out to the sex, and in which custom has for the most part rationally confirmed them, than to stray awkwardly, unbecomingly, and unsuccessfully, in a forbidden road? Is it not desirable to be the lawful possessors of a lesser domestic territory, rather than the turbulent usurpers of a wider foreign empire? to be

good originals, rather than bad imitators ? to be the best thing of one's own kind, rather than an inferior thing even if it were of an higher kind ? to be excellent women rather than indifferent men ?

Is the author then undervaluing her own sex ?—No. It is her zeal for their true *interests* which leads her to oppose their imaginary *rights*. It is her regard for their happiness which makes her endeavour to cure them of a feverish thirst for fame. A little Christian humility and sober-mindedness are worth all the wild metaphysical discussion, which has unsettled the peace of vain women, and forfeited the respect of reasonable men. And the most elaborate definition of ideal rights, and the most hardy measures for attaining them, are of less value in the eyes of a truly amiable woman, than “that meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

Natural propensities best mark the designations of Providence as to their application.

application. The fin was not more clearly bestowed on the fish that he should swim, nor the wing given to the bird that he should fly, than superior strength of body and a firmer texture of mind was given to man, that he might preside in the deep and daring scenes of action and of council; in government, in arms, in science, in commerce, and in those professions which demand a higher reach, and a wider range of powers. The true value of woman is not diminished by the imputation of inferiority in *these* respects; she has other requisites better adapted to answer the ends and purposes of her being, by "HIM
"who does all things well;" who suits the agent to the action; who accommodates the instrument to the work.

Let her not then view with pining envy the keen satyrist, hunting vice through all the doublings and windings of the heart; the sagacious politician, leading senates, and directing the fate of empires; the
acute

acute lawyer, detecting the obliquities of fraud ; and the skilful dramatist, exposing the pretensions of folly : but let her ambition be consoled by reflecting, that those who thus excel, to all that Nature bestows and books can teach, must add besides that consummate knowledge of the world to which a delicate woman has no fair avenues, and which even if she could attain she would never be supposed to have come honestly by.

In almost all that comes under the description of polite letters, in all that captivates by imagery or warms by just and affecting sentiment, women are excellent. They possess in a high degree that delicacy and quickness of perception, and that nice discernment between the beautiful and defective, which comes under the denomination of taste. Both in composition and action they excel in details ; but they do not so much generalize their ideas as men, nor do their minds seize a great subject
with

with so large a grasp. They are acute observers, and accurate judges of life and manners, as far as their own sphere of observation extends; but they describe a smaller circle. A woman sees the world, as it were, from a little elevation in her own garden, whence she makes an exact survey of home scenes, but takes not in that wider range of distant prospects, which he who stands on a loftier eminence commands. Women have a certain *tact* which often enables them to feel what is just more instantaneously than they can define it. They have an intuitive penetration into character, bestowed on them by Providence, like the sensitive and tender organs of some timid animals, as a kind of natural guard to warn off the approach of danger beings who are often called to act defensively.

In summing up the evidence, if I may so speak, of the different powers of the sexes, one may venture, perhaps, to assert,
that

that women have equal *parts*, but are inferior in *wholeness* of mind, in the integral understanding: that though a superior woman may possess single faculties in equal perfection, yet there is commonly a juster proportion in the mind of a superior man: that if women have in an equal degree the faculty of fancy which creates images, and the faculty of memory which collects and stores ideas, they seem not to possess in equal measure the faculty of comparing, combining, analysing, and separating these ideas; that deep and patient thinking which goes to the bottom of a subject; nor that power of arrangement which knows how to link a thousand connected ideas in one dependent train, without losing sight of the original idea out of which the rest grow, and on which they all hang. The female too, wanting steadiness in her intellectual pursuits, is perpetually turned aside by her characteristic tastes and feelings. Woman in the career of
genius,

genius, is the Atalanta, who will risk losing the race by running out of her road to pick up the golden apple; while her male competitor, without, perhaps, possessing greater natural strength or swiftness, will more certainly attain his object, by direct pursuit, by being less exposed to the seductions of extraneous beauty, and will win the race, not by excelling in speed, but by despising the bait*.

Here it may be justly enough retorted, that, as it is allowed the education of women is so defective, the alleged inferiority of their minds may be accounted for on that ground more justly than by ascribing it to their natural make. And, indeed there is so much truth in the remark, that

* What indisposes even reasonable women to concede in these points is, that the weakest man instantly lays hold on the concession; and, on the mere ground of sex, plumes himself on his own individual superiority; inferring, that the silliest man is superior to the first-rate woman.

till

till women shall be more reasonably educated, and till the native growth of their mind shall cease to be stinted and cramped, we have no juster ground for pronouncing that their understanding has already reached its highest attainable point, than the Chinese would have for affirming that their women have attained to the greatest possible perfection in walking, while the first care is, during their infancy, to cripple their feet. At least, till the female sex are more carefully instructed, this question will always remain as undecided as to the *degree* of difference between the masculine and feminine understanding, as the question between the understandings of blacks and whites; for until Africans and Euporeans are put more nearly on a par in the cultivation of their minds, the shades of distinction, if any there be, between their native powers can never be fairly ascertained.

And when we see (and who will deny that we see it frequently?) so many wo-

men nobly rising from under all the pressure of a disadvantageous education and a defective system of society, and exhibiting the most unambiguous marks of a vigorous understanding, a correct judgment, and a sterling piety, it reminds one of those shining lights which have now and then burst out through all the "darkness visible" of the Romish church, have disincumbered themselves from the gloom of ignorance and shaken off the fetters of prejudice, and risen superior to all the errors of a corrupt theology.

But whatever characteristical distinctions may exist; whatever inferiority may be attached to woman from the slighter frame of her body, or the more circumscribed powers of her mind, from a less systematic education, and from the subordinate station she is called to fill in life; there is one great and leading circumstance which raises her importance, and even establishes her equality. *Christianity* has exalted women

to true and undisputed dignity; in Christ Jesus, as there is neither "rich nor poor," "bond nor free," so there is neither "male nor female." In the view of that immortality, which is brought to light by the gospel, she has no superior. Women (to borrow the idea of an excellent prelate) make up one half of the human race; equally with men redeemed by the blood of Christ. In this their true dignity consists; here their best pretensions rest, here their highest claims are allowed.

All disputes then for pre-eminence between the sexes have only for their object the poor precedence for a few short years, the attention of which would be better devoted to the duties of life and the interest of eternity.

And as the final hope of the female sex is equal, so are their present means, perhaps, more favourable, and their opportunities, often, less obstructed than those of
the

the other sex. In their Christian course women have every superior advantage, whether we consider the natural make of their minds, their leisure for acquisition in youth, or their subsequently less exposed mode of life. Their hearts are naturally soft and flexible, open to impressions of love and gratitude; their feelings tender and lively: all these are favourable to the cultivation of a devotional spirit. Yet while we remind them of these benefits, they will do well to be on their guard lest this very softness and ductility lay them more open to the seductions of temptation and error.

They have in the native constitution of their minds, as well as from the relative situations they are called to fill, a certain sense of attachment and dependence, which is peculiarly favourable to religion. They feel, perhaps, more intimately the want of a strength which is not their own. Christianity brings that superinduced strength; it comes in aid of their

conscious weakness, and offers the only true counterpoise to it. "Woman, be thou healed of thine infirmity," is still the heart cheering language of a gracious Saviour.

Women also bring to the study of Christianity fewer of those prejudices which persons of the other sex too often early contract. Men, from their classical education, acquire a strong partiality for the manners of Pagan antiquity, and the documents of Pagan philosophy : this, together with the impure taint caught from the loose descriptions of their poets, and the licentious language even of their historians, (in whom we reasonably look for more gravity,) often weakens the good impressions of young men, and at least confuses their ideas of piety, by mixing them with so much heterogeneous matter. Their very spirits are embued all the week with the impure follies of a depraved mythology ; and it is well if even on Sundays they get to hear of the "true God, and Jesus
" Christ

“Christ whom he has sent.” While women, though struggling with the same natural corruptions, have commonly less knowledge to unknow, and fewer schemes to unlearn; they have not to shake off the pride of system, and to disencumber their minds from the shackles of favourite theories: they do not bring from the porch or the academy any “oppositions of science” to obstruct their reception of those pure doctrines taught on the Mount: doctrines which ought to find a readier entrance into minds uninfected with the pride of the school of Zeno, or the libertinism of that of Epicurus.

And as women are naturally more affectionate than fastidious; they are likely both to read and to hear with a less critical spirit than men: they will not be on the watch to detect errors, so much as to gather improvement; they have seldom that hardness which is acquired by dealing deeply in books of controversy, but are

more inclined to works which quicken the devotional feelings, than to such as awaken a spirit of doubt and scepticism. They are less disposed to consider the compositions they peruse, as materials on which to ground objections and answers, than as helps to faith and rules of life. With these advantages, however, they should also bear in mind that their impressions being often less abiding, and their reason less open to conviction, by means of the strong evidences which exist in favour of the truth of Christianity, "they ought therefore, to give the more earnest heed to the things which they have heard, lest at any time they should let them slip." Women are also from their domestic habits, in possession of more leisure and tranquillity for religious pursuits, as well as secured from those difficulties and temptations to which men are exposed in the tumult of a bustling world. Their lives are more uniform, less agitated by the

the passions, the busineſſes, the contentions, the ſhock of opinions and of intereſts which convulſe the world.

If we have denied them the talents which might lead them to excel as lawyers, they are preſerved from the peril of having their principles warped by that too indifcriminate defence of right and wrong, to which the profeſſors of the law are expoſed. If we ſhould queſtion their title to eminence as mathematicians, they are happily exempt from the danger to which men devoted to that ſcience are ſaid to be liable ; namely, that of looking for demonſtration on ſubjects, which, by their very nature, are incapable of affording it. If they are leſs converſant in the powers of nature, the ſtructure of the human frame, and the knowledge of the heavenly bodies, than philoſophers, phyſicians, and aſtronomers ; they are, however, delivered from the error into which many of each of theſe have ſometimes fallen, I mean from the fatal habit of reſting in ſecond cauſes, inſtead of referring all to the firſt ; inſtead of

making "the heavens declare the glory
"of God, and proclaim his handy work;"
instead of concluding, when they observe,
"how fearfully and wonderfully we are
"made, marvellous are thy works, O Lord,
"and that my soul knoweth right well."

And let the weaker sex take comfort,
that in their very exemption from privi-
leges, which they are sometimes disposed
to envy, consists their security and their
happiness. If they enjoy not the dis-
tinctions of public life and high offices, do
they not escape the responsibility attached
to them, and the mortification of being
dismissed from them? If they have no
voice in deliberative assemblies, do they
not avoid the load of duty connected with
such privileges? Preposterous pains have
been taken to excite in women an uneasy
jealousy, that their talents are neither re-
warded with public honours nor emolu-
ments in life; nor with inscriptions, sta-
tues, and mausoleums after death. It
has been absurdly represented to them as

a hardship, that while they are expected to perform duties, they must yet be contented to relinquish honours, and must unjustly be compelled to renounce fame while they must sedulously labour to deserve it.

But for Christian women to act on the low views suggested to them by their ill-judging panegyrists; and to look up with a giddy head and a throbbing heart to honours and remunerations, so little suited to the wants and capacities of an immortal spirit, would be no less ridiculous than if Christian heroes should look back with envy on the pagan rewards of ovations, oak garlands, parsley crowns, and laurel wreaths. The Christian hope more than reconciles Christian women to these petty privations, by substituting a nobler prize for their ambition, "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" by substituting, for that popular and fluctuating voice, which may cry "Hosanna" and "crucify" in a breath, that "favour of God which is eternal life."

If women should lament the disadvantages attached to their sex, that their character is of so delicate a texture as to be sullied by the slightest breath of calumny, and that the stain is indelible; yet are they not led by that very circumstance more instinctively to shrink from all those irregularities to which the loss of character is so much expected to be attached; and to shun with keener circumspection the most distant approach towards the confines of danger? Let them not lament it as a hardship, but account it to be a privilege, that the delicacy of their sex impels them more scrupulously to avoid the very appearance of evil, and that the consciousness of their danger serves to secure their purity, by placing them at a greater distance from the evil itself.

Though it be one main object of this little work, rather to lower than to raise any desire of celebrity in the female heart; yet I would awaken it to a just sensibility to honest fame: I would call on women

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to reflect that our religion has not only made them heirs to a blessed immortality hereafter, but has greatly raised them in the scale of being here, by lifting them to an importance in society unknown to the most polished ages of antiquity. The religion of Christ has even bestowed a degree of renown on the sex beyond what any other religion ever did. Perhaps there are hardly so many virtuous women (for I reject the long catalogue whom their vices have transferred from oblivion to infamy) named in all the pages of Greek or Roman History, as are handed down to eternal fame, in a few of those short chapters with which the great Apostle to the Gentiles has concluded his epistles to his converts. Of "devout and honourable women," the sacred scriptures record "not a few." Some of the most affecting scenes, the most interesting transactions, and the most touching conversations which are recorded of the Saviour
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of the world, passed with women. *They* are the first remarked as having "ministered to him of their substance." *Theirs* was the praise of not abandoning their despised Redeemer when he was led to execution, and under all the hopeless circumstances of his ignominious death; *they* appear to have been the *last* attending at his tomb, and the *first* on the morning when he arose from it. *Theirs* was the privilege of receiving the earliest consolation from their risen Lord; *theirs* was the honour of being first commissioned to announce his glorious resurrection to the world. And even to furnish heroic confessors, devoted saints, and unshrinking martyrs to the Church of Christ, has not been the exclusive honour of the bolder sex.

CHAP. XIV.

CONVERSATION.—*Hints suggested on the subject.—On the tempers and dispositions to be introduced in it.—Errors to be avoided.—Vanity under various shapes the cause of those errors.*

THE sexes will naturally desire to appear to each other, such as each believes the other will best like; their conversation will act reciprocally; and each sex will appear more or less rational as they perceive it will more or less recommend them to the other. It is therefore to be regretted, that many men, even of distinguished sense and learning, are so apt to consider the society of ladies, as a scene in which to rest their understandings, rather than to exercise them; while ladies, in return, are too much addicted to make their court by lending themselves to this spirit
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of trifling; they often avoid to make use of what abilities they have; and affect to talk below their natural and acquired powers of mind; considering it as a tacit and welcome flattery to the understanding of men, to renounce the exercise of their own.

Now since taste and principles thus mutually operate; men, by keeping up conversation to its proper standard, would not only call into exercise the powers of mind which women actually possess; but would even awaken in them new energies which they do not know they possess; and men of sense would find their account in doing this, for their own talents would be more highly rated by companions who were better able to appreciate them. And, on the other hand, if young women found it did not often recommend them in the eyes of those whom they might wish to please, to be frivolous and superficial, they would become more sedulous in correcting their own habits; whenever fashionable women
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indicate a relish for instructive conversation, men will not be apt to hazard what is vain or unprofitable; much less will they ever presume to bring forward what is loose or corrupt, where some signal has not been previously given, that it will be acceptable, or at least that it will be pardoned.

Ladies commonly bring into company minds already too much relaxed by petty pursuits, rather than overstrained by intense application; the littleness of the employments in which they are usually engaged, does not so exhaust their spirits as to make them stand in need of that relaxation from company which severe application or overwhelming business makes requisite for studious or public men. The due consideration of this circumstance might serve to bring the sexes more nearly on a level in society; and each might meet the other half way; for that degree of lively and easy conversation which is a necessary refreshment to the learned and the busy, would not decrease
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in pleasantness by being made of so rational a cast as would yet somewhat raise the minds of women, who commonly seek society as a scene of pleasure, not as a refuge from intense thought or exhausting labour.

It is a disadvantage even to those women who keep the best company, that it is unhappily almost established into a system, by the other sex, to postpone every thing like instructive discourse till the ladies are withdrawn; their retreat serving as a kind of signal for the exercise of intellect. And in the few cases in which it happens that any important discussion takes place in their presence, they are for the most part considered as having little interest in serious subjects. Strong truths, whenever such happen to be addressed to them, are either diluted with flattery, or kept back in part, or softened to their taste; or if the ladies express a wish for information on any point, they are put off with a compliment, instead of a reason; and are considered

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as beings who are not expected to see and to judge of things as they really exist.

Do we then wish to see the ladies, whose opportunities leave them so incompetent, and the modesty of whose sex ought never to allow them even to be as shining as they are able;—do we wish to see them take the lead in metaphysical disquisitions? Do we wish them to plunge into the depths of theological polemics,

And find no end in wand'ring mazes lost?

Do we wish them to revive the animosities of the Bangorian controversy, or to decide the process between the Jesuits and the five propositions of Jansenius? Do we wish to enthrone them in the professor's chair, to deliver oracles, harangues, and dissertations? to weigh the merits of every new production in the scales of Quintilian, or to regulate the unities of dramatic composition by *Aristotle's clock*? Or renouncing those foreign aids, do we desire to behold them, inflated with
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their original powers, labouring to strike out sparks of wit, with a restless anxiety to shine, which generally fails, and with a laboured affectation to please, which never pleases ?

Diseurs de bons mots, fades caracteres !

All this be far from them !—But we *do* wish to see the conversation of well-bred women rescued from vapid common places, from uninteresting tattle, from trite and hackneyed communications, from frivolous earnestness, from false sensibility, from a warm interest about things of no moment, and an indifference to topics the most important ; from a cold vanity, from the overflowings of self-love, exhibiting itself under the smiling mask of an engaging flattery, and from all the factitious manners of artificial intercourse. We *do* wish to see the time passed in polished and intelligent society, considered among the beneficial, as well as the pleasant portions of our existence, and not consigned over,

as it too frequently is, to premeditated trifling, or systematic unprofitableness. Let us not, however, be misunderstood ; it is not meant to prescribe that they should affect to talk on lofty subjects, so much as to suggest that they should bring good sense, simplicity, and precision into those common subjects, of which, after all, both the business and the conversation of mankind is in a great measure made up.

It is too well known how much the dread of imputed pedantry keeps off any thing that verges towards *learned*, and the terror of imputed enthusiasm, staves off any thing that approaches to *serious* conversation, so that the two topics which peculiarly distinguish us, as rational and immortal beings, are by general consent in a good degree banished from the society of rational and immortal creatures. But we might almost as consistently give up the comforts of fire because a few persons have been burnt, and the benefit of water because some others have been drowned, as

relinquish the enjoyments of intellectual, and the blessings of religious intercourse, because the learned world has sometimes been infested with pedants, and the religious world with fanatics.

As in the momentous times in which we live, it is next to impossible to pass an evening in company, 'but the talk will so inevitably revert to politics, that, without any premeditated design, every one present shall infallibly get to know to which side the other inclines; why, in the far higher concern of eternal things, should we so carefully shun every offered opportunity of bearing even a casual testimony to the part we espouse in religion? Why, while we make it a sort of point of conscience to leave no doubt on the mind of a stranger, whether we adopt the party of Pitt or Fox, shall we chuse to leave it very problematical whether we belong to God or Baal? Why, in religion, as well as in politics, should we not act like people who, having their all at stake, cannot forbear now and then

then adverting for a moment to the object of their grand concern, and dropping, at least, an incidental intimation of the side to which they belong.

Even the news of the day, in such an eventful period as the present, may lend frequent occasions to a woman of principle, to declare, without parade, her faith in a moral Governor of the world; her trust in a particular Providence; her belief in the Divine Omnipotence; her confidence in the power of God, in educating good from evil, in his employing wicked nations, not as favourites but instruments; her persuasion that present success is no proof of the divine favour; in short, some intimation that she is not ashamed to declare that her mind is under the influence of christian faith and principle. A general concurrence in exhibiting this spirit of decided faith and holy trust, would inconceivably discourage that pert infidelity which is ever on the watch to produce itself: and, as we have already observed, if

women, who derive authority from their rank or talents, did but reflect how their sentiments are repeated and their authority quoted, they would be so on their guard, that general society might become a scene of general improvement, and the young, who are looking for models on which to fashion themselves, would be ashamed of exhibiting any thing like levity, or scepticism, or prophaneness.

Let it be understood, that it is not meant to intimate that serious subjects should make up the bulk of conversation; this, as it is impossible, would also often be improper. It is not intended to suggest that they should be abruptly introduced, or unsuitably prolonged; but only that they should not be systematically shunned, nor the brand of fanaticism be fixed on the person who, with whatever propriety, hazards the introduction of them. It is evident, however, that this general dread of serious topics arises a good deal from an ignorance of the true nature of religion; people avoid it

it on the principle expressed by the vulgar phrase of the danger of playing with edge tools. They conceive of it as something which involves controversy, and dispute, and mischief; something of an inflammatory nature, which is to stir up ill humours; as of a sort of party business which sets friends at variance. So much is this notion adopted, that I have seen announced two works of considerable merit, in which it was stipulated as an attraction, that religion, as being likely to excite anger and party distinctions, should be carefully excluded. Such is the worldly idea of the spirit of that religion, whose direct object it was to bring "peace and good will to men!"

Women too little live or converse up to their understandings; and however we have deprecated affectation or pedantry, let it be remembered, that both in reading and conversing the understanding gains more by stretching, than stooping. If by exerting itself it may not attain to all it de-

fires, yet it will be sure to gain something. The mind, by always applying itself to objects below its level, contracts and shrinks itself to the size, and lowers itself to the level, of the object about which it is conversant : while the mind which is active expands and raises itself, grows larger by exercise, abler by diffusion, and richer by communication.

But the taste of general society is not favourable to improvement. The seriousness with which the most frivolous subjects are agitated, and the levity with which the most serious are dispatched, bear a pretty exact proportion to each other. Society too is a sort of magic lanthorn; the scene is perpetually shifting. In this incessant change, the evanescent fashion of the present minute, which, while in many it leads to the cultivation of real knowledge, has also sometimes led even the gay and idle to the affectation of mixing a sprinkling of science with the mass of dissipation. The ambition of appearing to be

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well-informed breaks out even in those triflers who will not spare time from their pleasureable pursuits sufficient for acquiring that knowledge, of which, however, the reputation is so desirable. A little smattering of philosophy often dignifies the pursuits of their day, without rescuing them from the vanities of the night. A course of lectures (that admirable assistant for enlightening the understanding) is not seldom resorted to as a means to substitute the appearance of knowledge for the fatigue of application; but where this valuable help is attended merely like any other public exhibition, and is not furthered by correspondent reading at home, it often serves to set off the reality of ignorance with the affectation of skill. But instead of producing in conversation a few reigning scientific terms, with a familiarity and readiness, which

Amaze the unlearn'd, and make the learned smile,
would it not be more modest even for
those who are better informed, to avoid

the common use of technical terms whenever the idea can be as well conveyed without them? For it argues no real ability to know the *names* of tools; the ability lies in knowing their *use*: and while it is in the thing, and not in the term, that real knowledge consists, the charge of pedantry is attached to the use of the term, which would not attach to the knowledge of the science.

In the faculty of speaking well, ladies have such a happy promptitude of turning their slender advantages to account, that there are many who, though they have never been taught a rule of syntax, yet, by a quick facility in profiting from the best books and the best company, hardly ever violate one; and who often exhibit an elegant and perspicuous arrangement of style, without having studied any of the laws of composition. Every kind of knowledge which appears to be the result of observation, reflection, and natural taste, fits gracefully on women. Yet on the
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other hand it sometimes happens, that ladies of no contemptible natural parts are too ready to produce, not only pedantic expressions, but crude notions; and still oftener to bring forward obvious and hackneyed remarks, which float on the very surface of a subject, with the imposing air of recent invention, and all the vanity of conscious discovery. This is because their acquirements have not been woven into their minds by early instruction; what knowledge they have gotten stands out as it were above the very surface of their minds, like the *appliquée* of the embroiderer, instead of having been interwoven with the growth of the piece, so as to have become a part of the stuff. They did not, like men, acquire what they know while the texture was forming. Perhaps no better preventive could be devised for this literary vanity, than *early* instruction: that woman would be less likely to be vain of her knowledge who did not remember the time when she was ignorant.

Knowledge

Knowledge that is *burnt in*, if I may so speak, is seldom obtrusive, rarely impertinent.

Their reading also has probably consisted much in abridgments from larger works, as was observed in a former chapter; this makes a readier talker, but a shallower thinker, than the perusal of books of more bulk. By these scanty sketches their critical spirit has been excited, while their critical powers have not been formed. For in those crippled mutilations they have seen nothing of that just proportion of parts, that skilful arrangement of the plan, and that artful distribution of the subject, which, while they prove the master hand of the writer, serve also to form the taste of the reader, far more than a dis-jointed skeleton, or a beautiful feature or two can do. The instruction of women is also too much drawn from the scanty and penurious sources of short writings of the essay kind: this, when it comprises the best part of a person's reading, makes a smatterer and
spoils

spoils a scholar; for though it supplies current talk, yet it does not make a full mind; it does not furnish a store-house of materials to stock the understanding, neither does it accustom the mind to any trains of reflection: for the subjects, besides being each succinctly, and, on account of this brevity, superficially treated, are distinct and disconnected: they arise out of no concatenation of ideas, nor any dependent series of deduction. Yet on this pleasant but desultory reading, the mind which has not been trained to severer exercise, loves to repose itself in a sort of creditable indolence, instead of stretching its powers in the wholesome labour of consequent investigation*.

* The writer cannot be supposed desirous of depreciating the value of those many beautiful periodical essays which adorn our language. But, perhaps, it might be better to regale the mind with them singly, at different times, than to read at the same sitting, a multitude of short pieces on dissimilar and unconnected topics, *by way of getting through the book.*

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I am not discouraging study at a late period of life, or even slender knowledge; information is good at whatever period and in whatever degree it be acquired. But in such cases it should be attended with peculiar humility: and the new possessor should bear in mind, that what is fresh to her has been long known to others; and she should therefore be aware of advancing as novel that which is common, and obtruding as rare that which every body possesses. Some ladies are eager to exhibit proofs of their reading, though at the expence of their judgment, and will introduce in conversation quotations quite irrelevant to the matter in hand, because they happen at the instant to recur to their recollection, or were, perhaps, found in the book they have just been reading. Unappropriate quotations or strained analogy may shew reading, but they do not shew taste. That just and happy allusion which knows
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by a word how to awaken a corresponding image, or to excite in the hearer the idea which fills the mind of the speaker, shews less pedantry and more taste than bare citations; and a mind imbued with elegant knowledge will inevitably betray the opulence of its resources, even on topics which do not relate to science or literature. Well informed persons will easily be discovered to have read the best books, though they are not always detailing catalogues of authors. Though honey owes its exquisite taste to the fragrance of the sweetest flowers, yet the skill of the little artificer appears in this, that the delicious stores are so admirably worked up, as not to taste individually of any of those sweets of the very essence of which it is compounded. But true judgment will detect the infusion which true modesty will not display; and even common subjects passing through a cultivated understanding borrow a flavour of its richness.

richness. A power of apt selection is more valuable than any power of general retention ; and an apposite remark, which shoots straight to the point, demands higher powers of mind than an hundred simple acts of memory : for the business of the memory is only to store up materials which the understanding is to mix and work up with its native faculties, and which the judgment is to bring out and apply. But young women who have more vivacity than sense, and more vanity than vivacity, often risk the charge of absurdity to escape that of ignorance, and will even compare two authors who are totally unlike, rather than miss the occasion to shew that they have read both.

