

nature, to the higher duty of forming the mind, fixing the principles, and strengthening the character of her with 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, and through the want of that sound affection which labours to improve and exalt the

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the character of its object; it happens, that many a helpless, fretful, and dandling 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. By fair and youthful females an argument, drawn from sound experience and real life, is commonly repelled by a stanza; and a couplet is considered as nearly of the same validity with a text. When ladies are complimented with being

Fine by defect and delicately weak!

is not a standard of feebleness held out to them,

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 arms with which Nature has furnished the weak 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 *piquant* and alluring in the mutual graces of caprice, than in the monotonous smoothness of an even temper, and who also having heard much, as was observed before,

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

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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 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; it is 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
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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, quiet, 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 implicit and 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. The heart which is

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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 in the art of conversation, used to remark, that a few years had brought about a

* The late Bishop Horne.

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 now, knowledge, and taste, and wit, and erudition, seemed to be scarcely considered as necessary materials to be brought into the pleasurable 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 end to promote, that if there were any chemical process by which the quantum
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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) would present to the mind an image the most *undomestic* which language can convey?

convey? Could it be anticipated that the event of one lady's being *at home* could only be effected by the universal concurrence of all her acquaintance to be abroad? That so simple an act should require such complicated co-operation? And that the report that one person would be found in her own house should operate with such an electric force as to empty the houses of all her friends?

My country readers, who may require to have it explained that these two magnetic words *at home*, 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. The scale of enjoyment is rated by the measure of fatigue, and the quantity of inconvenience furnishes the standard of gratification : the smallness of the dimensions to which each person is limited on account of the multitudes which must divide among them a certain given space, adds to the sum total of general delight ; the aggregate of pleasure is produced by the proportion of individual suffering ; and not till every guest feels herself in the state of a cat in an exhausted receiver, does the delighted hostess attain the consummation of that renown which is derived from such overflowing rooms as shall throw all her competitors at a disgraceful distance.

An eminent divine has said, that “per-
 “severance in prayer will either make
 “a man leave off sinning, or a continu-
 “ance in sin will make him leave off
 “prayer.” This remark may be accom-
 modated 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. Con-
 traries cannot unite. The moral nurture
 of a tall daughter can no more be ad-
 ministered by a mother whose time is
 absorbed by crowds abroad, than the phy-
 cal nurture of her infant offspring can
 be supplied by her in a perpetual absence
 from home. And is not that a prepos-
 terous affection which, after leading a mo-
 ther to devote a few months to the inferior
 duty

duty of furnishing aliment to the mere animal life, allows her 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 loving 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 water-
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ing places, destitute of a tree, or an herb, 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 dependants on the rural mansions of the
 L 3 opulent,

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,

inquiry, for this attention, for this sympathy, 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
 L 4 relation;

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, and the inculcation of the spirit which produces it, 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 Nuncham 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

sional 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 the conviction that the rich really take an interest in their comfort, would contribute to reconcile the lower class to that state in which it has pleased God to place them.

be real, and though if real it ought to be relieved, is far less easily ascertained than 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

behold every source purified! But in the public resorts there are many who are able and willing to give. In the sequestered, though populous village, there is, perhaps, only one affluent family: the distress which they do not *behold* will probably not be attended to: the distress 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

ments too much absorbed the thoughts and affections, took women off from the necessary 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 experiments; 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 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 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; and it happens in this as in other cases, that a few characters conspicuously absurd, have served to bring a whole order or body into ridicule. 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

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, which makes her unpleasant. The truth, however, probably lies here, that while her understanding was improved, the tempers of her heart were neglected, and that in cultivating the fame of a *savante*, she lost the humility of a Christian. But 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

tion 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 competition in *such* perfections is in perpetual exercise; where the laurels of admiration are to be won; whence 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

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 conviction that she is accountable for the application of knowledge as well as for the dedication of time. Perhaps if there be any one principle which should be more sedulously than another worked into the youthful mind, it is the doctrine of particular as well as general responsibility.

The contagion of dissipated manners 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 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*

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: 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 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

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 and necessary 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.

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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 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

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 infatuation is it that men too, even men of sense, join in the confederacy against their own happiness, by looking for their home companions in the resorts of vanity? Why do not such men rise superior to the illusions of fashion? 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 in just gradation 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 flick 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 definitely 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

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, for after that time 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 con- sider

sider 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 of their own; they form a kind of distinct *cast*, and with a sort of *esprit du 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

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 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,

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 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, 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

rior 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 dissipations.