Among the arts to spoil conversation, some ladies possess that of suddenly diverting it from the channel in which it was beneficially flowing, because some *word* used by the person who was speaking has accidentally struck out a new train of think-

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ing in their own minds, and not because the general *idea* expressed has struck out a corresponding idea, which sort of collision is indeed the way of eliciting the true fire. Young ladies, whose sprightliness has not been disciplined by a correct education, consider how things may be prettily said, rather than how they may be prudently or seasonably spoken; and hazard being thought wrong, or rash, or vain, for the chance of being reckoned pleasant. The flowers of rhetoric captivate them more than the justest deductions of reason; and to repel an argument they arm themselves with a metaphor. Those also who do not aim so high as eloquence, are often surprized that you refuse to accept of a prejudice instead of a reason; they are apt to take up with a probability in place of a demonstration, and cheaply put you off with an assertion when you are requiring a proof. The same mode of education renders them also impatient of opposition;
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and if they happen to possess beauty, and to be vain of it, they may be tempted to consider that as an additional proof of their being always in the right. In this case, they will not ask you to submit your judgment to the force of their argument, so much as to the authority of their charms.

The same fault in the mind, strengthened by the same cause, (a neglected education,) leads lively women often to pronounce on a question without examining it: on any given point they seldom *doubt* than men; not because they are more clear sighted, but because they have not been accustomed to look into a subject long enough to discover its depths and its intricacies; and not discerning its difficulties, they conclude that it has none. Is it a contradiction to say, that they seem at once to be quick-sighted and short-sighted? What they see at all, they commonly see at once; a little difficulty discourages them; and, having caught a

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hasty glimpse of a subject, they rush to this conclusion, that either there is no more to be seen, or that what is behind will not pay them for the trouble of searching. They pursue their object eagerly, but not regularly; rapidly, but not pertinaciously; for they want that obstinate patience of investigation which grows stouter by repulse. What they have not attained, they do not believe exists; what they cannot seize at once, they persuade themselves is not worth having.

Is a subject of moment started in company? While the more sagacious are deliberating on its difficulties, and viewing it under all its aspects, in order to form a competent judgment before they decide, you will often find the most superficial woman present determine the matter without hesitation. Not seeing the perplexities in which the question is involved, she wonders at the want of penetration in him whose very penetration keeps him

silent. She secretly despises the dull perception and slow decision of him who is patiently *untying* the knot which she fancies she exhibits more dexterity by *cutting*. By this shallow sprightliness, the person whose opinion was best worth having is discouraged from delivering it, and an important subject is dismissed without discussion, by this inconsequent flippancy and voluble rashness. It is this abundance of florid talk, from superficial matter, which has brought on so many of the sex the charge of *inverting* the Apostle's precept, and being *swift to speak, slow to hear*.

For if the great Roman Orator could observe, that silence was so important a part of conversation, that "there was not only "an art but an eloquence in it," how peculiarly does the remark apply to the modesty of youthful females! But the silence of listless ignorance, and the silence of sparkling intelligence, are two things almost as obviously distinct, as the wisdom and the folly of the tongue. An inviolable
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and marked attention may shew, that a woman is pleased with a subject, and an illuminated countenance may prove that she understands it, almost as unequivocally as language itself could do ; and this, with a modest question, is in many cases as large a share of the conversation as it is decorous for feminine delicacy to take. It is also as flattering an encouragement as men of sense require, for pursuing such topics in the presence of women, which they would be more disposed to do, did they oftener gain by it the attention which it is natural to wish to excite.

Yet do we not sometimes see an impatience to be heard (nor is it a *feminine* failing only) which good breeding can scarcely subdue ? And even when these incorrigible talkers are compelled to be silent, is it not evident that they are not listening to what is said, but are only thinking of what they themselves shall say when they can seize the first lucky interval for which they are so narrowly watching ?

But conversation must not be considered as a stage for the display of our talents, so much as a field for the exercise and improvement of our virtues; as a means for promoting the glory of our Creator, and the good and happiness of our fellow-creatures. Well-bred and intelligent Christians are not, when they join in society, to consider themselves as entering the lists like intellectual prize-fighters, in order to exhibit their own vigour and dexterity, to discomfit their adversary, and to bear away the palm of victory. Truth and not triumph should be the object; and there are few occasions in life, in which we are more unremittingly called upon to watch ourselves narrowly, and to resist the assaults of various temptations, than in conversation. Vanity, jealousy, envy, misrepresentation, resentment, disdain, levity, impatience, insincerity, will in turn solicit to be gratified. Constantly to struggle against the desire of being thought more wise, more witty, and more knowing, than
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those with whom we associate, demands the incessant exertion of Christian vigilance, a vigilance which the generality are so far from suspecting necessary in the intercourse of common society, that cheerful conversation is rather considered as an exemption and release from it, than as an additional obligation to it.

But society, as was observed before, is not a stage on which to throw down our gauntlet, and prove our own prowess by the number of falls we give to our adversary ; so far from it, good breeding as well as Christianity, considers as an indispensable requisite for conversation, the disposition to bring forward to notice any talent in others, which their own modesty, or conscious inferiority, would lead them to keep back. To do this with effect requires a penetration exercised to discern merit, and a generous candour which delights in drawing it out. There are few who cannot converse tolerably on some one topic ; what that is, we should try to find

out, and in general introduce that topic, though to the suppression of any one on which we ourselves are supposed to excel: and however superior we may be in other respects to the persons in question, we may, perhaps, in that particular point, improve by them; and if we do not gain information, we shall at least gain a wholesome exercise to our humility and self-denial; we shall be restraining our own impetuosity; we shall, if we take this course on just occasions only, and so as to beware lest we gratify the vanity of others, be giving confidence to a doubting, or cheerfulness to a depressed spirit. And to place a just remark, hazarded by the diffident, in the most advantageous point of view; to call the attention of the inattentive, the forward and the self-sufficient, to some quiet person in the company, who, though of much worth, is perhaps of little note; these are requisites for conversation, less brilliant, but far more valuable, than the power of exciting bursts of laughter by

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the brightest wit, or of extorting admiration by the most poignant sallies of ridicule.

For wit is of all the qualities of the female mind that which requires the severest castigation; yet the temperate exercise of this fascinating quality throws an additional lustre round the character of an amiable woman; for to manage with discreet modesty a dangerous talent, confers a higher praise than can be claimed by those in whom the absence of the talent takes away the temptation to misemploy it. To women, wit is a peculiarly perilous possession, which nothing short of the sober-mindedness of Christianity can keep in order. Intemperate wit craves admiration as its natural aliment; it lives on flattery as its daily bread. The professed wit is a hungry beggar, that subsists on the extorted alms of perpetual panegyric; and like the vulture in the Grecian fable, its appetite increases by indulgence. Simple truth and sober approbation become tasteless and insipid to the palate, daily vitiated by the

delicious poignancies of exaggerated commendation. Under the above restrictions, however, wit may be safely and pleasantly exercised; for *chastised wit* is an elegant and well-bred, and not unfeminine quality. But *humour*, especially if it degenerate into imitation, or mimicry, is very sparingly to be ventured on; for it is so difficult totally to detach it from the suspicion of buffoonery, that a woman will be likely to lose more of that delicacy which is her appropriate grace, than she will gain in the eyes of the judicious, by the most successful display of humour.

But if it be true that some women are too apt to affect brilliancy and display in their own discourse, and to undervalue the more humble pretensions of less showy characters; it must be confessed also, that some of more ordinary abilities are now and then guilty of the opposite error, and foolishly affect to value themselves on not making use of the understanding they really possess. They exhibit no small satisfaction
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in ridiculing women of high intellectual endowments, while they exclaim with much affected humility, and much real envy, that "they are thankful *they* are "not geniuses." Now, though one is glad to hear gratitude expressed on any occasion, yet the want of sense is really no such great mercy to be thankful for; and it would indicate a better spirit, were they to pray to be enabled to make a right use of the moderate understanding they possess, instead of exposing with a visible pleasure the imaginary or real defects of their more shining acquaintance. Women of the brightest faculties should not only "bear those faculties meekly," but consider it as no derogation, cheerfully to fulfil those humbler duties which make up the business of common life, always taking into the account the higher responsibility attached to higher gifts. While women of lower attainments should exert to the utmost such abilities as Providence has assigned them; and while they should
not

not deride excellencies which are above their reach, they should not despond at an inferiority which did not depend on themselves; nor, because God has denied them ten talents, should they forget that they are equally responsible for the one he *has* allotted them, but set about devoting that one with humble diligence to the glory of the Giver.

Vanity, however, is not the monopoly of talents: let not a young lady, therefore, fancy that she is humble, merely because she is not ingenious. Humility is not the exclusive privilege of dulness. Folly is as conceited as wit, and ignorance many a time outstrips knowledge in the race of vanity. Equally earnest competitions spring from causes less worthy to excite them than wit and genius. Vanity insinuates itself into the female heart under a variety of unsuspected forms, and seizes on many a little pass which was not thought worth guarding.

Who

Who has not seen as restless emotion agitate the features of an anxious matron, while peace and fame hung trembling in doubtful suspense on the success of a soup or a sauce, on which sentence was about to be pronounced by some consummate critic, as could have been excited by any competition for literary renown, or any struggle for contested wit? Nor was the illustrious hero of Greece more effectually hindered from sleeping by the trophies of Miltiades, than many a modish damsel by the eclipsing superiority of some newer decoration exhibited by her more successful friend.

There is another species of vanity in some women which disguises itself under the thin veil of an affected humility; they will accuse themselves of some fault from which they are remarkably exempt, and lament the want of some talent which they are rather notorious for possessing. This is not only a clumsy trap for praise, but there is a disingenuous intention, by
renouncing

renouncing a quality they eminently possess, to gain credit for others in which they are really deficient. All affectation involves a species of deceit. The Apostle when he enjoins, "not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought," does not exhort us to think *falsely* of ourselves, but to think "soberly;" and it is worth observing that in this injunction he does not use the word *speaking*, but *thinking*, inferring possibly, that it would be safer to *speaking* little of ourselves or not at all; for it is so far from being an unequivocal proof of our humility to talk even of our defects, that while we make *self* the subject, in whatever way, self-love contrives to be gratified, and will even be content that our faults should be talked of, rather than that we should not be talked of at all. Some are also attacked with such proud fits of humility, that while they are ready to accuse themselves of almost every sin in the lump, they yet take fire at the imputation of the slightest *individual* fault ;

fault ; and instantly enter upon their own vindication as warmly as if you and not themselves, had brought forward the charge. The truth is, they ventured to condemn themselves, in the full confidence that you would contradict them ; the last thing they intended was that you should believe them, and they are never so much piqued and disappointed as when they are taken at their word.

Of the various shapes and undefined forms into which vanity branches out in conversation, there is no end. Out of a restless desire to please, grows the spurious desire to astonish : from vanity as much as from credulity, arises that strong love of the marvellous, with which the conversation of the ill-educated abounds. Hence that fondness for dealing in narratives hardly within the compass of possibility. Here vanity has many shades of gratification ; those shades will be stronger or weaker, whether the relater chance to have been an eye-witness of the wonder she recounts ;

or

or whether she claim only the second-hand renown of its having happened to her friend, or the still remoter celebrity of its having been witnessed only by her friend's friend: but even though that friend only knew the man, who remembered the woman, who actually beheld the thing which is now causing admiration in the company, still *self*, though in a fainter degree, is brought into notice, and the relater contrives in some circuitous way to be connected with the wonder.

To correct this propensity "to elevate" and surprise*, it would be well in mixed society to abstain altogether from hazarding stories, which though they may not be absolutely false, yet lying without the verge of probability, are apt to impeach the credit of the narrator; in whom the very consciousness that she is not believed, excites an increased eagerness to depart still farther from the soberness of truth, and induces a habit of vehement asse-

* The Rehearsal.

vation,

veration, which is too often called in to help out a questionable point*.

There is another shape, and a very deformed shape it is, in which loquacious vanity shews itself; I mean, the betraying of confidence. Though the act be treacherous, yet the fault, in the first instance, is not treachery, but vanity. It does not so often spring from the mischievous desire of divulging a secret, as from the pride of having been trusted with it. It is the secret inclination of mixing *self* with whatever is important. The secret would be of little value, if the revealing it did not serve to intimate *our* connexion with it; the plea-

* This is also a good rule in composition. An event, though it may actually have happened, yet if it be out of the reach of probability, or contrary to the common course of nature, will seldom be chosen as a subject by a writer of good taste; for he knows that a probable fiction will interest the feelings more than an unlikely truth. Verisimilitude is indeed the poet's truth, but the truth of the moralist is of a more sturdy growth.

sure

sure of its having been deposited with us would be nothing, if others may not know it has been so deposited.—When we continue to see the variety of serious evils this principle involves, shall we persist in asserting that vanity is a slender mischief?

There is one offence committed in conversation of much too serious a nature to be overlooked, or to be animadverted on without sorrow and indignation: I mean, the habitual and thoughtless profaneness of those who are repeatedly invoking their Maker's name on occasions the most trivial. It is offensive in all its variety of aspects;—it is very pernicious in its *effects*;—it is a *growing* evil;—those who are most guilty of it, are from habit hardly conscious when they do it; are not aware of the sin; and for both these reasons, without the admonitions of faithful friendship, little likely to discontinue it.—It is utterly *INEXCUSABLE*;—it has none of the palliatives of *temptation* which other vices plead, and in that respect stands

stands distinguished from all others both in its nature and degree of guilt.—Like many other sins, however, it is at once cause and effect ; it *proceeds* from want of love and reverence to the best of Beings, and *causes* that want both in themselves and others. Yet with all those aggravations, there is, perhaps, hardly any sin so frequently committed, so seldom repented of, and so little guarded against. On the score of *impropriety* too, it is additionally offensive, as being utterly repugnant to female delicacy, which often affects to be shocked at swearing in a man. Now this species of profaneness is not only swearing, but, perhaps, in some respects, swearing of the worst sort ; as it is a *direct* breach of an express command, and offends against the *very letter* of that law which says in so many words, THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN. It offends against *delicacy* and *good breeding* ; for those who commit it, little think of the pain they

are inflicting on the sober mind, which is deeply wounded when it hears the holy name it loves dishonoured; and it is as contrary to good breeding to give pain, as it is to true piety to be profane.

I would endeavour to give some faint idea of the grossness of this offence, by an analogy (oh! how inadequate!) with which the feeling heart, even though not seasoned with religion, may be touched. To such I would earnestly say:—Suppose you had some beloved friend,—to put the case still more strongly, a departed friend — a revered parent, perhaps, — whose image never occurs without awaking in your bosom sentiments of tender love and gratitude; how would you feel if you heard this honoured name *banded about* with unfeeling familiarity and indecent levity; or at best, thrust into every pause of speech as a vulgar expletive? Does not your affectionate heart recoil at the thought? And yet the hallowed name of your truest Benefactor, your heavenly Father,

Father, your best Friend, who gives you all you enjoy, those very friends in whom you so much delight, those very organs with which you dishonour him, is treated with an irreverence, a contempt, a wantonness, with which you cannot bear the very thought or mention of treating a human friend. His name is impiously, is unfeelingly, is ungratefully singled out as the object of decided irreverence, of systematic contempt, of thoughtless levity. It is used indiscriminately to express anger, joy, grief, surprise, impatience; and what is almost still more unpardonable than all, it is wantonly used as a mere unmeaning expletive, which, being excited by no emotion, can have nothing to recommend it, unless it be the pleasure of the sin.

Among the deep, but less obvious mischiefs of conversation, *misrepresentation* must not be overlooked. Self-love is continually at work, to give to all we say a bias in our own favour. The counteraction of this fault should be set about

in the earliest stages of education. If young persons have not been discouraged in the natural, but evil, propensity to relate every dispute they have had with others to their own advantage; if they have not been trained to the duty of doing justice even to those with whom they are at variance; if they have not been led to aim at a complete impartiality in their little narratives, and instructed never to take advantage of the absence of the other party, in order to make the story lean to their own side more than the truth will admit; how shall we in advanced life look for correct habits, for unprejudiced representations, for fidelity, accuracy, and unbiaſſed justice?

Yet, how often in ſociety, otherwiſe reſpectable, are we pained with narrations in which prejudice warps, and ſelf-love blinds! How often do we ſee, that withholding part of a truth answers the worſt ends of a falſehood! How often regret the unfair turn given to a buſineſs, by
placing

placing a sentiment in one point of view, which the speaker had used in another! the letter of truth preserved where its spirit is violated! a superstitious exactness scrupulously maintained in the underparts of a detail, in order to impress such an idea of integrity as shall gain credit, while the leading principle is designedly misstated! nay, a new character given to a fact by a different look, tone, or emphasis, which alters it as much as words could have done! the false impression of a sermon conveyed, when we do not like the preacher, or when through him we wish to make religion itself ridiculous! the avoiding of literal untruths, while the mischief is better effected by the unfair quotation of a passage divested of its context! the bringing together detached portions of a subject, and making those parts ludicrous, when connected, which were perfect in their distinct position! the insidious use made of a sentiment by representing it as the *opinion* of him who had only

brought it forward in order to expose it ! the relating opinions which had merely been put hypothetically, as the avowed principles of him we would discredit ! that subtle falsehood which is so made to incorporate with a certain quantity of truth, that the most skilful moral chemist cannot analyse or separate them ! for a good *misrepresenter* knows that a successful lie must have a certain infusion of truth, or it will not go down. All that indefinable ambiguity and equivocation ; all that prudent deceit, which is rather implied than expressed ; those more delicate artifices of the school of Loyala and of Chesterfield, which allow us when we dare not deny a truth, yet so to disguise and discolour it, that the truth we relate shall not resemble the truth we heard ! These and all the thousand shades of simulation and dissimulation will be carefully guarded against in the conversation of vigilant Christians.

Again, it is surprising to mark the common deviations from strict veracity which
spring,

spring, not from enmity to truth, not from intentional deceit, not from malevolence or envy, or the least design to injure, but from mere levity, habitual inattention, and a current notion that it is not worth while to be correct in small things. But here the doctrine of habits comes in with great force, and in that view no error is small. The cure of this disease in its more inveterate stages being next to impossible, its prevention ought to be one of the earliest objects of education *.

The grievous fault of gross and obvious detraction which infects conversation, has been so heavily and so justly condemned by divines and moralists, that the subject is exhausted. But there is an error of an opposite complexion, which we have before noticed, and against which the peculiar temper of the times requires that young ladies of a better cast should be guarded. From the narrowness of their own sphere of observation, they are some-

* See the Chapter on the Use of Definitions.

times addicted to accuse of uncharitableness, that distinguishing judgment which, resulting from a sound penetration and a zeal for truth, forbids persons of a very correct principle to be indiscriminately prodigal of commendation without inquiry, and without distinction. There is an affectation of candour, which is almost as mischievous as calumny itself; nay, if it be less injurious in its individual application, it is, perhaps, more alarming in its general principle, as it lays waste the strong fences which separate good from evil. They know (though they sometimes calumniate) that calumny is wrong; but they have not been told that flattery is wrong also; and youth, being apt to fancy that the direct contrary to wrong must necessarily be right, are apt to be driven into violent extremes. The dread of being only suspected of one fault, makes them actually guilty of the other; and to avoid the charge of harshness or of envy, they plunge into insincerity. In this they are
actuated

actuated either by an unsound judgment or an unsound principle.

In this age of high-minded independence, when our youth are apt to set up for themselves, and every man is too much disposed to be his own legislator without looking, as his standard, to the established law of the land; and to set up for his own divine, without looking to the revealed will of God; by a candour equally vicious with our vanity, we are also complaisantly led to *give* the latitude we *take*: and it is become too frequent a phrase in the mouths of our *tolerating* young ladies, when speaking of their more erring and misled acquaintance, to offer for them this flimsy vindication, "that what they do is right "if it appear right to *them*:"—"if *they* "see the thing in that light, and act up to "it with sincerity, they cannot be materially wrong." But the standard of truth, justice, and religion, must neither be elevated nor depressed, in order to accommodate it to actual circumstances: it must
never

never be lowered to palliate error, to justify folly, or to vindicate vice. Good-natured young people often speak favourably of unworthy, or extravagantly of common characters, from one of these motives; either their own views of excellence are low, or they speak respectfully of the undeserving, to purchase for themselves the reputation of tenderness and generosity; or they lavish unsparing praise on almost all alike, in the usurious hope of buying back universal commendation in return; or in those captivating characters in which the simple and masculine language of truth is sacrificed to the jargon of affected softness; and in which smooth and pliant manners are substituted for intrinsic worth, the inexperienced are too apt to *suppose* virtues, and to *forgive* vices. But they should carefully guard against the error of making *manner* the criterion of merit, and of giving unlimited credit to strangers for possessing every perfection, only because they bring into company the
engaging

engaging exterior of alluring gentleness. They should also remember that it is an easy, but not an honest way of obtaining the praise of candour, to get into the soft and popular habit of saying of all their acquaintance, when speaking of them, that *they are so good!* True Christian candour conceals faults, but it does not invent virtues. It tenderly forbears to expose the evil which may belong to a character, but it dares not ascribe to it the good which does not exist. To correct this propensity to false judgment and insincerity, it would be well to bear in mind, that while every good action, come from what source it may, and every good quality, be it found in whomsoever it will, deserves its fair proportion of distinct and willing commendation: yet no character is good in the true sense of the word which is not RELIGIOUS.

In fine—to recapitulate what has been said, with some additional hints:—Study to promote both intellectual and moral improve-

improvement in conversation; labour to bring into it a disposition to bear with others, and to be watchful over yourself; keep out of sight any prominent talent of your own, which, if indulged, might discourage or oppress the feeble-minded. If you know any one present to possess any particular weakness or infirmity, never exercise your wit by maliciously inventing occasions which may lead her to expose or betray it; but give as favourable a turn as you can to the follies which appear, and kindly help her to keep the rest out of sight. Never gratify your own humour, by hazarding what you suspect may wound any one present in their persons, connections, professions in life, or religious opinions; and do not forget to examine whether the laugh your wit has raised be never bought at this expence. Give credit to those who, without your kindness, will get none; do not talk *at* any one whom you dare not talk *to*, unless from motives in which the golden rule

rule will bear you out. Seek neither to shine nor to triumph; and if you seek to please, take care that it be in order to convert the influence you may gain by pleasing to the good of others. Cultivate true politeness, for it grows out of true principle, and is consistent with the Gospel of Christ; but avoid those feigned attentions which are not stimulated by goodwill, and those stated professions of fondness which are not dictated by esteem. Remember, that the praise of being thought *amiable* by strangers, may be bought too dear, if it be bought at the expence of truth and simplicity: remember, that Simplicity is the first charm in manner, as Truth is in mind; and could Truth make herself visible, she would appear invested in Simplicity.

Remember also, that true good nature is the soul, of which politeness is only the garb. It is not that artificial quality which is taken up by many when they go into society, in order to charm those
whom

whom it is not their particular business to please; and is laid down when they return home to those to whom to appear amiable is a real duty. It is not that fascinating but deceitful softness, which, after having acted over a hundred scenes of the most lively sympathy and tender interest with every slight acquaintance; after having exhausted every phrase of feeling, for the trivial sicknesses or petty sorrows of multitudes who are scarcely known, leaves it doubtful whether a grain of real feeling or genuine sympathy be reserved for the dearest connections; and which dismisses a woman to her immediate friends with little affection, and to her own family with little attachment.

True good nature, that which alone deserves the name, is not a holiday ornament, but an every-day habit. It does not consist in servile complaisance, or dishonest flattery, or affected sympathy, or unqualified assent, or unwarrantable compliance, or eternal smiles. Before it
can

can be allowed to rank with the virtues, it must be wrought up from a humour into a principle, from an occasional disposition into a habit. It must be the result of an equal and well-governed mind, not the start of casual gaiety, the trick of designing vanity, or the whim of capricious fondness. It is compounded of kindness, forbearance, forgiveness, and self-denial; "it seeketh not its own," but must be capable of making continual sacrifices of its own tastes, humours, and self-love; but among the sacrifices it makes, it must never include its integrity. Politeness on the one hand, and insensibility on the other, assume its name and wear its honours; but they assume the honours of a triumph, without the merit of a victory; for politeness subdues nothing, and insensibility has nothing to subdue. Good nature of the true cast, and under the foregoing regulations, is above all price in the common intercourse of domestic society; for an ordinary quality,

quality, which is constantly brought into action by the perpetually recurring though minute events of daily life, is of higher value than more brilliant qualities which are more seldom called into use. And, indeed, Christianity has given that new turn to the character of all the virtues, that perhaps it is the best test of the excellence of many that they have little brilliancy in them. The Christian Religion has degraded some splendid qualities from the rank they held, and elevated those which were obscure into distinction.

CHAP. XV.

On the danger of an ill-directed Sensibility.

IN considering the human character with a view to its improvement, it is prudent to endeavour to discover the natural bent of the mind, and having found it, to direct your force against that side on which the warp lies, that you may lessen by counteraction the defect which you might be promoting, by applying your aid in a contrary direction. But the misfortune is, people who mean better than they judge, are apt to take up a set of general rules, good perhaps in themselves, and originally gleaned from experience and observation on the nature of human things, but not applicable in all cases. These rules they keep by them as nostrums of universal efficacy, which they therefore often bring out for

use in cases to which they do not apply. For to make any remedy effectual, it is not enough to know the medicine, you must study the constitution also ; if there be not a congruity between the two, you may be injuring one patient by the means which are requisite to raise and restore another, whose temperament is of a contrary description.

It is of importance in forming the female character, that those on whom this task devolves should possess so much penetration as accurately to discern the degree of sensibility, and so much judgment as to accommodate the treatment to the individual character. By constantly stimulating and extolling feelings naturally quick, those feelings will be rendered too acute and irritable. On the other hand, a calm and equable temper will become obtuse by the total want of excitement ; the former treatment converts the feelings into a source of error, agitation, and calamity ; the latter starves their native energy, deadens the affections, and produces a cold, dull,

dull, selfish spirit ; for the human mind is an instrument which will lose its sweetness if strained too high, and will be deprived of its tone and strength if not sufficiently raised.

It is cruel to chill the precious sensibility of an ingenuous soul, by treating with supercilious coldness and unfeeling ridicule every indication of a warm, tender, disinterested, and enthusiastic spirit, as if it exhibited symptoms of a deficiency in understanding or prudence. How many are apt to intimate, with a smile of mingled pity and contempt, that when such a one knows the world, that is, in other words, when she shall be grown cunning, selfish, and suspicious, she will be ashamed of her present glow of honest warmth, and of her lovely susceptibility of heart. May she never know the world, if the knowledge of it must be acquired at such an expence ! But to sensible hearts, every indication of genuine feeling will be dear, for they will know that it is this

temper which, by the guidance of the Divine spirit, may make her one day become more enamoured of the beauty of holiness; which, with the co-operation of principle, and under its direction, will render her the lively agent of Providence in diminishing the misery that is in the world; into which misery this temper will give her a quicker intuition than colder characters possess. It is this temper which, when it is touched and purified by a "live coal from the altar*," will give her a keener taste for the spirit of religion, and a quicker zeal in discharging its duties. But let it be remembered likewise, that as there is no quality in the female character which will be so likely to endanger the peace, and to expose the virtue of the possessor; so there is none which requires to have its luxuriances more carefully watched, and its wild shoots more closely lopped.

* Isaiah, vi. 6.

For young women of affections naturally warm, but not carefully disciplined, are in danger of incurring an unnatural irritability; and while their happiness falls a victim to the excess of uncontrolled feelings, they are liable at the same time to indulge a vanity of all others the most preposterous, that of being vain of their very defect. They have heard sensibility highly commended, without having heard any thing of those bounds and fences which were intended to confine it, and without having been imbued with that principle which would have given it a beneficial direction; conscious that they possess the quality itself in the extreme, and not aware that they want all that makes that quality safe and delightful, they plunge headlong into those sins and miseries from which they conceitedly imagine, that not principle but coldness has preserved the more sober-minded and well-instructed of their sex.

But as it would be foreign to the present design to expatiate on those criminal excesses which are some of the sad effects of ungoverned passion, it is only intended here to hazard a few remarks on those lighter consequences of it, which consist in the loss of comfort without ruin of character, and the privation of much of the happiness of life without involving any very censurable degree of guilt or discredit. Let it, however, be incidentally remarked, and let it be carefully remembered, that if no women have risen so high in the scale of moral excellence as those whose natural warmth has been conscientiously governed by its true guide, and directed to its true end; so none have furnished such deplorable instances of extreme depravity as those who, through the ignorance or the dereliction of principle, have been abandoned by the excess of this very temper to the violence of ungoverned passions and uncontrolled inclinations. Perhaps, if we were to inquire into the remote cause

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of some of the blackest crimes which stain the annals of mankind, profligacy, murder, and especially suicide, we might trace them back to this original principle, an ungoverned Sensibility.

Notwithstanding all the fine theories in prose and verse to which this topic has given birth, it will be found that very exquisite sensibility contributes so little to *happiness*, and may yet be made to contribute so much to *usefulness*, that it may, perhaps, be considered as bestowed for an exercise to the possessor's own virtue, and as a keen instrument with which he may better work for the good of others.

Women of this cast of mind are less careful to avoid the charge of unbounded extremes, than to escape at all events the imputation of insensibility. They are little alarmed at the danger of *exceeding*, though terrified at the suspicion of *coming short*, of what they take to be the extreme point of feeling. They will even resolve to

prove the warmth of their sensibility, though at the expence of their judgment, and sometimes also of their justice. Even when they earnestly desire to *be* and to *do* right, they are apt to employ the wrong instrument to accomplish the right end. They employ the passions to do the work of the judgment; forgetting, or not knowing, that the passions were not given us to be used in the search and discovery of truth, which is the office of a cooler and more discriminating faculty; but that they were given to animate us to warmer zeal in the pursuit and practice of truth, when the judgment shall have pointed out what *is* truth.

Through this natural warmth, which they have been justly told is so pleasing, but which, perhaps, they have not been told will be continually exposing them to peril and to suffering, their joys and sorrows are excessive. Of this extreme irritability, as was before remarked, the ill-educated learn to boast as if it were a decided

cided indication of superiority of soul, instead of labouring to restrain it, as the excess of a temper which ceases to be amiable, when it is no longer under the control of the governing faculty. It is misfortune enough to be born more liable to suffer and to sin, from this conformation of mind; it is too much to nourish the evil by unrestrained indulgence; it is still worse to be proud of so misleading a quality.

Flippancy, impetuosity, resentment, and violence of spirit, grow out of this disposition, which will be rather promoted than corrected, by the system of education on which we have been animadverting; in which system, emotions are too early and too much excited, and tastes and feelings are considered as too exclusively making up the whole of the female character: in which the judgment is little exercised, the reasoning powers are seldom brought into action, and self-knowledge and self-denial scarcely included.

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The propensity of mind which we are considering, if unchecked, lays its possessors open to unjust prepossessions, and exposes them to all the danger of unfounded attachments. In early youth, not only love at first sight, but also friendship, of the same sudden growth, springs up from an ill-directed sensibility; and in after-life, women under the powerful influence of this temper, conscious that they have much to be borne with, are too readily inclined to select for their confidential connections, flexible and flattering companions, who will indulge and perhaps admire their faults, rather than firm and honest friends, who will reprove and would assist in curing them. We may adopt it as a general maxim, that an obliging, weak, yielding, complaisant friend, full of small attentions, with little religion, little judgment, and much natural acquiescence and civility, is a most dangerous, though generally a too much desired confidante: she soothes the indolence, and gratifies the vanity of her friend, by reconciling

conciling her to her faults, while she neither keeps the understanding nor the virtues of that friend in exercise; but withholds from her every useful truth, which by opening her eyes might give her pain. These obsequious qualities are the "soft green*" on which the soul loves to repose itself. But it is not a refreshing or a wholesome repose: we should not select, for the sake of present ease, a soothing flatterer, who will lull us into a pleasing oblivion of our failings, but a friend, who, valuing our soul's health above our immediate comfort, will rouse us from torpid indulgence to animation, vigilance, and virtue.

An ill-directed sensibility also leads a woman to be injudicious and eccentric in her *charities*; she will be in danger of proportioning her bounty to the immediate effect which the distressed object produces on her senses: and she will be

* Burke's "Sublime and Beautiful."

more liberal to a small distress presenting itself to her own eyes, than to the more pressing wants and better claims of those miseries of which she only hears the relation. There is a sort of stage effect which some people require for their charities; she will be apt also to desire, that the object of her compassion shall have something interesting and amiable in it, such as shall furnish pleasing images and lively pictures to her imagination, and engaging subjects for description; forgetting, that in her charities, as well as in every thing else, she is to be a "follower of Him who pleased not himself;" forgetting, that the most coarse and disgusting object is as much the representative of Him, who said, "Inasmuch as ye do it to one of the least of these, ye do it unto me," as the most interesting; nay the more uninviting and repulsive cases may be better tests of the principle on which we relieve, than those which abound in pathos and interest, as we can have

have less suspicion of our motive in the latter case than in the former. But, while we ought to neglect neither of these supposed cases, yet the less our feelings are caught by pleasing circumstances, the less will be the danger of our indulging self-complacency, and the more likely shall we be to do what we do for the sake of Him who has taught us, that no deeds but what are performed on that principle, “shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”

But through the want of that governing principle which should direct her sensibility, a tender-hearted woman, whose hand, if she be actually surrounded with scenes and circumstances to call it into action, is

Open as day to melting charity; nevertheless may utterly fail in the great and comprehensive duty of Christian love, for she has feelings which are acted upon solely by local circumstances and present events. Only remove her into another scene,

scene, distant from the wants she has been relieving; place her in the lap of indulgence, so entrenched with ease and pleasure, so immersed in the softness of life, that distress no longer finds any access to her presence, but through the faint and dull medium of a distant representation: remove her from the sight and sound of that misery which, when present, so tenderly affected her—she now forgets that misery exists; as she hears but little, and sees nothing of want and sorrow, she is ready to fancy that the world is grown happier than it was: in the meantime, with a quiet conscience and a thoughtless vanity, she has been lavishing on superfluities that money which she would cheerfully have given to a charitable cause, had she not forgotten that any such were in existence, because *Pleasure* had blocked up the avenues through which misery used to find its way to her heart; and now, when again such a cause forces itself into her presence, she laments with real sincerity

sincerity that the money is gone which should have relieved it.

In the meantime, perhaps, other women of less natural sympathy, but whose sympathies are under better regulation, or who act from a principle which requires little stimulus, have, by an habitual course of self-denial, by a constant determination to refuse themselves unnecessary indulgencies, and by guarding against that dissolving PLEASURE which melts down the firmest virtue that allows itself to bask in its beams, have been quietly furnishing a regular provision for miseries, which their knowledge of the state of the world teaches them are every where to be found, and which their obedience to the will of God tells them it is their duty both to find out and to relieve; a general expectation of being liable to be called upon for acts of charity; will lead the conscientiously charitable always to be prepared.

On such a mind as we have been describing, *Novelty* also will operate with peculiar force, and in nothing more than in the article of charity. Old established institutions, whose continued existence must depend on the continued bounty of that affluence to which they owed their origin, will be sometimes neglected, as presenting no variety to the imagination, as having by their uniformity ceased to be interesting, there is now a total failure of those springs of mere sensitive feeling which set the charity a-going, and those sudden emotions of tenderness and gusts of pity, which once were felt, must now be excited by newer forms of distress.—As age comes on, that charity which has been the effect of mere feeling, grows cold and rigid, on account also of its having been often disappointed in its high expectations of the gratitude and subsequent merit of those it has relieved; and by withdrawing its bounty,

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because

because some of its objects have been undeserving, it gives clear proof that what it bestowed was for its own gratification; and now finding that self-complacency at an end, it bestows no longer. Probably too the cause of so much disappointment may have been, that ill choice of the objects to which feeling, rather than a discriminating judgment, has led. The summer showers of mere sensibility soon dry up, while the living spring of Christian charity flows alike in all seasons.

The impatience, levity, and fickleness, of which women have been somewhat too generally accused, are perhaps in no small degree aggravated by the littleness and frivolousness of female pursuits. The sort of education they commonly receive, teaches girls to set a great price on small things. Besides this, they do not always learn to keep a very correct scale of degrees for rating the value of the objects of their admiration and attachment; but by a kind of unconscious idolatry, they rather make

a merit of loving *supremely* things and persons which ought to be loved with moderation and in a subordinate degree the one to the other. Unluckily, they consider moderation as so necessarily indicating a cold heart and narrow soul, and they look upon a state of indifference with so much horror, that either to love or hate with energy is supposed by them to proceed from a higher state of mind than is possessed by more steady and equable characters. Whereas it is in fact the criterion of a warm but well-directed sensibility, that while it is capable of loving with energy, it must be enabled, by the judgment which governs it, to suit and adjust its degree of interest to the nature and excellence of the object about which it is interested; for unreasonable prepossession, disproportionate attachment, and capricious or precarious fondness, is not sensibility.

Excessive but unintentional *flattery* is another fault into which a strong sensibility

bility is in danger of leading its possessor. A tender heart and a warm imagination conspire to throw a sort of radiance round the object of their love, till people are dazzled by a brightness of their own creating. The worldly and fashionable borrow the warm language of sensibility without having the really warm feeling; and young ladies get such a habit of saying, and especially of writing, such over obliging and flattering things to each other, that this mutual politeness, aided by the self-love so natural to us all, and by an unwillingness to search into our own hearts, keeps up the illusion, and we get a habit of taking our character from the good we *hear* of ourselves, which others assume, but do not very well know, rather than from the evil we *feel* in ourselves, and which we therefore ought to be thoroughly acquainted with.

Ungoverned sensibility is apt to give a wrong direction to its anxieties; and its affection often falls short of the true end of

friendship. If the object of its regard happen to be sick, what inquiries! what prescriptions! what an accumulation is made of cases in which the remedy its fondness suggests has been successful! What an unaffected tenderness for the perishing body! Yet is this sensibility equally alive to the immortal interests of the sufferer? Is it not silent and at ease when it contemplates the dearest friend persisting in opinions essentially dangerous; in practices unquestionably wrong? Does it not view all this, not only without a generous ardour to point out the peril, and rescue the friend; but if that friend be supposed to be dying, does it not even make it the *criterion* of kindness to let her die undeceived? What a want of true sensibility, to feel for the pain, but not for the danger of those we love! Now see what sort of sensibility the Bible teaches! "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, but thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, and shalt

9 "not

"not suffer sin upon him*." But let that tenderness which shrinks from the idea of exposing what it loves to a momentary pang, figure to itself the bare possibility, that the object of its own fond affection may not be the object of the Divine favour! Let it shrink from the bare conjecture, that "the familiar friend" "with whom it has taken sweet counsel," is going down to the gates of death, unrepenting, unprepared, and yet unwarned.

But mere human sensibility goes a shorter way to work. Not being able to give its friend the pain of hearing her faults or of knowing her danger, it works itself up into the quieting delusion that no danger exists, at least not for the objects of its own affection; it gratifies itself by inventing a salvation so comprehensive as shall take in all itself loves with all their faults; it creates to its own fond heart an ideal and exaggerated divine mercy, which shall

* Leviticus, xix. 17.

pardon and receive all in whom this blind sensibility has an interest, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

In regard to its application to religious purposes, it is a test that sensibility has received its true direction when it is supremely turned to the love of God: for to possess an overflowing fondness for our fellow-creatures and fellow-sinners, and to be cold and insensible to the Essence of goodness and perfection, is an inconsistency to which the feeling heart is awfully liable. God has himself the first claim to the sensibility he bestowed. "He *first* loved us:" this is a *natural* cause of love, "He loved us while we were sinners:" this is a *supernatural* cause. He continues to love us though we neglect his favours, and slight his mercies: this would wear out any earthly kindness. He forgives us, not petty neglects, not occasional slights, but grievous sins, repeated offences, broken vows, and un-

3 required

requited love. What human friendship performs offices so calculated to touch the soul of sensibility?

Those young women in whom feeling is indulged to the exclusion of reason and examination, are peculiarly liable to be the dupes of prejudice, rash decisions, and false judgment. The understanding having but little power over the will, their affections are not well poized, and their minds are kept in a state ready to be acted upon by the fluctuations of alternate impulses; by sudden and varying impressions; by casual and contradictory circumstances; and by emotions excited by every accident. Instead of being guided by the broad views of general truth, and having one fixed principle, they are driven on by the impetuosity of the moment. And this impetuosity blinds the judgment as much as it misleads the conduct; so that for want of a habit of cool investigation and inquiry, they meet every event without any previously formed opinion or rule

of action. And as they do not accustom themselves to appreciate the real value of things, their attention is as likely to be led away by the under parts of a subject, as to seize on the leading feature. The same eagerness of mind which hinders the operation of the discriminating faculty, leads also to the error of determining on the rectitude of an action by its success, and to that of making the event of an undertaking decide on its justice or propriety: it also leads to that superficial and erroneous way of judging which fastens on exceptions, if they make in one's own favour, as grounds of reasoning, while they lead us to overlook received and general rules which tend to establish a doctrine contrary to our wishes.

Open-hearted, indiscreet girls, often pick up a few strong notions, which are as false in themselves as they are popular among the class in question: such as, "that warm friends must make warm enemies;"—that "the generous love and
" hate

“hate with all their hearts;”—that “a
“reformed rake makes the best husband;”—
—that “there is no medium in marriage,
“but that it is a state of exquisite happi-
“ness or exquisite misery;” with many
other doctrines of equal currency and
equal soundness! These they consider as
axioms, and adopt as rules of life. From
the two first of these oracular sayings, girls
are in no small danger of becoming unjust
through the very warmth of their hearts :
for they will get a habit of making their
estimate of the good or ill qualities of
others, merely in proportion to the greater
or less degree of kindness which they
themselves have received from them.
Their estimation of general character is
thus formed on insulated and partial
grounds; on the accidental circumstance
of personal predilection or personal pique.
Kindness to themselves or their friends in-
volves all possible excellence; neglect, all
imaginable defects. Friendship and grati-
tude can and should go a great way; but

as they cannot convert vice into virtue, so they ought never to convert truth into falsehood. And it may be the more necessary to be upon our guard in this instance, because the very idea of gratitude may mislead us, by converting injustice, into the semblance of a virtue. Warm expressions should therefore be limited to the conveying a sense of our own individual obligations which are real, rather than employed to give an impression of general excellence in the person who has obliged us, which may be imaginary. A good man is still good, though it may not have fallen in his way to oblige or serve *us*, nay, though he may have neglected or even unintentionally hurt us: and sin is still sin, though committed by the person in the world to whom we are the most obliged, and whom we most love.

We come next to that fatal and most indelicate, nay gross maxim, that "a reformed rake makes the best husband;" an aphorism to which the principles and the happiness

happiness of so many young women have been sacrificed. It goes upon the preposterous supposition, not only that effects do not follow causes, but that they oppose them; on the supposition, that habitual vice creates rectitude of character, and that sin produces happiness: thus flatly contradicting what the moral government of God uniformly exhibits in the course of human events, and what Revelation so evidently and universally teaches.

For it should be observed, that the reformation is generally, if not always supposed to be brought about by the all-conquering force of female charms. Let but a profligate young man have a point to carry by winning the affections of a vain and thoughtless girl; he will begin his attack upon her heart by undermining her religious principles, and artfully removing every impediment which might have obstructed her receiving the addresses of a man without character. And while he will lead her not to hear without

out ridicule the mention of that change of heart which Scripture teaches and experience proves the power of Divine grace can work on a vicious character; while he will teach her to sneer at a change which he would treat with contempt, because he denies the possibility of so strange and miraculous a conversion; yet he will not scruple to swear, that the power of her beauty has worked a revolution in his own loose practices which is equally complete and instantaneous.

But supposing it possible that his reformation were genuine, it would even then by no means involve the truth of her proposition, that past libertinism insures future felicity; yet many a weak girl, confirmed in this palatable doctrine by examples she has frequently admired of those surprising reformations so conveniently effected in the last scene of most of our comedies, has not scrupled to risk her earthly and eternal happiness with a man, who is not ashamed to ascribe to the influence

influence of her beauty that power of changing the heart which he impiously denies to Omnipotence itself.

As to the last of these practical aphorisms, that “there is no medium in marriage, but that it is a state of exquisite happiness or exquisite misery;” this, though not equally sinful, is equally delusive: for marriage is only one modification of human life, and human life is not commonly in itself a state of exquisite extremes; but is for the most part that mixed and moderate state, so naturally dreaded by those who set out with fancying this world a state of rapture, and so naturally expected by those who know it to be a state of probation and discipline. Marriage, therefore, is only one condition, and often the best condition, of that imperfect state of being which, though seldom very exquisite, is often very tolerable; and which may yield much comfort to those who do not look for constant transport. But unfortunately, those who
find

find themselves disappointed of the unceasing raptures they had anticipated in marriage, disdaining to sit down with so poor a provision as comfort, and scorning the acceptance of that moderate lot which Providence commonly bestows with a view to check despondency and to repress presumption; give themselves up to the other alternative; and, by abandoning their hearts to discontent, make to themselves that misery with which their servid imaginations had filled the opposite scale.

The truth is, these young ladies are very apt to pick up their opinions, less from the divines than the poets; and the poets, though it must be confessed they are some of the best embellishers of life, are not *quite* the safest conductors through it: for in travelling through a wilderness, though we avail ourselves of the harmony of singing birds to render the grove delightful, yet we never think of following them as guides to conduct us through its labyrinths.

Those

Those women, in whom the natural defects of a warm temper have been strengthened by an education which fosters their faults, are very dextrous in availing themselves of a hint, when it favours a ruling inclination, soothes vanity, indulges indolence, or gratifies their love of power. They have heard so often from their favourite sentimental authors, and their more flattering male friends, “that when
“ Nature denied them strength, she gave
“ them fascinating graces in compensation;
“ that their strength consists in their
“ weakness;” and that “they are en-
“ dowed with arts of persuasion which
“ supply the absence of force, and the
“ place of reason;” that they learn, in time, to pride themselves on that very weakness, and to become vain of their imperfections; till at length they begin to claim for their defects, not only pardon, but admiration. Hence they get to cherish a species of feeling which, if not checked,
terminates

terminates in excessive selfishness; they learn to produce their inability to bear contradiction as a proof of their tenderness; and to indulge in that sort of irritability in all that relates to themselves, which inevitably leads to the utter exclusion of all interest in the sufferings of others. Instead of exercising their sensibility in the wholesome duty of relieving distress and visiting scenes of sorrow, that sensibility itself is pleaded as a reason for their not being able to endure sights of woe, and for shunning the distress it should be exerted in removing. That exquisite sense of feeling which God implanted in the heart as a stimulus to quicken us in relieving the miseries of others, is thus introverted, and learns to consider *self* not as the agent, but the object of compassion. Tenderness is made an excuse for being hard-hearted; and instead of drying the weeping eyes of others, this false delicacy reserves its selfish

selfish tears for the more elegant and less expensive sorrows of the melting novel or the pathetic tragedy.

When feeling stimulates only to self-indulgence; when the more exquisite affections of sympathy and pity evaporate in sentiment, instead of flowing out in active charity, and affording assistance, protection, or consolation to every species of distress; it is an evidence that the feeling is of a spurious kind; and instead of being nourished as an amiable tenderness, it should be subdued as a fond and base self-love.

That idleness, to whose cruel inroads many women of fortune are unhappily exposed, from not having been trained to consider wholesome occupation, vigorous exertion, and systematic employment, as making part of the indispensable duties of life, lays them open to a thousand evils of this kind, from which the useful and the busy are exempted: and, perhaps, it would not be easy to find a more pitiable object than a woman with a great deal

of time and a great deal of money on her hands, who, never having been taught the conscientious use of either, squanders both at random, or rather moulders both away, without plan, without principle, and without pleasure; all whose projects begin and terminate in self: who considers the rest of the world only as they may be subservient to her gratification; and to whom it never occurred, that both her time and money were given for the gratification and good of others.

It is not much to the credit of the other sex, that they now and then lend themselves to the indulgence of this selfish spirit in their wives, and cherish by a kind of false fondness those faults which should be combated by good sense and a reasonable counteraction: slothfully preferring a little false peace, the purchase of precarious quiet, and the reputation of good nature, to the higher duty of forming the mind, fixing the principles, and strengthening the character of her with whom

whom they are connected. Perhaps too, a little vanity in the husband helps out his good nature ; he secretly rewards himself for his sacrifice by the consciousness of his superiority ; he feels a self-complacency in his patient condescension to her weakness, which tacitly flatters his own strength : and he is, as it were, paid for stooping by the increased sense of his own tallness. Seeing also, perhaps, but little of other women, he gets to believe that they are all pretty much alike, and that, as a man of sense, he must content himself with what he takes to be the common lot. Whereas, in truth, by his misplaced indulgence, he has rather *made* his own lot than *drawn* it ; and thus, through an indolent despair in the husband of being able to effect any improvement by opposition, it happens, that many a helpless, fretful, and daudling wife acquires a more powerful ascendancy than the most discreet and amiable woman ; and that the most absolute

female tyranny is established by these sickly and capricious humours.

The poets again, who, to do them justice, are always ready to lend a helping hand when any mischief is to be done, have contributed their full share towards confirming these feminine follies: they have strengthened by adulatory maxims, sung in seducing strains, those faults which their talents and their influence should have been employed in correcting. When fair and youthful females are complimented with being

Fine by defect and delicately weak!

is not a standard of feebleness held out to them to which vanity will gladly resort, and to which softness and indolence can easily act up, or rather *act down*, if I may be allowed the expression?

When ladies are told by the same misleading, but to them high, authority, that “smiles and tears are the irresistible

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“arms

“ arms with which Nature has furnished them for conquering the strong,” will they not eagerly fly to this cheap and ready artillery, instead of labouring to furnish themselves with a reasonable mind, an equable temper, and a meek and quiet spirit ?

Every animal is endowed by Providence with the peculiar powers adapted to its nature and its wants ; while none, except the human, by grafting art on natural sagacity, injures or mars the gift. Spoilt women, who fancy there is something more *picquant* and alluring in the mutable graces of caprice, than in the monotonous smoothness of an even temper, and who also having heard much, as was observed before, about their “ amiable weakness,” learn to look about them for the best succedaneum to strength, the supposed absence of which they sometimes endeavour to supply by artifice. By this engine the weakest woman frequently furnishes the converse to the famous reply of the

French Minister, who, when he was accused of governing the mind of that feeble Queen Mary de Medicis by sorcery, replied, "that the only sorcery he had used, was that influence which strong minds naturally have over weak ones."

But though it be fair so to study the tempers, defects, and weaknesses of others, as to convert our knowledge of them to the promotion of their benefit and our own; and though it be making a lawful use of our penetration to avail ourselves of the faults of others for "their good to edification;" yet all deviations from the straight line of truth and simplicity; every plot insidiously to turn influence to unfair account; all contrivances to extort from a bribed complaisance what reason and justice would refuse to our wishes; these are some of the operations of that lowest and most despicable engine, selfish cunning, by which *little minds sometimes govern great ones.*

And

And unluckily, women from their natural desire to please, and from their sometimes doubting by what means this grand end may be best effected, are in more danger of being led into dissimulation than men; for dissimulation is the result of weakness, and the refuge of doubt and distrust, rather than of conscious strength, the dangers of which lie another way. Frankness, truth, and simplicity, therefore, as they are inexpressibly charming, so are they peculiarly commendable in women, and nobly evince that while the possessors of them wish to please, (and why should they not wish it?) they disdain to have recourse to any thing but what is fair, and just, and honourable to effect it; that they scorn to attain the most desired end by any but the most lawful means. The beauty of simplicity is indeed so intimately felt and generally acknowledged by all who have a true taste for personal, moral, or intellectual beauty, that women of the deepest artifice often find their account in

assuming an exterior the most foreign to their character, and by affecting the most studied *naïveté*. It is curious to see the quantity of *art* some people put in practice in order to appear *natural*; and the deep *design* which is set at work to exhibit *simplicity*. And indeed this feigned simplicity is the most mischievous, because the most engaging of all the Proteus forms which dissimulation can put on. For the most free and bold sentiments have been sometimes hazarded with fatal success under this unsuspected mask. And an innocent, quiet, indolent, artless manner, has been adopted as the most refined and successful accompaniment of sentiments, ideas, and designs, neither artless nor innocent.