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

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 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 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 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
 N 3 imperious

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 escaping from home as from the only scene which offers no possible materials for pleasure. The steady and growing attachment, improved by unbounded confidence and mutual interchange of sentiments; judgment ripening, and experience strengthening that esteem which taste and inclination first inspired; each party studying to promote the eternal as well as temporal happiness of the other; each correcting the errors, improving the principles, and confirming the faith of the beloved

beloved object: this would enrich the feeling heart with gratifications which the insolvent world has not to bestow: such an heart would compare its interesting domestic scenes with the vapid pleasures of public resort, till it would fly to its own home, not from necessity, but taste; not from custom, but choice; not from duty, but delight.

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 chase of pleasure, whether they are really happy. No:—in the full tide and torrent of diversion, in the full blaze of gaiety,

The heart, distrustful, asks 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

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 imposes 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 solicitations 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 shewing 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

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 tense: 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 seem compelled to suffer, but from which they are eager to escape, as really detaining them from some positive joy to which they are 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

“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 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

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, 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

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, 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

Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,
 Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;
 And party-colour'd 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 the 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 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 person 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, they 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.

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-
tion

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 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 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 perceptive and prohibitory parts; and especially that it in-

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

dividually 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 favourite 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, pure desires, heavenly tempers, 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 implant a 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, 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,

* Isaiah, chap. iii.

seldom contains any such detailed animadversions ; for though many of the censurable modes which the prophet so severely reprobated, 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 *.

* By the way, it would be well for those modish Christians who vindicate excessive vanity in dress and decoration on the principle of their being mere matters of indifference, to consider that such practices strongly mark the temper and spirit with which they are connected, and in that view are so little creditable to the Christian profession, as to furnish a just subject of suspicion against the piety of those who indulge in 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

“ 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, 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

“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, peculiar, 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

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 object of his condemnation, he laid his axe to the root of all corruption, 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." Of this Gospel the great object was, to attack not one popular evil, but the whole body of sin. Now the doctrine of Christ crucified was the most appropriate means

for destroying this; for how could the fervid imagination of the Apostle so powerfully inforce the heinousness of sin, as by insisting on the costliness of the sacrifice which was offered for its expiation? 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 the right practice of his hearers 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 panegyrists. The

truth

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

the universal precept to avoid “the
“lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye,
“and the pride of life,” they have pre-
pared a lasting antidote against the *prin-*
ciple 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 pre-
tended ground that they are not specifi-
cally 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 con-
demned in Scripture, because St. Paul,
when writing to the Corinthians, did not
speak against these, or because in avail-
ing 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 Chris-

which even his own day as modern christian

tian 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 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

"do unto you?" and against suicide and duelling, in the general prohibition against murder, which is strongly enforced and affectingly amplified by the solemn manner in which 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 lead-

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

ing 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.

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 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

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, 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 unseasonable or excessive indulgence they detain the heart and affections from God, how vain will all those arguments necessarily 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 compatible; as the physician, who visits a patient in an eruptive fever, pays little 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
 corrup,

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, 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 : “ Redeem-
“ ing 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 :” — “ Cru-
 “ cify the flesh with its affections
 “ and lusts ?” And I would venture to
 offer one criterion, by which the per-
 sons in question may be enabled to de-
 cide on the positive innocence and safety
 of such diversions ; I mean, provided
 they are sincere in their scrutiny and ho-
 nest 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

(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 this test were fairly used; if this experiment were honestly tried; if this examination were conscientiously made, may we not without offence presume to ask,—*Could* our numerous places of public resort, *could* our ever-multiplying scenes of more select but not less dangerous diversion, nightly overflow with an excess hitherto unparalleled in the annals of pleasure*?

* If I might presume to recommend a book which of all others exposes the insignificance, vanity, littleness,

ness, 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 perusal of Mr. Law. True Christianity does not call on us to starve our
bodies,

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.

CHAP. 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

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 I 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 our 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*, so much assumes the semblance of goodness, 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 the things 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 did 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,) while they believe its truths, ob-

serve 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 belief, in the lowness of his attainments!

ments! 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 at least this conviction, that faint as his confidence may be at times, low as may be his hope, and feeble as his faith may seem, 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 what is 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, however stout their profession, one cannot 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 ardour 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 attained by diligence, and we prudently proportion our earnestness to this conviction: when therefore 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," and produce the principle of such a relaxed morality, the faith would be found to be much of a piece with the practice?

Even

Even that very spirit of enjoyment which leads the persons in question so studiously to possess themselves of the qualifications for 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; that very spirit 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 wonderful or total change in our hearts or our tastes: so far from this, that we are assured in Scripture, "that he that is filthy will be filthy still," "and he that is holy will be holy still." Though we believe that death will completely cleanse the holy soul from its remaining pollutions, that it will exchange defective sanctification into perfect purity, entangling temptation 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 tempers 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

house

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 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 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

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, 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