CHAP. XVI.

On dissipation, and the modern habits of fashionable life.

PERHAPS the interests of true friendship, elegant conversation, mental improvement, social pleasure, maternal duty, and conjugal comfort, never received such a blow as when Fashion issued out that arbitrary and universal decree, that *every body must be acquainted with every body*; together with that consequent, authoritative, but rather inconvenient clause, that *every body must also go every where every night*. The devout obedience paid to this law is incompatible with the very being of friendship; for as the circle of acquaintance expands, and it will be continually expanding, the affections will be beaten out into such thin lamina as to leave little solidity remaining,

remaining. The heart which is continually exhausting itself in professions grows cold and hard. The feelings of kindness diminish in proportion as the expression of it becomes more diffuse and indiscriminate. The very traces of "simplicity" and "godly sincerity" in a delicate female, wear away imperceptibly by constant collision with the world at large. And perhaps no woman takes so little interest in the happiness of her real friends, as she whose affections are incessantly evaporating in universal civilities; as she who is saying fond and flattering things at random to a circle of five hundred people every night.

The decline and fall of animated and instructive conversation has been in a good measure effected by this barbarous project of assembling *en masse*. An excellent prelate*, with whose friendship the author was long honoured, and who himself excelled

* The late Bishop Horne.

in the art of conversation, used to remark, that a few years had brought about a great revolution in the manners of society; that it used to be the custom, previously to going into company, to think that something was to be communicated or received, taught or learnt; that the powers of the understanding were expected to be brought into exercise, and that it was therefore necessary to quicken the mind, by reading and thinking, for the share the individual might be expected to take in the general discourse; but that knowledge, and taste, and wit, and erudition, seemed now to be scarcely considered as necessary materials to be brought into the pleasure-able commerce of the world; because now there was little chance of turning them to much account; and therefore he who possessed them, and he who possessed them not, were nearly on a footing.

It is obvious also that multitudinous assemblies are so little favourable to that *cheerfulness* which it should seem to be their
very

very end to promote, that if there were any chemical process by which the quantum of spirits animal or intellectual could be ascertained, the diminution would be found to have been inconceivably great, since the transformation of man and woman from a social to a gregarious animal.

But if it be true that friendship, society, and cheerfulness, have sustained so much injury by this change of manners, how much more pointedly does the remark apply to family happiness!

Notwithstanding the known fluctuation of manners and the mutability of language, could it be foreseen, when the Apostle Paul exhorted "married women to be keepers *at home*," that the time would arrive when that very phrase would be selected to designate one of the most decided acts of dissipation? Could it be foreseen that when a fine lady should send out a notification that on such a night she shall be AT HOME, these two significant words (besides intimating the rarity of the thing)

thing) would present to the mind an image the most *undomestic* which language can convey? My country readers, who may require to have it explained that these two magnetic words now possess the powerful influence of drawing together every thing *fine* within the sphere of their attraction, may need also to be apprized, that the guests afterwards are not asked what was *said* by the company, but whether the *crowd* was prodigious, the rule for deciding on the merit of a fashionable society not being by the taste or the spirit, but by the *score* and the *hundred*. The question of pleasure, like a Parliamentary question, is now carried by numbers. And when two parties modish, like two parties political, are run one against another on the same night, the same kind of mortification attends the leader of a defeated minority, the same triumph attends the exulting carrier of superior numbers, in the one case as in the other.

An eminent divine has said, that "perseverance in prayer will either make a man leave off sinning, or a continuance in sin will make him leave off prayer." This remark may be accommodated to those ladies who, while they are devoted to the enjoyments of the world, yet retain considerable solicitude for the instruction of their daughters. But if they are really in earnest to give them a Christian education, they must themselves renounce a dissipated life. Or if they resolve to pursue the chase of pleasure, they must renounce this prime duty. Contraries cannot unite. The moral nurture of a tall daughter can no more be administered by a mother whose time is absorbed by crowds abroad, than the physical nurture of her infant offspring can be supplied by her in a perpetual absence from home. And is not that a preposterous affection which leads a mother to devote a few months to the inferior duty of furnishing aliment to the mere animal life,

and

and then to desert her post when the more important moral and intellectual cravings require sustenance? This great object is not to be effected with the shreds and parings rounded off from the circle of a dissipated life; but in order to its adequate execution, the mother should carry it on with the same spirit and perseverance at home, which the father thinks it necessary to be exerting abroad in his public duty or professional engagements.

The usual vindication (and in theory it has a plausible sound) which has been offered for the large portion of time spent by women in acquiring ornamental talents is, that they are calculated to make the possessor love home, and that they innocently fill up the hours of leisure. The plea has indeed so promising an appearance, that it is worth inquiring whether it be in fact true. Do we then, on fairly pursuing the inquiry, discover that those who have spent most time in such light acquisitions, are really remarkable for lov-
ing

ing home or staying quietly there? or that when there, they are sedulous in turning time to the best account? I speak not of that rational and respectable class of women, who, applying (as many of them do) these elegant talents to their true purpose, employ them to fill up the vacancies of better occupations, and to embellish the leisure of a life actively good. But do we *generally* see that even the most valuable and sober part of the reigning female acquisitions leads their possessor to scenes most favourable to the enjoyment of them? to scenes which we should naturally suppose she would seek, in order to the more effectual cultivation of such rational pleasures?

Would not those delightful pursuits, botany and drawing, for instance, seem likely to court the fields, the woods, and gardens of the paternal seat, as more congenial to their nature, and more appropriate to their exercise, than barren watering places, destitute of a tree, or an herb,
or

or a flower, and not affording an hour's interval from successive pleasures, to profit by the scene even if it abounded with the whole vegetable world, from the "Cedar of Lebanon to the Hyssop on the wall."

From the mention of watering places, may the author be allowed to suggest a few remarks on the evils which have arisen from the general conspiracy of the gay to usurp the regions of the sick; and from their converting the health-restoring fountains, meant as a refuge for disease, into the resorts of vanity for those who have no disease but idleness?

This inability of staying at home, as it is one of the most infallible, so it is one of the most dangerous symptoms of the reigning mania. It would be more tolerable, did this epidemic malady only break out, as formerly, during the winter, or some one season. Heretofore, the tenantry and the poor, the natural dependents on the rural mansions of the opulent, had some definite period to which

they might joyfully look forward for the approach of those patrons, part of whose business in life it is to influence by their presence, to instruct by their example, to soothe by their kindness, and to assist by their liberality, those whom Providence, in the distribution of human lots, has placed under their more immediate protection. Though it would be far from truth to assert that dissipated people are never charitable, yet I will venture to say, that dissipation is inconsistent with the *spirit* of charity. That affecting precept followed by so gracious a promise, "Never turn away thy face from any poor man, and then the face of the Lord shall never be turned away from thee," cannot literally mean that we should *give* to all, as then we should soon have nothing left to give : but it seems to intimate the habitual attention, the duty of inquiring out all cases of distress, in order to judge which are fit to be relieved ; now for this inquiry,

for

for this attention, the dissipated have little taste and less leisure.

Let a reasonable conjecture (for calculation would fail!) be made of how large a diminution of the general good has been effected in this single respect, by causes, which, though they do not seem important in themselves, yet make no inconsiderable part of the mischief arising from modern manners: and I speak now to persons who *intend* to be charitable. What a deduction will be made from the aggregate of charity, by a circumstance apparently trifling, when we consider what would be the beneficial effects of that regular bounty which must almost unavoidably result from the evening walks of a great and benevolent family among the cottages of their own domain: the thousand little acts of, comparatively, unexpensive kindness which the *sight* of petty wants and difficulties would excite; wants, which will scarcely be felt in the

relation; and which will probably be neither seen, nor felt, nor fairly represented, in their long absences, by an agent. And what is even almost more than the good done, is the habit of mind kept up in those who do it. Would not this habit, exercised on the Christian principle, that "even a cup of cold water," given upon *right motives*, shall not lose its reward; while the giving "all their goods to feed the poor," without the true *principle* of charity, shall profit them nothing; would not this habit, I say, be almost the best part of the education of daughters *?

But

* It would be a pleasant summer amusement for our young ladies of fortune, if they were to preside at such spinning feasts as are instituted at Nuneham for the promotion of virtue and industry in their own sex. Pleasurable anniversaries of this kind would serve to combine in the minds of the poor two ideas which ought never to be separated, but which *they* are not very forward to unite,—that the great wish to make them *happy* as well as good. Occasional

But transplant this wealthy and bountiful family periodically to the frivolous and uninteresting bustle of the watering place; there it is not denied that frequent public and fashionable acts of charity may make a part, (and it is well they do) of the business and amusement of the day; with this latter, indeed, they are sometimes good-naturedly mixed up. But how shall we compare the regular systematical good these persons would be doing at their own home, with the light, and amusing, and bustling bounties of the public place? The illegal raffle at the toy-shop, may relieve, it is true, some distress, but this distress though it may be real, and though if real, it ought to be relieved, is far less easily ascertained than

fional approximations of the rich and poor, for the purposes of relief and instruction, and annual meetings for the purpose of innocent pleasure, would do much towards wearing away discontent, and contribute to reconcile the lower class to that state in which it has pleased God to place them.

the wants of the poor round a person's own door, or the debts of a distressed tenant. How shall we compare the broad stream of bounty which should be flowing through and refreshing whole districts, with the penurious current of the subscription breakfast for the needy musician, in which the price of the gift is taken out in the diversion, and in which pleasure dignifies itself with the name of bounty? How shall we compare the attention, and time, and zeal which would otherwise, perhaps, be devoted to the village school, spent in hawking about benefit tickets for a broken player, while the kindness of the benefactress, perhaps, is rewarded by scenes in which her charity is not always repaid by the purity of the exhibition?

Far be it from the author to wish to check the full tide of charity wherever it is disposed to flow! Would she could multiply the already abundant streams, and behold every source purified! But in the public resorts there are many who are
able

able and willing to give. In the sequestered, though populous village, there is, perhaps only one affluent family: the distresses which they do not *behold*, will probably not be attended to: the distresses which *they* do not relieve will probably not be relieved at all: the wrongs which *they* do not redress will go unredressed: the oppressed whom *they* do not rescue will sink under the tyranny of the oppressor. Through their own rural domains too, charity runs in a clearer current, and is under less suspicion of being polluted by that muddy tincture which it is sometimes apt to contract in passing through the impure soil of the world.

But to return from this too long digression: the old standing objection formerly brought forward by the prejudices of the other sex, and too eagerly laid hold on as a shelter for indolence and ignorance by ours, was, that intellectual accomplishments too much absorbed the thoughts and affections, took women off from the ne-

cessary attention to domestic duties, and superinduced a contempt or neglect of whatever was useful.—But it is peculiarly the character of the present day to detect absurd opinions, and expose plausible theories by the simple and decisive answer of experiment; and it is presumed that this popular error, as well as others, is daily receiving the refutation of actual experience. For it cannot surely be maintained on ground that is any longer tenable, that acquirements truly rational are calculated to draw off the mind from real duties. Whatever removes prejudices, whatever stimulates industry, whatever rectifies the judgment, whatever corrects self-conceit, whatever purifies the taste, and raises the understanding, will be likely to contribute to moral excellence: to woman moral excellence is the grand object of education; and of moral excellence, domestic life is to woman the proper sphere.

Count

Count over the list of females who have made shipwreck of their fame and virtue, and have furnished the most lamentable examples of the dereliction of family duties; and the number will not be found considerable who have been led astray by the pursuit of knowledge. And if a few deplorable instances of this kind be produced, it will commonly be found that there was little infusion into the minds of such women of that correcting principle without which all other knowledge only "puffeth up."

The time nightly expended in late female vigils is expended by the light of far other lamps than those which are fed by the student's oil; and if families *are* to be found who are neglected through too much study in the mistress, it will probably be proved to be Hoyle, and not Homer, who has robbed her children of her time and affections. For one family which has been neglected by the mother's passion for books, an hundred have been deserted through her passion for play. The husband

band of a fashionable woman will not often find that the library is the apartment the expences of which involve him in debt or disgrace. And for one literary flatterer, who now manifests her indifference to her husband by the neglect of her person, there are scores of elegant spendthrifts who ruin theirs by excess of decoration.

May I digress a little while I remark, that I am far from asserting that literature has never filled women with vanity and self-conceit ; the contrary is too obvious : but I will assert, that in general those whom books are supposed to have spoiled, would have been spoiled in another way without them. She who is a vain pedant because she has read much, has probably that defect in her mind which would have made her a vain fool if she had read nothing. It is not her having more knowledge, but less sense, which makes her insufferable ; and ignorance would have added little to her value, for it is not what she has, but what she wants,

wants, which makes her unpleasant. These instances too furnish only a fresh argument for the general cultivation of the female mind. The wider diffusion of sound knowledge, would remove that temptation to be vain which may be excited by its rarity.

But while we would assert that a woman of a cultivated intellect is not driven by the same necessity as others into the giddy whirl of public resort; who but regrets that real cultivation does not *inevitably* preserve her from it? No wonder that inanity of character, that vacuity of mind, that torpid ignorance, should plunge into dissipation as their natural refuge; should seek to bury their insignificance in the crowd of pressing multitudes, and hope to escape analysis and detection in the undistinguished masses of mixed assemblies! *There* attrition rubs all bodies smooth, and makes all surfaces alike; thither superficial and external accomplishments naturally fly as to their proper scene of action; as to a field
where

where competition in such trifles is in perpetual exercise ; where the laurels of admiration are to be won, where the trophies of vanity may be carried off triumphantly.

It would indeed be matter of little comparative regret, if this corrupt air were breathed only by those whose natural element it seems to be ; but who can forbear lamenting that the power of fashion attracts into this impure and unwholesome atmosphere, minds also of a better make, of higher aims and ends, of more ethereal temper ? that it attracts even those who, renouncing enjoyments for which they have a genuine taste, and which would make them really happy, neglect society they love and pursuits they admire, in order that they may *seem* happy and *be* fashionable in the chace of pleasures they despise, and in company they disapprove ! But no correctness of taste, no depth of knowledge, will infallibly preserve a woman from this contagion, unless her heart be impressed with a deep Christian

con-

conviction that she is responsible for the application of knowledge as well as for the dedication of time.

This contagion is so deep, so wide, and fatal, that if I were called upon to assign the predominant cause of the greater part of the misfortunes and corruptions of the great and gay in our days, I should not look for it principally in any obviously great or striking circumstance; not in the practice of notorious vices, not originally in the dereliction of Christian principle; but I should without hesitation ascribe it to a growing, regular, systematic series of amusements; to an incessant, boundless, and not very disreputable DISSIPATION. Other corruptions, though more formidable in appearance, are yet less fatal in some respects, because they leave us intervals to reflect on their turpitude, and spirit to lament their excesses; but dissipation is the more hopeless, as by engrossing almost the entire life, and enervating the whole moral and intellectual system, it leaves
neither

neither time for reflection, nor space for self-examination, nor temper for the cherishing of right affections, nor leisure for the operation of sound principles, nor interval for regret, nor vigour to resist temptation, nor energy to struggle for amendment.

The great master of the science of pleasure among the ancients, who reduced it into a system, which he called *the chief good of man*, directed that there should be interval enough between the succession of delights to sharpen inclination ; and accordingly instituted periodical days of abstinence ; well knowing that gratification was best promoted by previous self-denial. But so little do our votaries of fashion understand the true nature of pleasure, that one amusement is allowed to overtake another without any interval, either for recollection of the past or preparation for the future. Even on their own selfish principle, therefore, nothing can be worse understood than this continuity of enjoyment :

joyment: for to such a degree of labour is the pursuit carried, that the pleasures exhaust instead of exhilarating, and the recreations require to be rested from.

For, not to argue the question on the ground of religion, but merely on that of present enjoyment; look abroad and see who are the people that complain of weariness, listlessness, and dejection. You will not find them among the class of such as are overdone with work, but with pleasure. The natural and healthful fatigues of business may be recruited by simple and cheap gratifications; but a spirit worn down with the toils of amusement, requires pleasures of poignancy; varied, multiplied, stimulating!

It has been observed by medical writers, that that sober excess in which many indulge, by eating and drinking a little too much at every day's dinner and every night's supper, more effectually undermines the health, than those more rare
excesses

excesses by which others now and then break in upon a life of general sobriety. This illustration is not introduced with a design to recommend occasional deviations into gross vice, by way of a pious receipt for mending the morals; but merely to suggest that there is a probability that those who are sometimes driven by unresisted passion into irregularities which shock their cooler reason, are more liable to be roused to a sense of their danger, than persons whose perceptions of evil are blunted through a round of systematical, unceasing, and yet not scandalous dissipation. And when I affirm that this system of regular indulgence relaxes the soul, enslaves the heart, bewitches the senses, and thus disqualifies for pious thought or useful action, without having any thing in it so gross as to shock the conscience; and when I hazard an opinion that this state is more formidable, because less alarming, than that which bears upon it a more determined character of evil, I

no more mean to speak of the latter in slight and palliating terms, than I would intimate, because the sick sometimes recover from a fever, but seldom from a palsy, that a fever is, therefore a safe or a healthy state.

But there seems to be an error in the first concoction, out of which the subsequent errors successively grow. First then, as has been observed before, the showy education of women tends chiefly to qualify them for the glare of public assemblies: secondly, they seem in many instances to be so educated, with a view to the greater probability of their being splendidly married: thirdly, it is alleged in vindication of those dissipated practices, that daughters can only be seen, and admirers procured at balls, operas, and assemblies: and that therefore, by a natural consequence, balls, operas, and assemblies must be followed up without intermission till the object be effected. For the accomplishment of this object it is that all

this complicated machinery had been previously set a-going, and kept in motion with an activity not at all slackened by the disordered state of the system; for some machines, instead of being stopped, go faster because the true spring is out of order; the only difference being that they go wrong, and so the increased rapidity adds only to the quantity of error.

It is also, as we have already remarked, an error to fancy that the love of pleasure exhausts itself by indulgence, and that the very young are chiefly addicted to it. The contrary appears to be true. The desire often grows with the pursuit in the same degree as motion is quickened by the continuance of the gravitating force.

First then, it cannot be thought unfair to trace back the excessive fondness for amusement to that mode of education we have elsewhere reprobated. Few of the accomplishments, falsely so called, assist the developement of the faculties: they do not exercise the judgment, nor
bring

bring into action those powers which fit the heart and mind for the occupations of life; they do not prepare women to love home, to understand its occupations, to enliven its uniformity, to fulfil its duties, to multiply its comforts: they do not lead to that sort of experimental logic, if I may so speak, compounded of observation and reflection, which makes up the moral science of life and manners. Talents which have *display* for their object despise the narrow stage of home: they demand mankind for their spectators, and the world for their theatre.

While one cannot help shrinking a little from the idea of a delicate young creature, lovely in person, and engaging in mind and manners, sacrificing nightly at the public shrine of Fashion, at once the votary and the victim; one cannot help figuring to oneself how much more interesting she would appear in the eyes of a man of feeling, did he behold her in the more endearing situations of domestic life. And

who can forbear wishing, that the good sense, good taste, and delicacy of the men had rather led them to prefer seeking companions for life in the almost sacred quiet of a virtuous home? *There* they might have had the means of seeing and admiring those amiable beings in the best point of view : *there* they might have been enabled to form a juster estimate of female worth, than is likely to be obtained in scenes where such qualities and talents as might be expected to add to the stock of domestic comfort must necessarily be kept in the back ground, and where such only *can* be brought into view as are not particularly calculated to insure the certainty of home delights.

O ! did they keep their persons fresh and new,
How would they pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
And win by rareness !

But by what unaccountable insatiation is it that men too, even men of sense, join in the confederacy against their own happiness, by looking for their home com-

panions in the resorts of vanity? Why do not such men rise superior to the illusions of fashions? why do they not uniformly seek her who is to preside in *their* families in the bosom of her own? in the practice of every domestic duty, in the exercise of every amiable virtue, in the exertion of every elegant accomplishment? those accomplishments of which we have been reprobating, not the possession, but the application? *there* they would find her exerting them to their true end, to enliven business, to animate retirement, to embellish the charming scene of family delights, to heighten the interesting pleasures of social intercourse, and, rising to their noblest object, to adorn the doctrine of God her Saviour.

If, indeed, woman were mere outside, form and face only, and if *mind* made up no part of her composition, it would follow that a ball-room was quite as appropriate a place for choosing a wife, as an exhibition room for choosing a picture.

But, inasmuch as women are not mere portraits, their value not being determinable by a glance of the eye, it follows that a different mode of appreciating their value, and a different place for viewing them antecedent to their being individually selected, is desirable. The two cases differ also in this, that if a man select a picture for himself from among all its exhibited competitors, and bring it to his own house, the picture being passive, he is able to *fix* it there: while the wife, picked up at a public place, and accustomed to incessant display, will not, it is probable, when brought home stick so quietly to the spot where he fixes her; but will escape to the exhibition-room again, and continue to be displayed at every subsequent exhibition, just as if she were not become private property, and had never been definitively disposed of.

It is the novelty of a thing which astonishes us, and not its absurdity: objects may be so long kept before the eye that

it begins no longer to observe them ; or may be brought into such close contact with it, that it does not discern them. Long habit so reconciles us to almost any thing, that the grossest improprieties cease to strike us when they once make a part of the common course of action. This, by the way, is a strong reason for carefully sifting every opinion and every practice before we let them incorporate into the mass of our habits, after which they will be no more examined.—Would it not be accounted preposterous for a young man to say he had fancied such a lady would dance a better minuet, because he had seen her behave devoutly at Church, and *therefore* had chosen her for his partner ? and yet he is not thought at all absurd when he intimates that he chose a partner for life because he was pleased with her at a ball. Surely the place of choosing and the motive of choice, would be just as appropriate in one case as in the

other, and the mistake, if the judgment failed, not *quite* so serious.

There is, among the more elevated classes of society, a certain set of persons who are pleased exclusively to call themselves, and whom others by a sort of compelled courtesy are pleased to call, *the fine world*. This small detachment consider their situation with respect to the rest of mankind, just as the ancient Grecians did theirs; that is, as the Grecians thought there were but two sorts of beings, and that all who were not Grecians were barbarians; so this *certain set* conceives of society as resolving itself into two distinct classes, the *fine world* and the *people*; to which last class they turn over all who do not belong to their little *coterie*, however high their rank, or fortune, or merit. Celebrity, in their estimation, is not bestowed by birth or talents, but by being connected with *them*. They have laws, immunities, privileges, and almost a language

language of their own; they form a kind of distinct *cast*, and with a sort of *esprit de corps* detach themselves from others, even in general society, by an affectation of distance and coldness; and only whisper and smile in their own little groups of the initiated; their confines are jealously guarded, and their privileges are incommunicable.

In this society a young man loses his natural character, which, whatever it might have been originally, is melted down and cast into the one prevailing mould of Fashion; all the strong, native, discriminating qualities of his mind being made to take one shape, one stamp, one superscription! However varied and distinct might have been the materials which nature threw into the crucible, plastic Fashion takes care that they shall all be the same, or at least appear the same, when they come out of the mould. A young man in such an artificial state of society, accustomed to the voluptuous ease,
refined

refined luxuries, soft accommodations, obsequious attendance, and all the unrestrained indulgencies of a fashionable club, is not to be expected after marriage to take very cordially to a home, unless very extraordinary exertions are made to amuse, to attach, and to interest him: and he is not likely to lend a very helping hand to the happiness of the union, whose most laborious exertions have hitherto been little more than a selfish stratagem to reconcile health with pleasure. Excess of gratification has only served to make him irritable and exacting; it will of course be no part of his project to make sacrifices, he will expect to receive them: and what would appear incredible to the *Paladins* of gallant times, and the *Chevaliers Preux* of more heroic days, even in the necessary business of establishing himself for life, he sometimes is more disposed to expect attentions than to make advances.

Thus

Thus the indolent son of fashion, with a thousand fine, but dormant qualities, which a bad tone of manners forbids him to bring into exercise; with real energies which that tone does not allow him to discover, and an unreal apathy which it commands him to feign; with the heart of an hero, perhaps, if called into the field, affects at home the manners of a Sybarite; and he who, with a Roman, or what is more, with a British valour, would leap into the gulph at the call of public duty,

Yet in the soft and piping time of peace,
when fashion has resumed her rights,
would murmur if a rose leaf lay double
under him.

The clubs above alluded to, as has been said, generate and cherish luxurious habits, from their perfect ease, undress, liberty, and inattentions to the distinctions of rank: they promote a love of
play,

play, and in short, every temper and spirit which tends to undomesticate; and what adds to the mischief is, all this is attained at a cheap rate compared with what may be procured at home in the same style.

These indulgencies, and this habit of mind, imply so much gratification of the passions, that a woman can never hope successfully to counteract the evil by supplying at home gratifications in a superior degree, which are of the same kind. If she should attempt this, in a little time she will find that those passions, to which she has trusted for making pleasant the married life of her husband, will crave the still higher pleasures of the club; and while these are pursued, she will be consigned over to solitary evenings at home, or driven back to the old dissipation.

To conquer the passion for club gratifications, a woman must not strive to feed
it

it with sufficient aliment in the same kind in her society, either at home or abroad; she must supplant and overcome it by a passion of a different nature, which Providence has kindly planted within us, I mean by inspiring him with the love of fire-side enjoyments. But to qualify herself for administering these, she must cultivate her understanding and her heart, and her temper, acquiring at the same time that modicum of accomplishments suited to his taste, which may qualify her for possessing, both for him and for herself, greater varieties of safe recreation.

One great cause of the want of attachment in these modish couples is, that by living in the world at large, they are not driven to depend on each other as the chief source of comfort. Now it is pretty clear, in spite of modern theories, that the very frame and being of societies, whether great or small, public or private, is jointed and glued together by dependence. Those attachments which arise from, and are
com-

compacted by, a sense of mutual wants, mutual affection, mutual benefit, and mutual obligation; are the cement which secure the union of the family as well as of the state.

Unfortunately, when two young persons of the above description marry, the union is sometimes considered rather as the end than the beginning of an engagement: the attachment of each to the other is rather viewed as an object already completed, than as one which marriage is to confirm more closely. But the companion for life is not always chosen from the purest motive; she is selected, perhaps, because she is admired by other men, rather than because she possesses in an eminent degree those peculiar qualities which are likely to constitute the individual happiness of the man who chooses her. Vanity usurps the place of affection; and indolence swallows up the judgment. Not happiness, but some easy substitute for happiness, is pursued; and a choice which may excite envy, rather

rather than produce satisfaction, is adopted as the means of effecting it.

The pair, not *matched but joined*, set out separately with their independent and individual pursuits; whether it made a part of their original plan or not, that they should be indispensably necessary to each other's comfort, the sense of this necessity, probably not very strong at first, rather diminishes than increases by time; they live so much in the world, and so little together, that to stand well with their *own set* continues the favourite project of each; while to stand well with each other is considered as an under-part of the plot in the drama of life. Whereas, did they start in the conjugal race with the fixed idea that they were to look to each other for their chief worldly happiness, not only principle, but prudence, and even selfishness, would convince them of the necessity of sedulously cultivating each other's esteem and affection as the grand means of promoting that happiness. But vanity, and
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the desire of flattery and applause, still continue to operate. Even after the husband is brought to feel a perfect indifference for his wife, he still likes to see her decorated in a style which may serve to justify his choice. He encourages her to set off her person, not so much for his own gratification, as that his self-love may be flattered, by her continuing to attract the admiration of those whose opinion is the standard by which he measures his fame, and which fame is to stand him in the stead of happiness. Thus is she necessarily exposed to the two-fold temptation of being at once neglected by her husband, and exhibited as an object of attraction to other men. If she escape this complicated danger, she will be indebted for her preservation not to his prudence, but to her own principles.

In some of these modish marriages, instead of the decorous neatness, the pleasant intercourse, and the mutual warmth of communication of the once social dinner, the

the late and uninteresting meal is commonly hurried over by the languid and slovenly pair, that the one may have time to dress for his club, and the other for her party. And in these cold abstracted *têtes-à-têtes*, they often take as little pains to entertain each other, as if the one was precisely the only human being in the world in whose eyes the other did not feel it necessary to appear agreeable.

But if these young and perhaps really amiable persons could struggle against the imperious tyranny of fashion, and contrive to pass a little time together, so as to get acquainted with each other; and if each would live in the lively and conscientious exercise of those talents and attractions which they sometimes know how to produce on occasions not *quite* so justifiable; they would, I am persuaded, often find out each other to be very agreeable people. And both of them, delighted and delighting, receiving and bestowing happiness, would no longer be driven to the necessity

of perpetually flying from home as from the only scene which offers no possible materials for pleasure.

It may seem a contradiction to have asserted that beings of all ages, tempers, and talents, should with such unremitting industry follow up any way of life if they did not find some enjoyment in it; yet I appeal to the bosoms of these incessant hunters in the chace of pleasure, whether they are really happy. No.—In the full tide and torrent of diversion, in the full blaze of gaiety,

The heart distrusts if this be joy?

But there is an anxious restlessness excited by the pursuit, which, if not interesting, is bustling. There is the dread and partly the discredit of being suspected of having one hour unmortgaged, not only to successive, but contending engagements; this it is, and not the pleasure of the engagement itself, which is the object. There is an agitation in the arrangements which im-

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poses itself on the vacant heart for happiness. There is a tumult kept up in the spirits which is a busy though treacherous substitute for comfort. The multiplicity of sollicitations soothes vanity. The very regret that they cannot be all accepted has its charms; for dignity is flattered because refusal implies importance, and pre-engagement intimates celebrity. Then there is the joy of being invited when others are neglected; the triumph of showing one's less modish friend that one is going where she cannot come; and the feigned regret at being *obliged* to go, assumed before her who is half wild at being obliged to stay away. These are some of the supplemental shifts for happiness with which vanity contrives to feed her hungry followers; too eager to be nice.

In the succession of open houses, in which Pleasure is to be started and pursued on any given night, the actual place is never taken into the account of enjoyment: the scene of which is always supposed to lie in

any place where her votaries happen not to be. Pleasure has no present sense: but in the house which her pursuers have just quitted, and in the house to which they are just hastening, a stranger might conclude the slippery goddess had really fixed her throne, and that her worshippers considered the existing scene, which they seemed compelled to suffer, but from which they were eager to escape, as really detaining them from some positive joy to which they were flying in the next crowd; till, if he met them there, he would find the component parts of each precisely the same. He would hear the same stated phrases interrupted, not answered, by the same stated replies; the unfinished sentence "driven adverse to the winds" by pressing multitudes; the same warm regret mutually exchanged by two friends (who had been expressly denied to each other all the winter) that they had not met before; the same soft and smiling sorrow at being
torn

torn away from each other now; the same anxiety to renew the meeting, with perhaps the same secret resolution to avoid it. He would hear described with the same pathetic earnestness the difficulties of getting into this house, and the dangers of getting out of the last! the perilous retreat of former nights, effected amidst the shock of chariots and the clang of contending coachmen! a retreat indeed effected with a skill and peril little inferior to that of the *ten thousand*, and detailed with far juster triumph; for that which happened only once in a life to the Grecian Hero occurs to these British heroines every night. There is one point of resemblance, indeed, between them in which the comparison fails; for the Commander, with a *mauvaise honte* at which a true female veteran would blush, is remarkable for never naming himself.

With "mysterious reverence" I forbear to descant on those serious and interesting rites,

rites, for the more august and solemn celebration of which Fashion nightly convenes these splendid myriads to her more sumptuous temples. Rites! which, when engaged in with due devotion, absorb the whole soul, and call every passion into exercise, except indeed those of love, and peace, and kindness, and gentleness. Inspiring rites! which stimulate fear, rouse hope, kindle zeal, quicken dulness, sharpen discernment, exercise memory, inflame curiosity! Rites! in short, in the due performance of which all the energies and attentions, all the powers and abilities, all the abstraction and exertion, all the diligence and devotedness, all the sacrifice of time, all the contempt of ease, all the neglect of sleep, all the oblivion of care, all the risks of fortune (half of which if directed to their true objects would change the very face of the world): all these are concentrated to one point; a point in which the wise and the weak, the learned and the ignorant, the fair and the frightful,

ful, the sprightly and the dull, the rich and the poor, the Patrician and Plebeian, meet in one common and uniform equality; an equality as religiously respected in these solemnities, in which all distinctions are levelled at a blow, and of which the very spirit is therefore democratical, as it is combated in all other instances.

Behold four Kings in majesty rever'd,
With hoary whiskers and a forked beard;
And four fair Queens, whose hands sustain a flow'r,
Th' expressive emblem of their softer pow'r;
Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,
Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;
And party-coloured troops, a shining train,
Drawn forth to combat on the velvet plain*.

* Rape of the Lock.

CHAP. XVII.

On public amusements.

It is not proposed to enter the long contested field of controversy as to the individual amusements which may be considered as safe and lawful for those women of the higher class who make a strict profession of Christianity. The judgment they will be likely to form for themselves on this subject, and the plan they will consequently adopt, will depend much on the clearness or obscurity of their religious views, and on the greater or less progress they have made in their Christian course. It is in their choice of amusements that you get in some measure to know the real dispositions of mankind. In their *business*, in the leading employments of life, their path is in a good degree chalked out for

for them : there is in this respect a sort of general character wherein the greater part, more or less, must coincide. But in their pleasures the choice is voluntary, the taste is self-directed, the propensity is independent ; and of course the habitual state, the genuine bent and bias of the temper, are most likely to be seen in those pursuits which every man is at liberty to choose for himself.

When a truly religious principle shall have acquired such a degree of force as to produce that conscientious and habitual improvement of time before recommended, it will discover itself by an increasing indifference and even deadness to those pleasures which are interesting to the world at large. A woman under the predominating influence of such a principle, will begin to discover that the same thing which in itself is innocent may yet be comparatively wrong. She will begin to feel that there are many amusements and employments which, though
they

they have nothing censurable in themselves, yet if they be allowed to intrench on hours which ought to be dedicated to still better purposes; or if they are protracted to an undue length; or above all, if by softening and relaxing her mind and dissipating her spirits, they so indispose her for better pursuits as to render subsequent duties a burden, become in that case clearly wrong for her, whatever they may be for others. Now as temptations of this sort are the peculiar dangers of better kind of characters, the sacrifice of such little gratifications as may *have no great harm in them*, come in among the daily calls to self-denial in a Christian. Y

The fine arts, for instance, polite literature, elegant society, these are among the lawful, and liberal, and becoming recreations of higher life; yet if even these be cultivated to the neglect or exclusion of severer duties; if they interfere with serious studies, or disqualify the mind for religious exercises, it is an intima-
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tion that they have been too much indulged; and, under such circumstances, it might be the part of Christian circumspection to inquire if the time devoted to them ought not to be abridged. Above all, a tender conscience will never lose sight of one safe rule of determining in all doubtful cases: if the point be so nice that though we hope upon the whole there *may* be no harm in engaging in it, we may at least be always quite sure that there *can* be no harm in letting it alone. The adoption of this simple rule would put a period to much unprofitable casuistry.

The principle of being responsible for the use of time once fixed in the mind, the conscientious Christian will be making a continual progress in the great art of turning time to account. In the first stages of her religion she will have abstained from pleasures which began a *little* to wound the conscience, or which assumed a questionable shape; but she will probably have
abstained

abstained with regret, and with a secret wish that conscience *could* have permitted her to keep well with pleasure and religion too. But you may discern in her subsequent course that she has reached a more advanced stage, by her beginning to neglect even such pleasures or employments as have no moral turpitude in them, but are merely what are called innocent. This relinquishment arises, not so much from her feeling still more the restraints of religion, as from the improvement in her religious taste. Pleasures cannot now attach her merely from their being innocent, unless they are interesting also, and to be interesting they must be consonant to her superinduced views. She is not contented to spend a large portion of her time harmlessly, it must be spent profitably also. Nay, if she be indeed earnestly “pressing towards the mark,” it will not be even enough for her that her present pursuit be good if she be convinced that it might be still better.

better. Her contempt of ordinary enjoyments will increase in a direct proportion to her increased relish for those pleasures which religion enjoins and bestows. So that at length if it were possible to suppose that an angel could come down to take off as it were the interdict, and to invite her to resume all the pleasures she had renounced, and to resume them with complete impunity, she would reject the invitation, because she would despise, from an improvement in her spiritual taste, those delights from which she had at first abstained through fear. Till her will and affections come heartily to be engaged in the service of God, the progress will not be comfortable; but when once they are so engaged, the attachment to this service will be cordial, and her heart will not desire to go back and toil again in the drudgery of the world. For her religion has not so much given her a new creed, as a new heart, and a new life.

As

As her views are become new, so her tempers, dispositions, tastes, actions, pursuits, choice of company, choice of amusements, are new also; her employment of time is changed; her turn of conversation is altered; "old things are passed away, "all things are become new." In dissipated and worldly society, she will seldom fail to feel a sort of uneasiness, which will produce one of these two effects; she will either, as proper seasons present themselves, struggle hard to introduce such subjects as may be useful to others; or, supposing that she finds herself unable to effect this, she will, as far as she prudently can, absent herself from all unprofitable kind of society. Indeed her manner of conducting herself under these circumstances may serve to furnish her with a test of her own sincerity. For while people are contending for a little more of this amusement, and pleading for a little extension of that gratification, and fighting in order that they may hedge in
a little

a little more territory to their pleasure ground, they are exhibiting a kind of evidence against themselves, that they are not yet "renewed in the spirit of their mind."

It has been warmly urged as an objection to certain religious books, and particularly against a recent work of high worth and celebrity, by a distinguished layman*, that they have set the standard of self-denial higher than reason or even than Christianity requires. These works do indeed elevate the general tone of religion to a higher pitch than is quite convenient to those who are at infinite pains to construct a comfortable and comprehensive plan, which shall unite the questionable pleasures of this world with the promised happiness of the next. I say it has been sometimes objected, even by those readers who on the whole greatly admire the particular work alluded to, that it is unreasonably strict in the preceptive and prohibitory parts; and especially

* Practical View, &c. by Mr. Wilberforce.

that

that it individually and specifically forbids certain fashionable amusements, with a severity not to be found in the scriptures; and is scrupulously rigid in condemning diversions against which nothing is said in the New Testament: each objector, however, is so far reasonable, as only to beg quarter for her own favorite diversion, and generously abandons the defence of those in which she herself has no pleasure.

But these objectors do not seem to understand the true genius of Christianity. They do not consider that it is the character of the Gospel to exhibit a scheme of principles, of which it is the tendency to infuse such a spirit of holiness as must be utterly incompatible, not only with customs decidedly vicious, but with the very spirit of worldly pleasure. They do not consider that Christianity is neither a table of ethics, nor a system of opinions, nor a bundle of rods to punish, nor an exhibition of rewards to allure, nor a scheme of restraints, nor merely a code of laws;

laws; but it is a new principle infused into the heart by the word and the spirit of God, out of which principle will inevitably grow right opinions, renewed affections, correct morals, and holy habits, with an invariable desire of pleasing God, and a constant fear of offending him. A real Christian, whose heart is once thoroughly imbued with this principle, can no more return to the amusements of the world, than a philosopher can be refreshed with the diversions of the vulgar, or a man be amused with the recreations of a child. The New Testament is not a mere statute-book: it is not a table where every offence is detailed, and its corresponding penalty annexed: it is not so much a *compilation*, as a *spirit* of laws: it does not so much prohibit every individual wrong practice, as suggest a temper and general principle with which every wrong practice is incompatible. It did not, for instance, so much attack the then reigning and corrupt fashions, which were probably,

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like the fashions of other countries, temporary and local; but it struck at that worldliness, which is the root and stock from which all corrupt fashions proceed.

The prophet *Isaiah*, who addressed himself more particularly to the Israelitish women, inveighed not only against vanity, luxury, and immodesty, in general; but with great propriety blamed even those precise instances of each, to which the women of rank in the particular country he was addressing were especially addicted; nay, he enters into the minute detail * of their very personal decorations, and brings specific charges against their levity and extravagance of apparel; meaning, however, chiefly to censure the turn of character which these indicated. But the Gospel of Christ, which was to be addressed to all ages, stations, and countries, seldom contains any such detailed animadversions; for though many of the censurable modes which the prophet so severely reprobated,

* *Isaiah*, chap. iii.

continued probably to be still prevalent in Jerusalem in the days of our Saviour, yet how little would it have suited the universality of his mission, to have confined his preaching to such local, limited, and fluctuating customs ! not but that there are many texts which actually *do* define the Christian conduct as well as temper, with sufficient particularity to serve as a condemnation of many practices which are pleaded for, and often to point pretty directly at them.

Had Peter, on that memorable day when he added three thousand converts to the Church by a single sermon, narrowed his subject to a remonstrance against this diversion, or that public place, or the other vain amusement, it might indeed have suited the case of some of the female Jewish converts who were present ; but such restrictions as might have been appropriate to them, would probably not have applied to the cases of the Parthians and Medes, of which his audience was partly

composed; or such as might have belonged to them would have been totally inapplicable to the Cretes and Arabians; or again, those which suited these would not have applied to the Elamites and Mesopotamians. By such partial and circumscribed addresses, his multifarious audience, composed of all nations and countries, would not have been, as we are told they were, "pricked to the heart." But when he preached on the broad ground of general "repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ," it was no wonder that they all cried out "What shall we do?" These collected foreigners, at their return home, must have found very different usages to be corrected in their different countries; of course a detailed restriction of the popular abuses at Jerusalem, would have been of little use to strangers returning to their respective nations. The ardent Apostle, therefore, acted more consistently in communicating to them the large and comprehensive spirit of the Gospel,

Gospel, which should at once involve all their scattered and separate duties, as well as reprove all their scattered and separate corruptions; for the whole always includes a part, and the greater involves the less. Christ and his disciples, instead of limiting their condemnation to the peculiar vanities reprehended by Isaiah, embraced the very soul and principle of them all, in such exhortations as the following: "Be ye not conformed to the world:"—"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him:"—"The fashion of this world passeth away." Our Lord and his Apostles, whose future unlimited audience was to be made up out of the whole world, attacked the evil *heart*, out of which all those incidental, local, and popular corruptions proceeded.

In the time of Christ and his immediate followers, the luxury and intemperance of the Romans had arisen to a pitch before unknown in the world; but as the same Gospel which its Divine Author and his

disciples were then preaching to the hungry and necessitous, was afterwards to be preached to high and low, not excepting the Roman Emperors themselves; the large precept, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," was likely to be of more general use, than any separate exhortation to temperance, to thankfulness, to moderation as to quantity or expence; which last indeed must always be left in some degree to the judgment and circumstances of the individual.

When the Apostle of the Gentiles visited the "Saints of Cæsar's household," he could hardly fail to have heard, nor could he have heard without abhorrence, of some of the fashionable amusements in the court of Nero. He must have reflected with peculiar indignation on many things which were practised in the Circensian games: yet, instead of pruning this corrupt tree, and singling out even the inhuman gladiatorial sports for the ob-
ject

ject of his condemnation, he laid his axe to the root of all sin, by preaching to them that Gospel of Christ of which "he was not ashamed;" and shewing to them that believed, that "it was the power of God" and the wisdom of God." It is somewhat remarkable, that about the very time of his preaching to the Romans, the public taste had sunk to such an excess of depravity, that the very women engaged in those shocking encounters with the gladiators.

But, in the first place, it was better that their right practice should grow out of the right principle; and next, his specifically reprobating these diversions might have had this ill effect, that succeeding ages, seeing that they in their amusements came somewhat short of those dreadful excesses of the polished Romans, would only have plumed themselves on their own comparative superiority; and on this principle, even the bull-fights of Madrid might have had their panegyrist. The truth is, the Apostle knew that such abominable

corruptions could never subsist together with Christianity, and in fact, the honour of abolishing these barbarous diversions, was reserved for Constantine, the first Christian emperor.

Besides, the Apostles, by inveighing against some *particular* diversions might have seemed to sanction all which they did not actually censure: and as, in the lapse of time and the revolution of governments, customs change and manners fluctuate; had a minute reprehension of the fashions of the then existing age been published in the New Testament, that portion of scripture must in time have become obsolete, even in that very same country, when the fashions themselves should have changed. Paul and his brother Apostles knew that their epistles would be the oracles of the Christian world, when these temporary diversions would be forgotten. In consequence of this knowledge, by the universal precept to avoid "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," they have prepared

pared a lasting antidote against the *principle* of all corrupt pleasures, which will ever remain equally applicable to the loose fashions of all ages, and of every country, to the end of the world.

Therefore to vindicate diversions, which are in themselves unchristian, on the pretended ground that they are not specifically condemned in the gospel, would be little less absurd than if the heroes of Newmarket should bring it as a proof that their periodical meetings are not condemned in Scripture, because St. Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, did not speak against these, or because in availing himself of the Isthmian games, as a happy illustration of the Christian race, he did not drop any censure on the practice itself: a practice which was indeed as much more pure than the races of Christian Britain, as the moderation of being contented with the triumph of a crown of leaves, is superior to that criminal spirit of gambling which iniquitously enriches the victor by beggaring the competitor.

Local

Local abuses, as we have said, were not the object of a book whose instructions were to be of universal and lasting application. As a proof of this, little is said in the Gospel of the then prevailing corruption of polygamy; nothing against the savage custom of exposing children, or even against slavery; nothing expressly against suicide or duelling; the last Gothic custom, indeed, did not exist among the crimes of *Paganism*. But is there not an implied prohibition against polygamy in the general denunciation against adultery? Is not exposing of children condemned in that charge against the Romans, that "they were without natural affection?" Is there not a strong censure against slavery conveyed in the command to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you?" and against suicide and duelling, in the general prohibition against murder, which is strongly enforced by the solemn manner in which murder

murder is traced back to its first seed of anger, in the sermon on the mount?

Thus it is clear, that when Christ sent the Gospel to all nations, he meant that that Gospel should proclaim those prime truths, general laws, and fundamental doctrines, which must necessarily involve the prohibition of all individual, local, and inferior errors; errors which could not have been specifically guarded against, without having a distinct Gospel for every country, or without swelling the divine volume into such inconvenient length as would have defeated one great end of its promulgation *. And while its leading principles are of universal application, it must always, in some measure, be left to the discretion of the preacher, and to the conscience of the hearer, to examine whether the life and habits of those who profess it are conformable to its spirit.

* "To the *poor* the Gospel is preached."
Luke, vii. 22.

The same Divine Spirit which indited the Holy Scriptures, is promised to purify the hearts and renew the natures of repenting and believing Christians; and the compositions it inspired are in some degree analogous to the workmanship it effects. It prohibited the vicious practices of the apostolical days, by prohibiting the passions and principles which rendered them gratifying; and still working in like manner on the hearts of real Christians, it corrects the taste which was accustomed to find its proper gratification in the resorts of vanity; and thus effectually provides for the reformation of the habits, and infuses a relish for rational and domestic enjoyments, and for whatever can administer pleasure to that spirit of peace, and love, and hope, and joy, which animates and rules the renewed heart of the true Christian.

But there is a portion of Scripture which, though to a superficial reader it may
seem

seem but very remotely connected with the present subject, yet to readers of another cast, seems to settle the matter beyond controversy: In the parable of the great supper, this important truth is held out to us, that even things *good in themselves* may be the means of our eternal ruin, by drawing our hearts from God, and causing us to make light of the offers of the Gospel. One invited guest had bought an estate, another had made a purchase equally blameless of oxen; a third had married a wife, an act not illaudable in itself. They had all different reasons; but they all agreed in this, *to decline the invitation to the supper*. The worldly possessions of one, the worldly business of another, and what should be particularly attended to, the love to his dearest relative, of a third, (a love by the way not only allowed but commanded in Scripture) were brought forward as excuses for not attending to the important business of religion. The consequence,

however,

however was the same to all. "None
 " of those which were bidden shall taste
 " of my supper." If then things *innocent*,
 things *necessary*, things *laudable*, things
commanded, become sinful, when by un-
 reasonable or excessive indulgence they
 detain the heart and affections from God,
 how vain will all those arguments ne-
 cessarily be rendered, which are urged by
 the advocates for certain amusements, on
 the ground of their *harmlessness*; if those
 amusements serve (not to mention any
 positive evil which may belong to them) in
 like manner to draw away the thoughts
 and affections from all spiritual objects!

To conclude; when this topic happens
 to become the subject of conversation,
 instead of addressing severe and pointed
 attacks to young ladies on the sin of
 attending places of diversion, would it
 not be better first to endeavour to excite
 in them that principle of Christianity, with
 which such diversions seem not quite com-
 patible; as the physician, who visits a
 patient in an eruptive fever, pays little
 attention

attention to those spots which to the ignorant appear to be the disease, except indeed so far as they serve as indications to let him into its nature, but goes straight to the root of the malady? He attacks the fever, he lowers the pulse, he changes the system, he corrects the general habit; well knowing that if he can but restore the vital principle of health, the spots, which were nothing but symptoms, will die away of themselves.

In instructing others we should imitate our Lord and his Apostles, and not always aim our blow at each particular corruption; but making it our business to convince our pupil that what brings forth the evil fruit she exhibits, cannot be a branch of the true vine; we should thus avail ourselves of individual corruptions, for impressing her with a sense of the necessity of purifying the common source from which they flow—a corrupt nature. Thus making it our grand business to rectify the heart, we pursue the true, the compendious,

dious, the only method of universal holiness.

I would, however, take leave of those amiable and not ill-disposed young persons, who complain of the rigour of human prohibitions, and declare "they meet with no such strictness in the Gospel," by asking them, with the most affectionate earnestness, if they can conscientiously reconcile their nightly attendance at every public place which they frequent, with such precepts as the following: "Redeeming the time:"—"Watch and pray:"—"Watch, for ye know not at what time your Lord cometh:"—"Abstain from all *appearance* of evil:"—"Set your affections on things above;"—"Be ye spiritually minded:"—"Crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts?" And I would venture to offer one criterion, by which the persons in question may be enabled to decide on the positive innocence and safety of such diversions; I mean, provided

they

they are sincere in their scrutiny and honest in their avowal. If on their return at night from those places they find they can retire, and “commune with their own hearts;” if they find the love of God operating with undiminished force on their minds; if they can “bring every thought into subjection,” and concentrate every wandering imagination; if they can soberly examine into their own state of mind: I do not say if they can do all this perfectly and without distraction; (for who can do this at any time?) but if they can do it with the same *degree* of seriousness, pray with the same *degree* of fervour, and renounce the world in as great a *measure* as at other times; and if they can lie down with a peaceful consciousness of having avoided in the evening “that temptation” which they had prayed not to be “led into” in the morning, they may then more reasonably hope that all is well, and that they

are not speaking false peace to their hearts *.

* If I might presume to recommend a book which of all others exposes the insignificance, vanity, littleness, and emptiness of the world, I should not hesitate to name Mr. Law's "*Serious Call to a devout and holy Life.*" Few writers, except Pascal, have directed so much acuteness of reasoning, and so much pointed wit to this object. He not only makes the reader afraid of a worldly life on account of its sinfulness, but ashamed of it on account of its folly. Few men perhaps have had a deeper insight into the human heart, or have more skilfully probed its corruptions: yet on points of doctrine his views do not seem to be just; and his disquisitions are often unsound and fanciful; so that a *general* perusal of his works would neither be profitable or intelligible. To a fashionable woman immersed in the vanities of life, or to a busy man overwhelmed with its cares, I know no book so applicable, or likely to exhibit with equal force the vanity of the shadows they are pursuing. But even in this work he is not a safe guide to evangelical light; and in many of his others he is highly visionary and whimsical: and I have known some excellent persons who were first led by this admirable genius to see the wants of their own hearts, and the utter insufficiency of the world to fill up the craving void, who, though they became eminent for piety and self-denial, have had their usefulness abridged, and whose minds have contracted something of a monastic severity by an unqualified

lified perusal of Mr. Law. True Christianity does not call on us to starve our bodies, but our corruptions. As the *mortified Apostle of the holy and self-denying Baptist*, preaching repentance because the kingdom of Heaven is at hand, Mr. Law has no superior. As a preacher of salvation on scriptural grounds, I would follow other guides.

C H A P. XVIII.

*A worldly spirit incompatible with the spirit
of Christianity.*

Is it not whimsical to hear such complaints against the strictness of religion as we are frequently hearing, from beings who are voluntarily pursuing, as has been shewn in the preceding Chapters, a course of life which Fashion makes infinitely more laborious? How really burdensome would Christianity be if she enjoined such sedulous application, such unremitting labours, such a succession of fatigues! if religion commanded such hardships and self-denial, such days of hurry, such evenings of exertion, such nights of broken rest, such perpetual sacrifices of quiet, such exile from family delights, as Fashion imposes, then indeed

the service of Christianity would no longer merit its present appellation of being a "*reasonable service*:" then the name of perfect slavery might be justly applied to that which we are told in the beautiful language of our church, is "a service of perfect freedom:" a service, the great object of which is "to deliver us from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

A worldly temper, by which I mean a disposition to prefer worldly pleasures, worldly satisfactions, and worldly advantages, to the immortal interests of the soul; and to let worldly considerations actuate us instead of the dictates of religion in the concerns of ordinary life; a worldly temper, I say, is not, like almost any other fault, the effect of passion or the consequence of surprise when the heart is off its guard. It is not excited incidentally by the operation of external circumstances on the infirmity of nature; but it is the vital

spirit, the essential soul, the living principle of evil. It is not so much an act, as a state of being; not so much an occasional complaint, as a tainted constitution of mind. If it do not always show itself in extraordinary excesses, it has no perfect intermission. Even when it is not immediately tempted to break out into overt and specific acts, it is at work within, stirring up the heart to disaffection against holiness, and infusing a kind of moral disability to whatever is intrinsically good. It infects and depraves all the powers and faculties of the soul; for it operates on the understanding by blinding it to whatever is spiritually good; on the will, by making it averse from God; on the affections, by disordering and sensualizing them; so that one may almost say to those who are under the supreme dominion of this spirit, what was said to the hosts of Joshua, "*Ye cannot serve the Lord.*"

This worldliness of mind is not at all commonly understood, and for the follow-

following reason:—People suppose that in this world our chief business is with the things of this world, and that to conduct the business of this world well, that is, conformably to moral principles, is the chief substance of moral and true goodness. Religion, if introduced at all into the system, only makes its occasional, and if I may so speak, its holiday appearance. To bring religion into every thing, is thought incompatible with the due attention to the things of this life. And so it would be, if by religion were meant *talk-
ing* about religion. The phrase, therefore, is: “One cannot always be praying; we
“ must mind our business and social duties
“ as well as our devotion.” Worldly business being thus subjected to worldly, though in some degree moral, maxims, the mind during the conduct of business grows worldly; and a continually increasing worldly spirit dims the sight and relaxes the moral principle on which the

affairs of the world are conducted, as well as indisposes the mind for all the exercises of devotion.

But this temper, as far as relates to *business*, assumes the semblance of goodness; so that those who have not right views are apt to mistake the carrying on the affairs of life on a tolerably moral principle, for religion. They do not see that the evil lies not in their so carrying on business, but in their not carrying on the things of this life in subserviency to those of eternity; in their not carrying them on with the unintermitting idea of responsibility. The evil does not lie in their not being always on their knees, but in their not bringing their religion from the closet into the world: in their not bringing the spirit of the Sunday's devotions into the transactions of the week: in not transforming their religion from a dry, and speculative, and inoperative system, into a lively, and influential, and unceasing principle of action.

Though

Though there are, blessed be God ! in the most exalted stations, women who adorn their Christian profession by a consistent conduct ; yet are there not others who are labouring hard to unite the irreconcilable interests of earth and heaven ? who, while they will not relinquish one jot of what this world has to bestow, yet by no means renounce their hopes of a better ? who do not think it unreasonable that their indulging in the fullest possession of present pleasure should interfere with the most certain reversion of future glory ? who, after living in the most unbounded gratification of ease, vanity, and luxury, fancy that heaven must be attached of course to a life of which Christianity is the outward profession, and which has not been stained by any flagrant or dishonourable act of guilt ?

Are there not many who, while they entertain a respect for religion, (for I address not the unbelieving or the licentious,)

tious,) while they believe its truths, observe its forms, and would be shocked not to be thought religious, are yet immersed in this life of disqualifying worldliness? who, though they make a conscience of going to the public worship once on a Sunday, and are scrupulously observant of the other rites of the Church, yet hesitate not to give up all the rest of their time to the very same pursuits and pleasures which occupy the hearts and lives of those looser characters whose enjoyment is not obstructed by any dread of a future account? and who are acting on the wise principle of "the children of this world" in making the most of the present state of being from the conviction that there is no other to be expected?

It must be owned, indeed, that faith in unseen things is at times sadly weak and defective even in the truly pious; and that it is so, is the subject of their grief and humiliation. O! how does the real Christian take shame in the coldness of his

his belief, in the lowness of his attainments ! How deeply does he lament that “ when he would do good, evil is present with him ! ” — “ that the life he now “ lives in the flesh, is ” not, in the degree it ought to be, “ by faith in the son of “ God ! ” Yet one thing is clear ; however weak his belief may seem to be, it is evident that his actions are mainly governed by it ; he evinces his sincerity to others by a life in some good degree analogous to the doctrines he professes : while to himself he has this conviction, that faint as his confidence may be at times, yet at the worst of times he would not exchange that faint measure of trust and hope for all the actual pleasures and possessions of his most splendid acquaintance ; and as a proof of his sincerity he never seeks the cure of his dejection, where they seek theirs, in the world, but in God.

But as to the faith of worldly persons, however strong it may be in speculation, however orthodox their creed, one cannot
help

help fearing that it is a little defective in sincerity : for if there were in the mind a full persuasion of the truth of revelation, and of the eternal bliss it promises, would it not be obvious to them that there must be more diligence for its attainment ? We discover great ardor in carrying on worldly projects, because we believe the good which we are pursuing is real, and will reward the trouble of the pursuit : we believe that good to be attainable by diligence, and prudently proportion our earnestness to this conviction : and therefore where we see persons professing a lively faith in a better world, yet labouring little to obtain an interest in it, can we forbear suspecting that their belief, not only of their own title to eternal happiness, but of eternal happiness itself, is not well grounded ? and that, if they were to “ examine themselves truly,” the faith would be found to be much of a piece with the practice ?

Even that very taste for enjoyment which leads the persons in question to possess themselves of the qualifications for
the

the pleasures of the present scene; that understanding which leads them to acquire such talents as may enable them to relish the resorts of gaiety here, should induce those who are really looking for a future state of happiness, to wish to acquire something of the taste, and temper, and talents, which may be considered as qualifications for its enjoyment. The neglect to do this must proceed from one of these two causes; either they must think their present course a safe and proper course; or they must think that death is to produce some sudden and surprising alteration in the human character. But the office of death is to transport us to a new state, not to transform us to a new nature: the stroke of death is intended to effect our deliverance out of this world, and our introduction into another; but it is not likely to effect any sudden and surprising or total change in our hearts or our tastes: so far from this, that we are assured in Scripture, “that he that is
“filthy

“filthy will be filthy still, and he that is
“holy will be holy still.” Though we
believe that death will compleatly cleanse
the holy soul from its remaining pollutions,
that it will exchange defective sanctifica-
tion into perfect purity, entangling temp-
tation into complete freedom, want and
pain into health and fruition, doubts and
fears into perfect security, and oppressive
weariness into everlasting rest; yet there
is no magic in the wand of death which will
convert an unholy soul into a holy one.
And it is awful to reflect, that such tem-
pers as have the allowed predominance
here will maintain it for ever; that such as
the will is when we close our eyes upon
the things of time, such it will be when
we open them on those of eternity. The
mere act of death no more fits us for
heaven, than the mere act of the mason
who pulls down our old house fits us for
a new one. If we die with our hearts
running over with the love of the world,
there is no promise to lead us to expect
that we shall rise with them full of the
love

love of God: death indeed will shew us to ourselves such as we are, but will not make us such as we are not: and it will be too late to be acquiring self-knowledge when we can no longer turn it to any account but that of tormenting ourselves. To illustrate this truth still farther by an allusion familiar to the persons I address: the drawing up the curtain at the theatre, though it serves to introduce us to the entertainments behind it, does not create in us any new faculties to understand or to relish those entertainments: these must have been long in acquiring: they must have been provided beforehand, and brought with us to the place, if we would relish the pleasures of it; for the entertainment can only operate on that taste we carry to it. It is too late to be acquiring when we ought to be enjoying.

That spirit of prayer and praise, those dispositions of love, meekness, "peace, quietness, and assurance;" that indifference

ference to the fashion of a world which is passing away; that longing after deliverance from sin, that desire of holiness, together with all the specific marks of our having "the fruits of the spirit" here, must surely make some part of our qualification for the enjoyment of a world, the pleasures of which are all spiritual. And who can conceive any thing comparable to the awful surprise of a soul long immersed in the indulgences of vanity and pleasure, yet all the while lulled by the self-complacency of a religion of mere forms; who, while it counted upon heaven as a thing of course, had made no preparation for it! Who can conceive any surprise comparable to that of such a soul on shutting its eyes on a world of sense, of which all the objects and delights were so congenial to its nature, and opening them on a world of spirits of which all the characters of enjoyment are of a nature new, unknown, surprising, and specifically different? pleasures more inconceivable to its apprehension and more unsuitable to its taste,

taste, than the gratifications of one sense are to the organs of another, or than the most exquisite works of genius to absolute imbecility of mind.

While we would with deep humility confess that we cannot purchase heaven by any works or right dispositions of our own; while we gratefully acknowledge that it must be purchased for us by "Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood;" yet let us remember that we have no reason to expect we could be capable of enjoying the pleasures of a heaven so purchased without heavenly mindedness. When those persons who are apt to expect as much comfort from religion as if their hearts were not full of the world, now and then, in a fit of honesty or low spirits, complain that Christianity does not make them as good and as happy as they were led to expect from that assurance, that "great peace have they who love the Lord," and that "they who

“ wait on him shall want no manner of “ thing that is good ;” when they lament that the paths of religion are not those “ paths of pleasantness” they were led to expect ; their case reminds one of a celebrated physician, who used to say, that the reason why his prescriptions, which commonly cured the poor and the temperate, did so little good among his rich luxurious patients, was, that while he was labouring to remove the disease by medicines, of which they only took drams, grains, and scruples ; they were inflaming it by a multiplicity of injurious aliments, which they swallowed by ounces, pounds, and pints.

These fashionable Christians should be reminded, that there was no half engagement made for them at their baptism ; that they are not partly their own and partly their Redeemer’s. He that is “ bought “ with a price,” is the sole property of the purchaser. Faith does not consist merely in submitting the opinions of the under-

understanding, but the dispositions of the heart: religion is not a sacrifice of sentiments, but of affections: it is not the tribute of fear extorted from a slave, but the voluntary homage of love paid by a child.

Neither does a Christian's piety consist in living in retreat, and railing at the practices of the world, while, perhaps, her heart is full of the spirit of that world at which she is railing: but it consists in *subduing* the spirit of the world and opposing its practices, even while her duty obliges her to live in it.

Nor is the spirit or the love of the world confined to those only who are making a figure in it; nor are its operations bounded by the precincts of the metropolis, nor the limited regions of first-rate rank and splendor. She who inveighs against the luxury and excesses of London, and solaces herself in her own comparative sobriety, because her more circumscribed fortune compels her to take

up with the second-hand pleasures of successive watering-places, which pleasures she pursues with avidity, is governed by the same spirit: and she whose still narrower opportunities flint her to the petty diversions of her provincial town, if she be busied in swelling and enlarging her smaller sphere of vanity and idleness, however she may comfort herself with her own comparative goodness, by railing at the unattainable pleasures of the watering-place, or the still more unapproachable joys of the capital, is governed by the same spirit: for she who is as vain, as dissipated, and as extravagant as actual circumstances admit, would be as vain, as dissipated, and as extravagant as the gayest objects of her invective now are, if she could change places with them. It is not merely by what we do that we can be sure the spirit of the world has no dominion over us, but by fairly considering what we should probably do if more were in our power.

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The worldly Christian, if I may be allowed such a contradiction in terms, must not imagine that she acquits herself of her religious obligations by her mere weekly oblation of prayer. There is no covenant by which communion with God is restricted to an hour or two on the Sunday: she does not acquit herself by setting apart a few particular days in the year for the exercise of a periodical devotion, and then flying back to the world as eagerly as if she were resolved to repay herself with large interest for her short fit of self-denial; the stream of pleasure running with a more rapid current, from having been interrupted by this forced obstruction. And the avidity with which one has seen certain persons of a still less correct character than the class we have been considering, return to a whole year's carnival, after the self-imposed penance of a Passion week, gives a shrewd intimation that they considered the temporary abstraction less as an act of peni-

tence for the past, than as a purchase of indemnity for the future. Such bare-weight protestants prudently condition for retaining the Popish doctrine of indulgences, which they buy, not indeed of the late spiritual court of Rome, but of that secret, self-acquitting judge, which ignorance of its own turpitude, and of the strict requirements of the divine law, has established supreme in the tribunal of every unrenewed heart.

But the practice of self-examination is impeded with one clog, which renders it peculiarly inconvenient to the gay and worldly : for the royal prophet (who was, however, himself as likely as any one to be acquainted with the difficulties peculiar to greatness) has annexed as a concomitant to "communing with our own heart," that we should "*be still.*" Now this clause of the injunction renders the other part of it not a little inconsistent with the present habits of fashionable life, of which *stillness* is clearly not one of the

constituents. It would, however, greatly assist those who do not altogether decline the practice, if they were to establish into a rule the habit of detecting certain suspicious practices, by realizing them, as it were, to their own minds, through the means of drawing them out in detail, and of placing them before their eyes cloathed in language; for there is nothing that so effectually exposes an absurdity which has passed muster for want of such an inquisition, as giving it shape and form. How many things which now work themselves into the habit, and pass current, would then shock us by their palpable inconsistency! Who, for instance, could stand the sight of such a debtor and creditor account as this:—*Item*; So many card-parties, balls, and operas due to me in the following year, for so many manuals and meditations paid beforehand during the last six days in Lent? With how much indignation soever this suggestion may be treated; whatever offence may be taken at such a

combination of the serious and the ludicrous ; however we may revolt at the idea of such a composition with our Maker, when put into so many words ; does not the habitual course of some go near to realize such a statement ?

But “ a Christian’s *race*,” as a venerable Prelate * observes ; “ is not run at so many “ *beats*,” but is a constant course and progress by which we are continually gaining ground upon sin, and approaching nearer to the kingdom of God.

Am I then ridiculing this pious seclusion of contrite sinners ? Am I then jesting at that “ troubled spirit” which God has declared is his “ acceptable sacrifice ?” God forbid ! Such reasonable retirements have been the practice, and continue to be the comfort of some of the sincerest Christians ; and *will* continue to be resorted to as long as Christianity, that is, as long as the world, shall last. It

* Bishop Hopkins.

is well to call off the thoughts, even for a short time, not only from sin and vanity, but even from the lawful pursuits of business, and the laudable concerns of life; and, at times, to annihilate, as it were, the space which divides us from eternity:

'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours,
And ask them what report they bore to heaven,
And how they might have borne more welcome news.

Yet as to those who seek a short annual retreat as a mere form; who dignify with the idea of a religious retirement a week in which it is rather unfashionable to be seen in town; who retire with an unabated resolution to return to the maxims, the pleasures, and the spirit of that world which they do but mechanically renounce; is it not to be feared that such a short secession, which does not even pretend to subdue the principle, but merely suspends the act, may only serve to set a keener edge on the appetite for the pleasures they are quitting? Is it not

to

to be feared that the bow may fly back with redoubled violence from having been unnaturally bent ? that by varnishing over a life of vanity with the transient externals of a formal and temporary piety, they may the more dangerously skin over the troublesome soreness of a tender conscience, by laying

This flattering unction to the soul ?

For is it not among the delusions of a worldly piety to consider Christianity as a thing which cannot, indeed, safely be omitted, but which is to *be got over* ; a certain quantity of which is, as it were, to be taken in the lump, with long intervals between the repetitions ? to consider religion as imposing a set of hardships, which *must* be occasionally encountered in order to procure a peaceable enjoyment of the long respite ? that these severe conditions thus fulfilled, the acquitted Christian having paid the annual demand of a rigorous

rous requisition, she may now lawfully return to her natural state; and the old reckoning being adjusted, she may begin a new score, and receive the reward of her punctual obedience, in the resumed indulgence of those gratifications which she had for a short time laid aside as a hard task to please a hard master: but this task performed, and the master appeased, the mind may discover its natural bent, in joyfully returning to the objects of its real choice? Whereas, is it not clear on the other hand, that if the religious exercises had produced the effect which it is the nature of true religion to produce, the penitent *could* not return with her old genuine alacrity to those habits of the world, from which the pious weekly manuals through which she has been labouring with the punctuality of an almanac as to the day, and the accuracy of a bead-roll as to the number, was intended by the devout authors to rescue their reader?

I am

I am far from insinuating that this literal sequestration ought to be prolonged throughout the year, or that all the days of business are to be made equally days of solemnity and continued meditation. This earth is a place in which a much larger portion of a common Christian's time must be assigned to action than to contemplation. Women of the higher class were not sent into the world to shun society, but to improve it. They were not designed for the cold and visionary virtues of solitudes and monasteries, but for the amiable, and endearing, and useful offices of social life: they are of a religion which does not impose idle austerities, but enjoins active duties; a religion of which the most benevolent actions require to be sanctified by the purest motives; a religion which does not condemn its followers to the comparatively easy task of seclusion from the world, but assigns them the more difficult province of living uncorrupted in it; a religion which, while it forbids them to
“ follow

“ follow a multitude to do *evil*,” includes in that prohibition the sin of doing *nothing*, and which moreover enjoins them to be followers of him “ who went about doing “ *good*.”

But may we not reasonably contend, that though the same sequestration is not required, yet that the same *spirit* and *temper* which one hopes is thought necessary by all during the occasional humiliation, must, by every real Christian, be extended throughout all the periods of the year? And when that is really the case, when once the spirit of religion shall indeed govern the heart, it will not only animate her religious actions and employments, but will gradually extend itself to the chastising her conversation, will discipline her thoughts, influence her common business, and sanctify her very pleasures.

But it should seem that many, who entertain a *general* notion of Christian duty, do not consider it as of universal and unremitting obligation, but rather as a
duty

duty binding at times on all, and always on some. To the attention of such we would recommend that very explicit address of our Lord on the subject of self-denial, the temper directly opposed to a worldly spirit: "And he said unto them, "ALL, if any man will come after me, "let him deny himself, and take up his "cross DAILY." Those who think self-denial not of *universal* obligation, will observe the word *all*, and those who think the obligation not *constant* will attend to the term *daily*. These two little words cut up by the root all the occasional religious observances grafted on a worldly life; all transient, periodical, and temporary acts of piety, which some would commute for habitual thoughtlessness.

There is indeed scarcely a more pitiable being than one who, instead of making her religion the informing principle of all she does, has only just enough to keep her in continual fear; who drudges through her stunted exercises with a superstitious kind
of

of terror, while her general life shows that the love of holiness is not the governing principle in her heart; who seems to suffer all the pains and penalties of Christianity, but is a stranger to "that liberty" wherewith Christ has made us free."

Let it not be thought a ludicrous invention, if the author hazard the producing a real illustration of these remarks, in the instance of a lady of this stamp, who, returning from church on a very cold day, and remarking with a good deal of self-complacency how much she had suffered in the performance of her duty, comforted herself with emphatically adding, "that she" hoped however it would *answer*."

But there is no permanent comfort in any religion, short of that by which the diligent Christian strives that all his actions shall have the love of God for their motive, and the glory of God, as well as his own salvation, for their end; while to go about to balance one's good and bad actions one against the other, and to take
comfort

comfort in the occasional predominance of the former, while the cultivation of the principle from which they should spring is neglected, is not the road to all those peaceful fruits of the spirit to which true Christianity conducts the humble and penitent believer.

But I am aware that a better cast of characters than those we have been contemplating; that even the amiable and the well-disposed, who, while they want courage to resist what they have too much principle to think right, and too much sense to justify, will yet plead for the *palliating* system, and accuse these remarks of unnecessary rigour. They will declare
“that really they are as religious as they
“can be; they wish they were better;
“they have little satisfaction in the life
“they are leading, yet they cannot break
“with the world; they cannot fly in the
“face of custom; it does not become
“individuals like them to oppose the torrent of fashion.” Beings so interesting, abounding with engaging qualities; who
not

not only feel the beauty of goodness, but reverence the truths of Christianity, and are awfully looking for a general judgment, one is grieved to hear lament "that they only do as others do," when they are perhaps themselves of such rank and importance that if they would begin to do right, others would be brought to do as they did. One is grieved to hear them indolently assert, that "they wish it were otherwise," when they possess the power to *make* it otherwise, by setting an example which they know would be followed. One is sorry to hear them content themselves with declaring, that "they have not the courage to be singular," when they must feel, by seeing the influence of their example in worse things, that there would be no such great singularity in piety itself, if once *they* became sincerely pious. Besides, this diffidence does not break out on other occasions. They do not blush to be quoted as the opposers of an old mode or the inventors of a new

one. Nor are they equally backward in being the first to appear in a strange fashion, such an one as often excites wonder, and sometimes even offends against delicacy. Let not then diffidence be pleaded as an excuse only on occasions wherein courage would be virtue.

Will it be thought too harsh a question if we venture to ask these gentle characters who are thus intrenching themselves in the imaginary safety of surrounding multitudes, and who say "we only do as others do," whether they are willing to run the tremendous risk of consequences, and *to fare as others fare*?

But while these plead the authority of Fashion as a sufficient reason for their conformity to the world, one who has spoken with a paramount authority has positively said, "Be ye *not* conformed to the world." Nay, it is urged as the very badge and distinction by which the character opposite to the Christian is to be marked, "that the *friend-*

“friendship of the world is *enmity* with
“God.”

Temptation to conform to the world was never perhaps more irresistible than in the days which immediately preceded the Deluge. And no man could ever have pleaded the *fashion* in order to justify a criminal assimilation with the reigning manners, with more propriety than the Patriarch Noah. He had the two grand and contending objects of terror to encounter which we have; the fear of ridicule, and the fear of destruction; the dread of sin, and the dread of singularity. Our cause of alarm is at least equally pressing with his; for it does not appear, even while he was actually obeying the Divine command in providing the means of his future safety, that he *saw* any actual symptoms of the impending ruin. So that in one sense *he* might have truly pleaded as an excuse for slackness of preparation, “that all things continued as “they were from the beginning;” while

many of us, though the storm is begun, never think of providing the refuge: though we have had a fuller revelation, have seen Scripture illustrated, prophecy fulfilling, with every awful circumstance that can either quicken the most sluggish remissness, or confirm the feeblest faith.

Besides, the Patriarch's plea for following the fashion was stronger than you can produce. While you must see that many are going wrong, he saw that none were going right. "All flesh had corrupted his way before God;" whilst, blessed be God! you have still instances enough of piety to keep you in countenance. While you lament that *the world* seduces you, (for every one has a little world of his own,) your world perhaps is only a petty neighbourhood, a few streets and squares; but the Patriarch had really the contagion of a whole united world to resist; he had literally the example of the whole face of the earth to oppose. The "fear of man" also would then have been

been a more pardonable fault, when the lives of the same individuals who were likely to excite respect or fear was prolonged many ages, than it can be in the short period now assigned to human life. How lamentable then that opinion should operate so powerfully when it is but the breath of a being so frail and so short-lived,

That, he doth cease to be,
Ere one can say he is.

You who find it so difficult to withstand the individual allurements of one modish acquaintance, would if you had been in the Patriarch's case have concluded the struggle to be quite ineffectual, and sunk under the supposed fruitlessness of resistance. "Myself," would you not have said? "or
"at most my little family of eight persons
"can never hope to stop this torrent
"of corruption; I lament the fruitlessness
"of opposition; I deplore the necessity of
"conformity with the prevailing system:
"but it would be a foolish presumption

“to hope that *one* family can effect a “change in the state of the world.”

In your own case, however, it is not certain to how wide an extent the hearty union of even fewer persons in such a cause might reach: at least is it nothing to do what the Patriarch did? was it nothing to preserve himself from the general destruction? was it nothing to deliver his own soul? was it nothing to rescue the souls of his whole family?

A wise man will never differ from the world in trifles. It is certainly a mark of a sound judgment to comply with it whenever we safely can; such compliance strengthens our influence by reserving to ourselves the greater weight of authority on those occasions, when our conscience obliges us to differ. Those who are prudent will cheerfully conform to all its innocent usages; but those who are Christians will be scrupulous in defining which are really innocent previous to their conformity to them. Not what the world, but what

what the Gospel calls innocent will be found at the grand scrutiny to have been really so. A discreet Christian will take due pains to be convinced he is right before he will presume to be singular: but from the instant he is persuaded that the Gospel is true, and the world of course wrong, he will no longer risk his safety by following multitudes, or his soul by staking it on human opinion. All our most dangerous mistakes arise from our not constantly referring our practice to the standard of scripture, instead of the mutable standard of human opinion, by which it is impossible to fix the real value of characters. For this latter standard in some cases determines those to be good who do not run all the lengths in which the notoriously bad allow themselves. The Gospel has an universal, the world has a local standard of goodness: in certain societies certain vices alone are dishonourable, such as covetousness and cowardice; while those sins of which our Sa-

viour

viour has said, that they which commit them "shall not inherit the kingdom of "God," detract nothing from the respect some persons receive. Nay, those very characters whom the Almighty has expressly declared "He will judge*," are received, are admired, are caressed, in that which calls itself the best company.

But to weigh our actions by one standard now, when we know they will be judged by another hereafter, would be reckoned the height of absurdity in any transactions but those which involve the interests of eternity. "How readest "thou?" is a more specific direction than any comparative view of our own habits with the habits of others: and at the final bar it will be of little avail that our actions have risen above those of bad men, if our views and principles shall be found to have been in opposition to the Gospel of Christ.

* Hebrews, xiii. 4.

Nor is *their* practice more commendable, who are ever on the watch to pick out the worst actions of good men, by way of justifying their own conduct on the comparison. The faults of the best men, "for there is not a just man upon the earth who sinneth not," can in no wise justify the errors of the worst; and it is not invariably the example of even good men that we must take for our unerring rule of conduct: nor is it by a single action that either they or we shall be judged; for in that case who could be saved? but it is by the general prevalence of right principles and good habits; by the predominance of holiness and righteousness, and temperance in the life, and by the power of humility, faith and love in the heart.

CHAP. XIX.

On the leading doctrines of Christianity.—

The corruption of human nature.—The doctrine of redemption.—The necessity of a change of heart, and of the divine influences to produce that change.—With a sketch of the Christian character.

THE author having in this little work taken a view of the false notions often imbibed in early life from a bad education, and of their pernicious effects; and having attempted to point out the respective remedies to these; she would now draw all that has been said to a point, and declare plainly what she humbly conceives to be the source whence all these false notions, and this wrong conduct really proceed: The prophet Jeremiah shall answer: “It is because they have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and have hewn
“out

“out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” It is an ignorance past belief of what Christianity really is: the remedy, therefore, and the only remedy that can be applied with any prospect of success, is RELIGION, and by Religion she would be understood to mean the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It has been before hinted, that Religion should be taught at an early period of life; that children should be *brought up* “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The *manner* in which they should be taught has likewise with great plainness been suggested; that it should be done in so lively and familiar a manner as to make Religion amiable, and her ways to appear, what they really are, “ways of pleasantness.” And a slight sketch has been given of the genius of Christianity, by which her amiableness would more clearly appear. But this, being a subject of such vast importance, compared with which every other subject sinks into nothing; it seems not sufficient to
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speak on the doctrines and duties of Christianity in *detached* parts, but it is of importance to point out, though in a brief manner, the mutual dependance of one doctrine upon another, and the influence which these doctrines have upon the heart and life, so that the *duties* of Christianity may be seen to grow out of its *doctrines*: by which it will appear that Christian virtue differs *essentially* from Pagan: it is of a quite different kind: the plant itself is different, it comes from a different root, and grows in a different soil.

It will be seen how the humbling doctrine of the corruption of human nature, which has followed from the corruption of our first parents, makes way for the bright display of redeeming love. How from the abasing thought that "we are all as sheep going astray, every one in his own way:" that none *can* return to the shepherd of our souls, "except the Father draw him:" that "the natural man *cannot* receive the things
" of

“ of the spirit, because they are spiritually “ discerned:” how from this humiliating view of the *helplessness*, as well as the *corruption* of human nature, we are to turn to that animating doctrine, the offer of *divine assistance*. So that, though human nature will appear from this view in a deeply degraded state, and consequently *all* have cause for humility, yet not one has cause for despair: the disease indeed is dreadful, but a physician is at hand, both able and willing to save us: though we are naturally “ without “ strength, our help is laid upon one that “ is mighty.”

We should observe then, that the doctrines of our Saviour are, if I may so speak, like his coat, all woven into one piece. We should get such a view of their reciprocal dependence as to be persuaded that without a deep sense of our own corruptions we can never seriously believe in a Saviour, because the substantial and acceptable belief in Him must
always

always arise from the conviction of our want of Him; that without a firm persuasion that the Holy Spirit can alone restore our fallen nature, repair the ruins of sin, and renew the image of God upon the heart, we never shall be brought to serious, humble prayer for repentance and restoration; and that, without this repentance there is no salvation: for though Christ has died for us, and consequently to Him alone we must look as a Saviour, yet he has himself declared that he will save none but true penitents.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN COR-
RUPTION.

To come now to a more particular statement of these doctrines.—When an important edifice is about to be erected, a wise builder will dig deep, and look well to the foundations, knowing that without this the fabric will not be likely to stand. The foundation of the Christian religion,
out

out of which the whole structure may be said to arise, appears to be the doctrine of the fall of man from his original state of righteousness; and of the corruption and helplessness of human nature, which are the consequences of this fall, and which is the natural state of every one born into the world. To this doctrine it is important to conciliate the minds, more especially of young persons, who are peculiarly disposed to turn away from it as a morose, unamiable, and gloomy idea: they are apt to accuse those who are more strict and serious, of unnecessary severity, and to suspect them of thinking unjustly ill of mankind. Some of the reasons which prejudice the inexperienced against the doctrine in question appear to be the following.

Young persons themselves have seen little of the world. In pleasurable society the world puts on its most amiable appearance; and that softness and urbanity which prevail, particularly amongst persons of fashion, are liable to be mistaken for

for more than they are really worth. The opposition to this doctrine in the young, arises partly from ingenuousness of heart, partly from a habit of indulging themselves in favourable suppositions respecting the world, rather than of pursuing truth, which is always the grand thing to be pursued; and partly from the popularity of the tenet, *that every body is so wonderfully good!*

This error in youth has however a still deeper foundation, which is their not having a right standard of moral good and evil, in consequence of their already partaking of the very corruption which is spoken of; they are therefore apt to have no very strict sense of duty, or of the necessity of a right and religious motive to every act.

Moreover, young people usually do not know themselves. Not having yet been much exposed to temptation, owing to the prudent restraints in which they have been kept, they little suspect to what lengths in vice they themselves are liable to be transported,

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transported, nor how far others actually are carried who are set free from those restraints.

Having laid down these as some of the causes of error on this point, I proceed to observe on what strong grounds the doctrine itself stands.

Profane history abundantly confirms this truth : the history of the world being in fact little else than the history of the crimes of the human race. Even though the annals of remote ages lie so involved in obscurity, that some degree of uncertainty attaches itself to many of the events recorded, yet this one melancholy truth is always clear, that most of the miseries which have been brought upon mankind, have proceeded from this general depravity.

The world we now live in furnishes abundant proof of this truth. In a world formed on the deceitful theory of those who assert the innocence and dignity of man, almost all the professions, since they would have been rendered useless by such a state

of innocence, would not have existed. Without sin we may nearly presume there would have been no sickness; so that every medical professor is a standing evidence of this sad truth. Sin not only brought sickness but death into the world; consequently every funeral presents a more irrefragable argument than a thousand sermons. Had man persevered in his original integrity, there could have been no litigation, for there would be no contests about property in a world where none would be inclined to attack it. Professors of law, therefore, from the attorney who prosecutes for a trespass, to the pleader who defends a criminal, or the judge who condemns him, loudly confirm the doctrine. Every victory by sea or land should teach us to rejoice with humiliation, for conquest itself brings a terrible, though splendid attestation to the truth of the fall of man.

Even those who deny the doctrine, act universally more or less on the principle. Why do we all secure our houses with bolts,

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and

and bars, and locks? Do we take these steps to defend our lives or property from any *particular* fear? from any suspicion of this neighbour, or that servant, or the other invader? No:—It is from a practical conviction of the common depravity; from a constant, pervading, but undefined dread of impending evil arising from the sense of general corruption. Are not prisons built, and laws enacted, on the same practical principle?

But not to descend to the more degraded part of our species. Why in the fairest transaction of business is nothing executed without bonds, receipts, and notes of hand? Why does not a perfect confidence in the *dignity of human nature* abolish all these securities; if not between enemies, or people indifferent to each other, yet at least between friends and kindred, and the most honourable connections? Why, but because of that universal suspicion between man and man, which, by all we see, and hear, and feel,

is become interwoven with our very make? Though we do not entertain any *individual* suspicion, nay, though we have the strongest *personal* confidence, yet the acknowledged principle of conduct has this doctrine for its basis. "I will take a receipt, though it were from my brother," is the established voice of mankind; or, as I have heard it more artfully put, by a fallacy of which the very disguise discovers the principle, "Think every man honest, but deal with him as if you knew him to be otherwise." And as, in a state of innocence, the beasts, it is presumed, would not have bled for the sustenance of man, so their parchments would not have been wanted as instruments of his security against his fellow man*.

* Bishop Butler distinctly declares this truth to be evident, from experience as well as Revelation, "that this world exhibits an idea of a RUIN;" and he will hazard much who ventures to assert that Butler defended Christianity upon principles unconsistant to *reason, philosophy, or sound experience.*

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But the grand arguments for this doctrine must be drawn from the Holy Scriptures: and these, besides implying it almost continually, expressly assert it; and that in instances too numerous to be all of them brought forward here. Of these may I be allowed to produce a few? “God saw that the wickedness of man was great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually:”—“God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for *all flesh* had corrupted his way upon the earth. And it *repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it *grieved him at his heart* *.” This is a picture of mankind *before* the flood; and the doctrine receives additional confirmation in Scripture, when it speaks of the times which followed after that tremendous judgment had taken place. The Psalms abound in lamentations on the de-

* Genesis, vi.

pravity of man. "They are *all* gone
"aside; there is *none* that doeth good, no
"not *one*."—"In *thy* fight," says David,
addressing the Most High, "shall *no man*
"*living* be justified." Job, in his usual
lofty strain of interrogation, asks, "What
"is man that he should be clean, and he
"that is born of a woman that he should
"be righteous? Behold the heavens are
"not clean in *His* sight, how much more
"abominable and filthy is man, who
"drinketh iniquity like water?"

Nor do the Scriptures speak of this corruption as arising only from occasional temptation, or from mere extrinsic causes. The wise man tells us, that "foolishness is
"bound up in the *heart of a child*:" the prophet Jeremiah assures us, "the *heart* is
"deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:" and David plainly states the doctrine: "Behold, I was shapen in
"iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Can language be more explicit?

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The New Testament corroborates the Old. Our Lord's reproof of Peter seems to take the doctrine for granted: "Thou
"favourest not the things that be of God
"but those that be of *man*;" clearly intimating, that the *ways of man* are opposite to the ways of God. And our Saviour, in that affecting discourse to his disciples, observes to them that, as they were by his grace made *different* from others, therefore they must expect to be hated by those who were so unlike them. And it should be particularly observed, as another proof that the world is wicked, that our Lord considered "*the world*" as opposed to him and to his disciples. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own;
"but I have chosen you out of the world,
"therefore the world hateth you*." St. John, writing to his Christian church, states the same truth: "We know that
"we are of God, and the whole world
"lieth in wickedness."

* John, xv. 19.

Man in his natural and unbelieving state is likewise represented as in a state of *guilt*, and under the displeasure of Almighty God. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God *abideth* on him."

Here, however, if it be objected, that the heathen who never heard of the Gospel will not assuredly be judged by it; the Saviour's answer to such curious inquirers concerning the state of others is, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." It is enough for us to believe that God will judge all men according to their opportunities. But with whatever mercy he may judge those who, living in a land of darkness, are without knowledge of his revealed law, *our* business is not with them, but with ourselves. It is *our* business to consider what mercy he will extend to those who, living in a Christian country, abounding with means and ordinances, where the Gospel is preached in its purity;

urity; it is *our* business to inquire how he will deal with those who shut their eyes to its beams, who close their ears to its truths. For an unbeliever, who has passed his life in the meridian of Scripture light, or for an outward but unfruitful professor of Christianity, I know not what hope the Gospel holds out.

The natural state of man is again thus described: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; (awful thought!) for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be. So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." What the Apostle means *by being in the flesh*, is evident by what follows; for speaking of those whose hearts were changed by Divine grace, he says, "But ye are *not* in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you:" that is, you are now not in your natural state: the change that has passed on your minds by the influence of the Spirit of God is so great, that your state may properly be called

called being in the spirit. It may be further observed that the same Apostle, writing to the churches of Galatia, tells them, that the natural corruption of the human heart is continually opposing the spirit of holiness which influences the regenerate. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other:" which passage by the way, at the same time that it proves the corruption of the heart, proves the necessity of divine influences. And the Apostle, with respect to himself, freely confesses and deeply laments the workings of this corrupt principle: "O wretched man that I am!" &c.

It has been objected by some who have opposed this doctrine, that the same Scriptures which speak of mankind as being *sinners*, speak of some as being *righteous*; and hence they would argue, that though this depravity of human nature may be *general*, yet it cannot be *universal*. This objection, when examined, serves only,

only, like all other objections against the truth, to establish that which it was intended to destroy. For what do the Scriptures assert respecting the righteous? That there are some whose principles, views, and conduct, are so different from the rest of the world, and from what theirs themselves once were, that these persons are honoured with the peculiar title of the "sons of God." But no where do the Scriptures assert that even these are *sinless*; on the contrary their *faults* are frequently mentioned; and persons of this class are moreover represented as those on whom a great *change* has past: as having been formerly "dead in trespasses and sins;" but as "being now *called out* of darkness into "light;" as "*translated* into the kingdom "of God's dear Son;" as "having *passed* "from death to life." And St. Paul put this matter past all doubt, by expressly asserting, that "*they were all* by nature "the children of wrath even as others."

It

It might be well to ask certain persons who oppose the doctrine in question, and who also seem to talk as if they thought there were many sinless people in the world, how they expect that such sinless people will be saved? (though indeed to talk of an *innocent* person being *saved* is a palpable contradiction in terms; it is talking of curing a man already in health.) "Undoubtedly," such will say, "they will be received into those abodes of bliss prepared for the righteous."—But be it remembered, there is but *one way* to these blissful abodes, and that is, through Jesus Christ: "For there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved." If we ask whom did Christ come to save? the Scripture directly answers, "He came into the world to save *sinners*:"—"His name was called Jesus, because he came to save his people *from their sins*." When St. John was favoured with a heavenly vision, he tells us, that he beheld "a great multitude which no man
" could

“ could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes :” that one of the heavenly inhabitants informed him who they were : “ These are they who come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his Temple ; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them ; they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat ; for the Lamb which is in the midst of them shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

• We may gather from this description what these glorious and happy beings once were : they were *sinful* creatures : their robes were not *spotless* : “ They had washed
“ them,

“ them, and made them white in the
“ blood of the Lamb.” They are likewise
generally represented as having been once
a *suffering* people : they came out of great
tribulation. They are described as having
overcome the great tempter of mankind,
“ by the blood of the Lamb* :” as they
who “ follow the Lamb wheresoever he
“ goeth :” as “ redeemed from among
“ men†.” And their *employment* in the re-
gions of bliss is a farther confirmation of
the doctrine of which we are treating.
“ The great multitude,” &c. &c. we are
told, “ stood and cried with a loud voice,
“ Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon
“ the throne, and to the Lamb !” Here we
see they ascribe their salvation to Christ,
and consequently their present happiness to
his atoning blood. And in another of their
celestial anthems, they say in like manner :
“ Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us
“ to God by Thy blood, out of every kin-

* Rev. xii. 14.

† Rev. xiv. 4.

“ dred,

“dred, and tongue, and people, and
“nation *.”

By all this it is evident, that men of any other description than *redeemed sinners* must gain admittance to heaven some other way than that which the Scriptures point out; and also that when they shall arrive there, so different will be their employment, that they must have an anthem peculiar to themselves.

Nothing is more adapted to “the casting down of high imaginations,” and to promote humility, than this reflection, that heaven is always in Scripture pointed out not as the reward of the innocent, but as the hope of the penitent. This, while it is calculated to “exclude boasting,” the temper the most opposite to the Gospel, is yet the most suited to afford comfort; for were heaven promised as the reward of innocence, who could attain to it? but being, as it is, the promised portion of faith and repentance, who is compelled to miss it?

* Rev. v. 9.

It

It is urged that the belief of this doctrine of our corruption produces many ill effects, and therefore it should be discouraged.— That it does *not* produce those ill effects, when not misunderstood or partially represented, we shall attempt to show : at the same time let it be observed, if it be really *true* we must not reject it on account of any of these supposed ill-consequences. Truth may often be attended with disagreeable effects, but if it be truth it must still be pursued. If, for instance, treason should exist in a country, every one knows the disagreeable effects which will follow such a conviction ; but our *not believing* such treason to exist, will not prevent such effect following it ; on the contrary, our believing it may prevent the consequences.

It is objected, that this doctrine debases human nature, and that finding fault with the building is only another way of finding fault with the architect. To the first part of this objection it may be remarked, that if man be really a corrupt, fallen

fallen being, it is proper to represent him as such: the fault then lies in the *man*, and not in the *doctrine*, which only states the *truth*. As to the inference which is supposed to follow, namely, that it throws the fault upon the Creator, it proceeds upon the false supposition that man's present corrupt state is the state in which he was originally created: and also that God has left him unavoidably to perish in it, whereas although "in Adam we die," "in Christ we shall be made alive."

It is likewise objected, that as this doctrine must give us such a bad opinion of mankind, it must consequently produce ill-will, hatred, and suspicion. But it should be remembered, that it gives us no worse an opinion of other men than it gives us of ourselves; such views of ourselves have a very salutary effect, inasmuch as they have a tendency to produce *humility*; and humility is not likely to produce ill-will to others, "for only "from pride cometh contention;" and as

to the views it gives us of mankind, it represents us as *fellow-sufferers*; and surely the consideration that we are *companions in misery* is not calculated to produce hatred. The truth is, these effects have actually followed from a false and partial view of the subject.

Old persons who have seen much of the world, and who have little religion, are apt to be strong in their belief of man's actual corruption; but not taking it up on Christian grounds, this belief in them shows itself in a narrow and malignant temper; in uncharitable judgment, and harsh opinions.

Suspicion and hatred also are the uses to which Rochefaucault and the other French philosophers have converted this doctrine: their acute minds intuitively found the corruption of man, and they saw it without its concomitant and correcting doctrine: they allowed man to be a depraved creature, but disallowed his high original: they found him in a low state,

state, but did not conceive of him as having fallen from a better. They represent him rather as a brute than an apostate; not taking into the account that his present degraded nature and depraved faculties are not his original state: that he is not such as he came out of the hands of his Creator, but such as he has been made by sin. Nor do they know that he has not even now lost all remains of his primitive dignity, but is still capable of a restoration more glorious

Than is dreamt of in their philosophy.

Perhaps, too, they know from what they *feel*, all the *evil* to which man is inclined; but they do not know, for they have not felt, all the good of which he is capable by the superinduction of the divine principle: thus they asperse human nature instead of representing it fairly, and in so doing it is *they* who calumniate the great Creator.

The doctrine of corruption is likewise accused of being a gloomy, discouraging doctrine, and an enemy to joy and comfort. Now suppose this objection true in its fullest extent. Is it any way unreasonable that a being fallen into a state of sin, under the displeasure of Almighty God, should feel *seriously alarmed* at being in such a state? Is the condemned criminal blamed because he is not *merry*? And would it be esteemed a kind action to persuade him that he is *not* condemned in order to make him so?

But this charge is *not* true in the sense intended by those who bring it forward. Those who believe this doctrine are *not* the most gloomy people. When, indeed, any one by the influence of the Holy Spirit is brought to view his state as it really is, a state of guilt and danger, it is natural that *fear* should be excited in his mind, but it is such a fear as impels him "to flee from the wrath to come;" it is such a fear as moved Noah to "pre-
pare

“pare an ark to the saving of his house.” Such an one will likewise feel *sorrow*; not however “the sorrow of the world which worketh death,” but that godly sorrow which worketh repentance: such an one is in a proper state to receive the glorious doctrine we are next about to contemplate; namely,

THAT GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD,
THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN
SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVED ON
HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE
EVERLASTING LIFE.

Of this doctrine it is of the last importance to form just views, for as it is the only doctrine which can keep the humble penitent from despair, so, on the other hand, great care must be taken that false views of it do not lead us to presumption. In order to understand it rightly, we must not fill our minds with our own reason-

ings upon it, which is the way in which some good people have been misled, but we must betake ourselves to the Scriptures, wherein we shall find the doctrine stated so plainly as to shew that the mistakes have not arisen from a want of clearness in the scriptures, but from a desire to make it bend to some favourite notions. While it has been rejected by some, it has been so mutilated by others, as hardly to retain any resemblance to the Scripture doctrine of redemption. We are told in the beautiful passage last quoted *its source*,—the love of God to a lost world:—*who* the Redeemer was—the Son of God:—the *end* for which this plan was formed and executed.—“That whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” There is nothing surely in all this to promote gloominess. If kindness and mercy have a tendency to win and warm the heart, here is every incentive to joy and cheerfulness. Christianity looks kindly towards all, and with peculiar tenderness on such, as, from humbling views

of their own unworthiness, might be led to fancy themselves excluded:—we are expressly told, that “Christ died for *all* :”—that “he tasted death for *every* man :”—that “he died for the sins of the *whole world*.” Accordingly he has commanded that his Gospel should be “preached to *every creature* ;” which is in effect declaring that not a single human being is excluded: for to preach the Gospel is to offer a Saviour:—and the Saviour in the plainest language offers himself to all,—declaring to “all the ends of the earth”—“look unto me and be saved.” It is therefore an undeniable truth, that no one will perish for *want* of a Saviour, but for *rejecting* him.

But to suppose that because Christ has *died* for the “sins of the whole world,” the whole world will therefore be *saved*, is a most fatal mistake: in the same book which tells us that “Christ died for all,” we have likewise this awful admonition: “Strait is

“the gate, and *few* there be that find it;” which, whether it be understood of the immediate reception of the Gospel, or of the final use which was too likely to be made of it, gives no encouragement to hope that *all* will entitle themselves to its reward. And whilst it declares that “there is no other name whereby we may be saved but the name of Jesus;” it likewise declares

THAT “WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN
“SHALL SEE THE LORD.”

It is much to be feared that some, in their zeal to defend the Gospel doctrines of free grace, have materially injured the Gospel doctrine of holiness: stating, that Christ has done all in such a sense, as that there is nothing left for us to do.—But do the Scriptures hold out this language? —“Come, for all things are ready,” is the Gospel call; in which we may observe, that at the same time that it tells us that
“all

"all things are ready," it nevertheless tells us that we must "*come*." Food being *provided* for us will not benefit us except we *partake* of it.—It will not avail us that "Christ our passover is *sacrificed*" "for us," unless "we *keep* the feast."—We must *make use* of "the fountain which "is opened," if we would be *purified*. "All, indeed, who are *athirst* are invited "to take of the waters of life freely;" but if we feel no "*thirst*;" if we do not *drink*, their saving qualities are of no avail.

It is the more necessary to insist on this in the present day, as there is a worldly and fashionable, as well as a low and sectarian Antinomianism: there lamentably prevails in the world an unwarranted assurance of Salvation, founded on a slight, vague, and general confidence in what Christ has done and suffered for us, as if the great object of his doing and suffering had been to emancipate *us* from all obligations to duty and obedience; and as if,
because

because he died for sinners, we might therefore safely and comfortably go on to live in sin, contenting ourselves with now and then a transient, formal, and unmeaning avowal of our unworthiness, our obligation, and the all-sufficiency of *his* atonement. By this quit-rent, of which all the cost consists in the acknowledgment, the sensual, the worldly, and the vain, hope to find a refuge in heaven, when driven from the enjoyments of this world. But this indolent Christianity is no where taught in the Bible. The faith inculcated *there* is not a lazy, professional faith, but that faith which “produceth obedience,” that faith which “worketh by love,” that faith of which the practical language is—“*Strive* that you may enter in;”—“So *run* that you may obtain;”—“So *fight* that you may lay hold on eternal life:”—that faith which directs us “not to be weary in well doing;”—which says, “*Work* out your own salvation:”—never forgetting

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at the same time "that it is God which
 "worketh in us both to will and to do."—
 Are those rich supplies of grace which
 the Gospel offers; are those abundant
 aids of the spirit which it promises, ten-
 dered to the *slothful*?—No.—God will
 have all his gifts improved. Grace must
 be used, or it will be withdrawn. The
 Almighty thinks it not derogatory to his
 free grace to declare, that "those only
 "who do his commandments have right
 "to the tree of life." And the Scriptures
 represent it as not derogatory to the *sacri-
 fice* of Christ, to follow his *example* in well-
 doing. The only caution is, that we
 must not work in our own strength, nor
 bring in our contribution of works as if
 in aid of the supposed deficiency of His
 merits.

For we must not in our *over-caution*
 fancy, that because Christ has "redeemed
 "us from the curse of the law," we are
 therefore without a law. In acknowledg-
 ing Christ as a deliverer, we must not for-
 get

get that he is a law-giver too, and that we are expressly commanded "to fulfil the law of Christ:" if then we wish to know what his laws are, we must "search the Scriptures," especially the New Testament; there we shall find him declaring

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF A CHANGE
OF HEART AND LIFE;

Our Saviour says, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:" that it is not a mere acknowledging His authority, calling him "Lord, Lord," that will avail any thing, except we do what He commands: that any thing short of this is like a man building his house upon the sands, which, when the storms come on, will certainly fall. In like manner the Apostles are continually enforcing the necessity of this change, which they describe under the various names of "the new man*;"—"the new crea-

* Ephesians, iv. 24.

"ture;"

“ture* ;”—“ a transformation into the
 “ image of God † ;”—“ a participation
 “ of the divine nature ‡.” Nor is this
 change represented as consisting merely
 in a change of religious opinions ; nor in
 exchanging gross sins for those which are
 more sober and reputable ; nor in re-
 nouncing the sins of youth, and assuming
 those of a quieter period of life ; nor
 in leaving off evil practices because men
 are grown tired of them, or find they
 injure their credit, health, or fortune ; nor
 does it consist in inoffensiveness and obliging
 manners, nor indeed in any merely *outward*
 reformation.

But the change consists in “ being
 “ renewed in the spirit of our minds ;”
 in being “ conformed to the image of the
 “ Son of God ;” in being “ called out of
 “ darkness into His marvellous light.”
 And the whole of this great change, its
 beginning, progress, and final accomplish-

* Galatians, vi. 15. † 2 Corinthians, xii.

‡ 2 Peter, i. 4.

ment,

ment, for it is represented as a gradual change, is ascribed to

THE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We are perpetually reminded of our utter inability to help ourselves, that we may set the higher value on those gracious aids which are held out to us. We are taught that "we are not sufficient to *think* any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." And when we are told that "if we live after the flesh, we shall die," we are at the same time reminded, that it is "through the *spirit* that we must mortify the deeds of the body." We are likewise cautioned that we "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God:" that we "quench not the Spirit." By all which expressions, and many others of like import, we are taught that, while we are to ascribe with humble gratitude every good thought, word, and work, to the influence
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of the Holy Spirit, we are not to look on such influences as superseding our own exertions: and it is plain that we *may* reject the gracious offers of assistance, since otherwise there would be no occasion to caution us *not* to do it. The Scriptures have illustrated this in terms which are familiar indeed, but which are therefore only the more condescending and endearing. "Behold, I stand at the door" and knock. If any man hear my voice "and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Observe, it is not said if any man will not listen to me, I will force open the door. But if we refuse admittance to such a guest, we must abide by the consequences.

This sublime doctrine of divine assistance is the more to be prized, not only on account of our own helplessness, but from the additional consideration of the powerful adversary with whom the Christian has to contend: an article of our faith by the way,

way, which is growing into general disrepute among the politer classes of society. Nay, there is a kind of ridicule attached to the very suggestion of the subject, as if it were exploded on full proof of its being an absolute absurdity, utterly repugnant to the liberal spirit of an enlightened age. And it requires no small neatness of expression and periphrastic ingenuity to get the very mention tolerated.—*I mean the Scripture doctrine of the existence and power of our great spiritual enemy.* It is considered by the fashionable sceptic as a vulgar invention, which ought to be banished with the belief in dreams, and ghosts, and witchcraft:—by the fashionable Christian, as an ingenious allegory, but not as a literal truth; and by almost all, as a doctrine which, when it happens to be introduced at Church, has at least nothing to do with the *pews*, but is by common consent made over to the *aisles*, if indeed it must be retained at all.

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May I, with great humility and respect, presume to suggest to our divines that they would do well not to lend their countenance to these modish curtailments of the Christian faith; nor to shun the introduction of this doctrine when it consists with their subject to bring it forward. A truth which is seldom brought before the eye, imperceptibly grows less and less important; and if it be an unpleasing truth, we grow more and more reconciled to its absence, till at length its intrusion becomes offensive, and we learn in the end to renounce what we at first only neglected. Because some coarse and ranting enthusiasts have been fond of using tremendous terms with a violence and frequency, which might make it seem to be a gratification to them to denounce judgments and anticipate torments, can *their* coarseness or vulgarity make a true doctrine false, or an important one trifling? If such preachers have given offence by their uncouth manner of managing an

awful doctrine, that indeed furnishes a caution to treat the subject more discreetly, but it is no just reason for avoiding the doctrine. For to keep a truth out of sight because it has been absurdly handled or ill-defended, might in time be assigned as a reason for keeping back, one by one, every doctrine of our holy Church; for which of them has not had imprudent advocates or weak champions?

Be it remembered that the doctrine in question is not only interwoven by allusion, implication, or direct assertion throughout the whole Scripture, but that it stands prominently personified at the opening of the New as well as the Old Testament. The devil's temptation of our Lord, in which he is not represented figuratively, but visibly and palpably, stands on the same ground of authority with other events which are received without repugnance. And it may not be an un-
 useful observation to remark, that the very refusing to believe in an evil spirit, may be
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considered as one of his own suggestions ; for there is not a more dangerous illusion than to believe ourselves out of the reach of illusions, nor a more alarming temptation than to fancy that we are not liable to be tempted.

But the dark cloud raised by this doctrine will be dispelled by the cheering certainty that our blessed Saviour having himself " been tempted like as we are, is " able to deliver those who are tempted."

But to return.—From this imperfect sketch we may see how suitable the religion of Christ is to fallen man ! How exactly it meets every want ! No one needs now perish because he is a sinner, provided he be willing to forsake his sins ; for " Jesus " Christ came into the world to save sinners ;" and " He is now exalted to be " a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sin." Which passage, be it observed, may be considered as pointing out to us the *order* in which he bestows his blessings ; he gives first *repentance*, and then *forgiveness*.

We may likewise see how much the character of a true Christian rises above every other : that there is a wholeness, an integrity, a completeness in the Christian character : that a few natural, pleasing qualities, not cast in the mould of the Gospel, are but as beautiful fragments, or well-turned single limbs, which for want of that beauty which arises from the proportion of parts, for want of that connection of the members with the living head, are of little comparative excellence. There may be amiable qualities which are not Christian graces : and the Apostle, after enumerating every separate article of attack or defence with which a Christian warrior is to be accoutred, sums up the matter by directing that we put on “ the whole
“ armour of God.” And this *completeness* is insisted on by all the Apostles. One prays that his converts may “ stand *perfect* and *complete* in the whole will of
“ God :” another enjoins that they be “ *perfect* and *entire*, wanting nothing.”

so incompatible as to be incapable by nature of being inmates of the same breast, are almost necessarily involved in the Christian character.

For instance; Christianity requires that our faith be at once fervent and sober; that our love be both ardent and lasting; that our patience be not only heroic but gentle: she demands dauntless zeal and genuine humility; active services and complete self-renunciation; high attainments in goodness, with deep consciousness of defect; courage in reproving, and meekness in bearing reproof; a quick perception of what is sinful; with a willingness to forgive the offender; active virtue ready to *do* all, and passive virtue ready to *bear* all.—We must stretch every faculty in the service of our Lord, and yet bring every thought into obedience to Him; while we aim to live in the exercise of every Christian grace, we must account ourselves unprofitable servants; we must *strive* for the crown, yet receive it as a *gift*, and then
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lay it at our Master's feet: while we are busily trading in the world with our Lord's talents, we must "commune with our heart, and be still:" while we strive to practice the purest disinterestedness, we must be contented though we meet with selfishness in return; and while laying out our lives for the good of mankind, we must submit to reproach without murmuring, and to ingratitude without resentment. And to render us equal to all these services, Christianity bestows not only the precept, but the power; she does what the great poet of Ethics lamented that Reason could not do, "she lends us arms as well as rules."

For here, if not the worldly and the timid, but the humble and the well-disposed should demand with fear and trembling, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Revelation makes its own reviving answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee."

It will be well here to distinguish that there are two sorts of Christian professors, one of which affect to speak of Christianity as if it were a mere system of doctrines, with little reference to their influence on life and manners; while the other consider it as exhibiting a scheme of human duties independent on its doctrines. For though the latter sort may admit the doctrines, yet they contemplate them as a separate and disconnected set of opinions, rather than as an influential principle of action.—In violation of that beautiful harmony which subsists in every part of Scripture between practice and belief, the religious world furnishes two sorts of people, who seem to enlist themselves, as if in opposition, under the banners of Saint Paul and Saint James, as if those two great champions of the Christian cause had fought for two masters. Those who affect respectively to be the disciples of each, treat faith and works as if they were opposite interests, instead of inseparable

separable points. Nay, they go farther, and set Saint Paul at variance with himself.

Now instead of reasoning on the point, let us refer to the Apostle in question, who definitively settles the dispute. The Apostolical order and method in this respect deserve notice and imitation; for it is observable that the earlier parts of most of the Epistles abound in the *doctrines* of Christianity, while those latter chapters, which wind up the subject, exhibit all the *duties* which grow out of them, as the natural and necessary productions of such a living root. But this alternate mention of doctrine and practice, which seemed likely to *unite*, has on the contrary formed a sort of line of separation between these two orders of believers, and introduced a broken and mutilated system. Those who would make Christianity consist of doctrines only, dwell, for instance, on the first eleven chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, as containing exclusively the
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sum and substance of the Gospel. While the mere moralists, who wish to strip Christianity of her lofty and appropriate attributes, delight to dwell on the *twelfth* chapter, which is a table of duties, as exclusively as if the preceding chapters made no part of the sacred Canon. But Paul himself, who was at least as sound a theologian as any of his commentators, settles the matter another way, by making the duties of the *twelfth* grow out of the doctrines of the antecedent *eleven*, just as any other consequence grows out of its cause. And as if he suspected that the indivisible union between them might possibly be overlooked, he links the two distinct divisions together by a logical "therefore," with which the *twelfth* begins:—"I beseech you *therefore*," (that is, as the effect of all I have been inculcating,) "that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable to God," &c. and then goes on to enforce on them, as a consequence of what he had been preaching,

ing,

ing, the practice of every Christian virtue. This combined view of the subject seems, on the one hand, to be the only means of preventing the substitution of Pagan morality for Christian holiness; and on the other, of securing the leading doctrine of justification by faith, from the dreadful danger of Antinomian licentiousness; every human obligation being thus grafted on the living stock of a divine principle.

CHAP. XX.

On the duty and efficacy of prayer.

It is not proposed to enter largely on a topic which has been exhausted by the ablest pens: But as a work of this nature seems to require that so important a subject should not be overlooked, it is intended to notice in a slight manner a few of those many difficulties and popular objections which are brought forward against the use and efficacy of prayer, even by those who would be unwilling to be suspected of impiety and unbelief.

There is a class of objectors who strangely profess to withhold homage from the Most High, not out of contempt, but reverence. They affect to consider the use of prayer as derogatory to the omniscience of God, asserting that it looks

as if we thought he stood in need of being informed of our wants; and as derogatory to his goodness, as implying that he needs to be put in mind of them.

But is it not enough for such poor frail beings as we are to know, that God himself does not consider prayer as derogatory either to his wisdom or goodness? And shall *we* erect ourselves into judges of what is consistent with the attributes of HIM before whom angels fall prostrate with self-abasement? Will he thank such defenders of his attributes, who, while they profess to reverence, scruple not to disobey him? It ought rather to be viewed as a great encouragement to prayer, that we are addressing a Being, who knows our wants better than we can express them, and whose preventing goodness is always ready to relieve them.

It is objected by another class, and on the specious ground of humility too, though we do not always find the objector him-

himself quite as humble as his plea, that it is arrogant in such insignificant beings as we are to presume to lay our petty necessities before the Great and Glorious God, who cannot be expected to condescend to the multitude of trifling and even interfering requests which are brought before him by his creatures. These and such like objections arise from mean and unworthy thoughts of the Great Creator. It seems as if those who make them considered the Most High as "such an one as themselves;" a Being, who can perform a certain quantity of business, but who would be overpowered with an additional quantity. Or at best, is it not considering the Almighty in the light, not of an infinite God, but of a great man, of a minister, or a king, who, while he superintends great and national concerns, is obliged to neglect small and individual petitions, because he cannot spare that leisure and attention which suffice for every thing? They do not consider him as that infinitely glorious

glorious Being who, while he beholds at once all that is doing in heaven and in earth, is at the same time as attentive to the prayer of the poor destitute, as present to the sorrowful sighing of the prisoner, as if these forlorn creatures were the objects of his undivided attention.

These critics, who are for sparing the Supreme Being the trouble of our prayers, and, if I may so speak without profaneness, would relieve Omnipotence of part of his burden, by assigning to his care only such a portion as may be more easily managed, seem to have no conception of his attributes.

They forget that infinite wisdom puts him as easily within reach of all knowledge, as infinite power does of all performance: that he is a Being in whose plans complexity makes no difficulty, and multiplicity no confusion: that to ubiquity distance does not exist; that to infinity space is annihilated; that past, present, and future, are discerned more accurately

accurately at one glance of his eye, to whom a thousand years are as one day, than a single moment of time or a single point of space can be by ours.

To the other part of the objection founded on the supposed interference (that is, irreconcilableness) of one man's petitions with those of another, this answer seems to suggest itself: first, that we must take care that when we ask, we do not "ask amiss;" that, for instance, we ask chiefly, and in an unqualified manner, only for spiritual blessings to ourselves and others; and in doing this the prayer of one man *cannot* interfere with that of another. Next, in asking for temporal and inferior blessings, we must *qualify* our petition even though it should extend to deliverance from the severest pains, or to our very life itself, according to that example of our Saviour: "Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me. *Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.*" By thus qualifying our prayer, we exercise

cise ourselves in an act of resignation to God; we profess not to wish what will interfere with his benevolent plan, and yet we may hope by prayer to secure the blessing so far as it is consistent with it. Perhaps the reason why this objection to prayer is so strongly felt, is the too great disposition to pray for merely temporal and worldly blessings, and to desire them in the most unqualified manner, not submitting to be without them, even though the granting them should be inconsistent with the general plan of Providence.

Another class continue to bring forward, as pertinaciously as if it had never been answered, the exhausted argument, that seeing God is immutable, no petitions of ours can ever change Him: that events themselves being settled in a fixed and unalterable course, and bound in a fatal necessity, it is folly to think that we can disturb the established laws of the universe, or interrupt the course of Providence by our prayers: and that it is absurd to sup-

pose these firm decrees can be reversed by any requests of ours.

Without entering into the wide and trackless field of fate and free will, from which pursuit I am kept back equally by the most profound ignorance and the most invincible dislike, I would only observe, that these objections apply equally to all human actions as well as to prayer. It may therefore with the same propriety be urged, that seeing God is immutable and his decrees unalterable, therefore our *actions* can produce no change in Him or in our own state. Weak as well as impious reasoning. It may be questioned whether the modern French and German philosophers might not be prevailed upon to acknowledge the existence of God, if they might make such a use of his attributes. The truth is, and it is a truth discoverable without any depth of learning, all these objections are the offspring of *pride*. Poor, short-sighted man cannot reconcile the omniscience and decrees of God

God with the efficacy of prayer; and, because *he* cannot reconcile them, he modestly concludes they are irreconcilable. How much more wisdom as well as happiness results from an humble christian spirit! Such a plain practical text as, "Draw near unto God, and he will draw near unto you," carries more consolation, more true knowledge of his wants and their remedy to the heart of a penitent sinner, than all the *tomcs* of casuistry which have puzzled the world ever since the question was first set afloat by its original propounders.

And as the plain man only got up and walked, to prove there was such a thing as motion, in answer to the philosopher who denied it: so the plain Christian, when he is borne down with the assurance that there is no efficacy in prayer, requires no better argument to repel the assertion than the good he finds in prayer itself.

All the doubts proposed to him respecting God, do not so much affect him as this one doubt respecting himself: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." For the chief doubt and difficulty of a Christian consists, not so much in a distrust of God's ability and willingness to answer the prayer of the upright, as in a distrust of his own uprightness, and of the quality of the prayer which he offers up.

Let the subjects of a dark fate maintain a sullen, or the slaves of a blind chance a hopeless silence, but let the child of a compassionate Almighty Father supplicate his mercies with an humble confidence, inspired by the assurance, that "the very hairs of his head are numbered." Let him take comfort in that individual and minute attention, without which not a sparrow falls to the ground, as well as in that heart-cheering promise, that, as "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous," so are "his ears open to their prayers."

And

And as a pious Bishop has observed, "Our Saviour has as it were hedged in and inclosed the Lord's Prayer with these two great fences of our faith, God's *willingness* and his *power* to help us:" the preface to it assures us of the one, which, by calling God by the tender name of "Our Father," intimates his *readiness* to help his children: and the animating conclusion, "Thine is the *power*," rescues us from every unbelieving doubt of his *ability* to help us.

A Christian knows, because he feels, that prayer is, though in a way to him inscrutable, the medium of connection between God and his rational creatures; the means appointed by him to draw down his blessings upon us. The Christian knows, that prayer is the appointed means of uniting two ideas, one of the highest magnificence, the other of the most profound lowliness, within the compass of imagination; namely, that it is the link of communication between "the High and

"Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity," and that heart of the "contrite in which" he delights to dwell." He knows that this inexplicable union between Beings so unspeakably, so essentially different, can only be maintained by prayer.

The plain Christian, as was before observed, cannot explain why it is so; but while he *feels* the efficacy, he is contented to let the learned *define* it; and he will no more postpone prayer till he can produce a chain of reasoning on the manner in which he derives benefit from it, than he will postpone eating till he can give a scientific lecture on the nature of digestion: he is contented with knowing that his meat has nourished him; and he leaves to the philosopher, who may choose to defer his meal till he has elaborated his treatise, to starve in the interim. The Christian feels better than he is able to explain, that the functions of his spiritual life can no more be carried on without habitual prayer, than those of his natural life

life without frequent bodily nourishment. He feels renovation and strength grow out of the use of the appointed means, as necessarily in the one case as in the other. He feels that the health of his soul can no more be sustained, and its powers kept in continued vigour by the *prayers* of a distant day, than his body by the *aliment* of a distant day.

But there is one motive to the duty in question, far more constraining to the true believer than all others that can be named; more imperious than any arguments on its utility, than any convictions of its efficacy, even than any experience of its consolations. Prayer is the command of God; the plain, positive, repeated injunction of the Most High, who declares, "He will be inquired of." This is enough to secure the obedience of the Christian, even though a promise were not, as it always is, attached to the command. But in this case the promise is as clear as the precept: "*Ask, and ye shall*

"*receive*;"—"Seek, and ye shall *find*:" this is enough for the plain Christian. As to the *manner* in which prayer is made to coincide with the general scheme of God's plan in the government of human affairs; how God has left himself at liberty to reconcile our prayer with his own predetermined will, the Christian does not very critically examine, his precise and immediate duty being to pray and not to examine; and probably this being among the "secret things which belong to God," and not to us, it will lie hidden among those numberless mysteries which we shall not fully understand till faith is lost in sight.

In the mean time it is enough for the humble believer to be assured, that the Judge of all the earth is doing right: it is enough for him to be assured in that word of God "which cannot lie," of numberless actual instances of the efficacy of prayer in obtaining blessings and averting calamities, both national and individual:

vidual: it is enough for him to be convinced experimentally, by that internal evidence which is perhaps paramount to all other evidence, the comfort he has received from prayer when all other comforts have failed: — and above all, to end with the same motive with which we began, the only motive indeed which *be* requires for the performance of any duty, — it is motive enough for him, — that *thus saith the Lord*. For when a serious Christian has once got a plain unequivocal command from his Maker on any point, he never suspends his obedience while he is amusing himself with looking about for subordinate motives of action. Instead of curiously analysing the nature of the duty, he considers how he shall best fulfil it: for on these points at least it may be said without controversy, that “the ignorant (and here who is *not* ignorant?) “*have nothing to do with the law but to “obey it.*”

Others

Others there are who perhaps not controverting any of these premises, yet neglect to build practical consequences on the admission of them; who neither denying the duty nor the efficacy of prayer, yet go on to live either in the irregular observance or the total neglect of it, as appetite, or pleasure, or business, or humour, may happen to predominate; and who, by living almost without prayer, may be said "to live almost without God in the world." To such we can only say, that they little know what they lose. The time is hastening on when they will look upon those blessings as invaluable, which now they think not worth asking for. "O that they were wise! that they understood this! that they would consider their latter end!"

There are again others, who it is to be feared, having once lived in the habit of prayer, yet not having been well-grounded in those principles of faith and repentance on which genuine prayer is built,

built, have by degrees totally discontinued it. "They do not find," say they, "that their affairs prosper the better" or the worse; or perhaps they were unsuccessful in their affairs even before they dropt the practice, and so had no encouragement to go on." They do not *know* that they had no encouragement; they do not *know* how much worse their affairs might have gone on, had they discontinued it sooner, or how their prayers helped to retard their ruin. Or they do not *know* that perhaps "they asked amiss," or that, if they had obtained what they asked, they might have been far more unhappy. For a true believer never "restrains prayer," because he is not certain he obtains every individual request; for he is persuaded that God, in compassion to our ignorance, sometimes in great mercy withholds what we desire, and often disappoints his most favoured children by giving them, not what they ask, but what he knows is really good
for

for them. The froward child, as a pious prelate* observes, cries for the shining blade, which the tender parent withholds, knowing it would cut his fingers.

Thus to persevere when we have not the encouragement of visible success, is an evidence of tried faith. Of this holy perseverance Job was a noble instance. Defeat and disappointment rather stimulated than stopped *his* prayers. Though in a vehement strain of passionate eloquence he exclaims, "I cry out of wrong, but
"I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there
"is no judgment:" yet so persuaded was he of the duty of continuing this holy importunity, that he persisted against human hope, till he attained to that pitch of unshaken faith, by which he was enabled to break out into that sublime apostrophe,
"Though he slay me, I will trust in
"him."

* Bishop Hall.

But

But may we not say that there is a considerable class, who not only bring none of the objections which we have stated against the use of prayer; who are so far from rejecting, that they are exact and regular in the performance of it; who yet take it up on as low ground as is consistent with their ideas of their own safety; who, while they consider prayer as an indispensable form, believe nothing of that change of heart which it is intended to produce? Many who yet adhere scrupulously to the letter, are so far from entering into the spirit of this duty, that they are strongly inclined to suspect those of hypocrisy who adopt the true scriptural views of prayer. Nay, as even the Bible may be so wrested as to be made to speak almost any language in support of almost any opinion, these persons lay hold on Scripture itself to bear them out in their own slight views of this duty; and they profess to borrow from it the ground of that censure which

they

they cast on the more serious Christians. Among the many passages which have been made to convey a meaning foreign to its original design, none has been seized upon with more avidity by such persons than the pointed censures of our Saviour on those "who for a pretence make long prayers;" as well as on those "who use vain repetitions, and think they shall be heard for much speaking." Now the things here intended to be reprov'd, were the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the ignorance of the heathen, together with the error of all those who depended on the success of their prayers, while they imitated the deceit of the one or the folly of the other. But our Saviour never meant those severe reprehensions should cool or abridge the devotion of pious Christians, to which they do not apply.

More or fewer words, however, so little constitute the value of prayer, that there is no doubt but one of the most affecting specimens on record is the short petition of
the

the Publican; full fraught as it is with that spirit of contrition and self-abasement which is the very principle and soul of prayer. And this perhaps is the best model for that sudden lifting up of the heart which we call ejaculation. But I doubt, in general, whether the few hasty words to which these frugal petitioners would stint the scanty devotions of others, will be always found ample enough to satisfy the humble penitent, who, being a sinner, has much to confess; who, hoping he is a pardoned sinner, has much to acknowledge. Such an one perhaps cannot always pour out the fullness of his soul within the prescribed abridgments. Even the sincerest Christian, when he wishes to find his heart warm, has often to lament its coldness. Though he feel that he has received much, and has therefore much to be thankful for, yet he is not able at once to bring his wayward spirit into such a posture as shall fit it for the solemn business; for such an one has not merely his form to repeat, but he has his
peace

peace to make. A devout suppliant too will labour to affect and warm his mind with a sense of the attributes of God, in imitation of the holy men of old. Like Jehosophat, he will sometimes enumerate "the power, and the might, and the mercies of the Most High," in order to stir up the sentiments of awe and gratitude, and humility in his own soul*. He has the example of his Saviour, whose heart dilated with the expression of the same holy affections: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." A heart thus warmed with divine love cannot always scrupulously limit itself to the mere *business* of prayer, if I may so speak. The humble suppliant, though he be no longer *governed* by a love of the world, yet grieves to find that he cannot totally exclude it from his thoughts. Though he has on the whole, a deep sense of his own wants, and of God's abundant fullness to supply

* 2 Chron. xx. 5, 6.

them,

them, yet when he most wishes to be rejoicing in those strong motives for love and gratitude, alas! even then he has to mourn that his thoughts are gone astray after some "trifle lighter than vanity itself." The best Christian is but too liable, during the temptations of the day, to be ensnared by "the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," and is not always brought without effort to reflect that he is but dust and ashes. How can even good persons, who are just come perhaps from listening to the flattery of their fellow-worms, acknowledge before God, without any preparation of the heart, that they are miserable sinners? They require a little time, to impress on their own souls the solemn confession of sin they are making to Him, without which brevity and not length might constitute hypocrisy. Even the sincerely pious have in prayer grievous wanderings to lament, from which others mistakingly suppose the advanced Christian to be exempt. Such wanderings that, as

an old divine has observed, it would exceedingly humble a good man, could he, after he had prayed, be made to see his prayers written down, with interlineations of all the vain and impertinent thoughts which had thrust themselves in amongst them. So that such an one will indeed, from a sense of these distractions, feel deep occasion with the prophet to ask forgiveness for "the iniquity of his *holy* things:" and would find cause enough for humiliation every night, had he to lament the sins of his prayers only.

We know that such a brief petition as, "Lord help my unbelief," if the suppliant be in so happy a frame, and the prayer be darted with such strong faith that his very soul mounts with the petition, may suffice to draw down a blessing which may be withheld from the more prolix petitioner: yet, if by prayer we do not mean a mere form of words, whether they be long or short; if the true definition of prayer be, that it is *the desire of the heart*;
if

if it be that secret communion between God and the soul which is the very breath and being of religion; then is the Scripture so far from suggesting that short measure of which it is accused, that it expressly says, “Pray without ceasing:”—“Pray evermore:”—“I will that men pray every where;”—“Continue instant in prayer.”

If such “repetitions” as these objectors reprobate, stir up desires as yet unawakened, for “*vain* repetitions” are such as awaken or express no new desire, and serve no religious purpose, then are “repetitions” not to be condemned. And if it be true that our Saviour gave the warning against “long prayers” in the sense these allege; if he gave the caution against vain repetitions in the sense these believe; then he broke his own rule in both instances: for once we are told “he continued *all night* in prayer to God.” And again, in a most awful crisis of his

life, it is expressly said, "He prayed the *third time* using the *same words* *."

But as it is the effect of prayer to *expand* the affections as well as to *sanctify* them, the benevolent Christian is not satisfied to commend himself alone to the Divine favour. The heart which is full of the love of God, will overflow with love to its neighbour. All that are near to himself he wishes to bring near to God. Religion makes a man so liberal of soul, that he cannot endure to restrict any thing, much less divine mercies, to himself: he spiritualizes the social affections, by adding intercessory to personal prayer: for he knows, that petitioning for others is one of the best methods of exercising and enlarging our love and charity towards them. It is unnecessary to produce any of the numberless instances with which Scripture abounds, on the efficacy of intercession: I shall confine myself to a

* Matt. xxvi. 44.

few observations on the benefits it brings to him who offers it.—When we pray for the objects of our dearest regard, it purifies love: when we pray for those with whom we have worldly intercourse, it smooths down the swellings of envy, and bids the tumults of ambition subside: when we pray for our country, it sanctifies patriotism: when we pray for those in authority, it adds a divine motive to human obedience: when we pray for our enemies, it softens the savageness of war, and mollifies hatred into sorrow. And we can best learn, nay, we can only learn, the difficult duty of forgiving those who have offended us, when we bring ourselves to pray for them to Him whom we ourselves daily offend. When those who are the faithful followers of the same Divine Master pray for each other, the reciprocal intercession best realizes that beautiful idea of “the Communion of Saints.”

Some are for confining their intercessions only to the good, as if none but persons

of merit were entitled to our prayers. Merit ! who has it ? Desert ! who can plead it ? in the sight of God, I mean. Who shall bring his own piety, or the piety of others, in the way of *claim*, before a Being of such transcendent holiness, that “ the heavens are not clean in his “ sight ? ” And if we wait for perfect holiness as a preliminary to prayer, when shall such erring creatures pray *at all* to HIM “ who chargeth the Angels with “ folly ! ”

In closing this little work with the subject of intercessory prayer, may the Author be allowed to avail herself of the feeling it suggests to her own heart ? And while she earnestly implores that Being, who can make the meanest of his creatures instrumental to his glory, to bless this humble attempt to those for whom it was written, may she, without presumption, entreat that this work of Christian Charity may be reciprocal, and that those who peruse these pages, may put up a petition for her, that in the great day to which

are all hastening, she may not be found to have suggested to others what she herself did not believe, or to have recommended what she did not desire to practise? In that awful day of everlasting decision, may both the reader and the writer be pardoned and accepted, “not for any works of righteousness which they have done,” but through the merits of the GREAT INTERCESSOR.

THE END.

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