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THE
Lady's Closet Library.

THE LYDIAS ;

OR, THE

DEVELOPMENT OF FEMALE CHARACTER.

BY ROBERT PHILIP,

OF MARERLY CHAPEL.

“LYDIA,—whose heart the Lord *opened*, that she attended
unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”—ACTS.

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PREFACE.

LYDIA was the first fruit of the Gospel in Europe. She is thus interesting to European females, as an historical person ; and to all females, as a specimen of female conversion. She might, indeed, have been an intended *model* of that ; for it is usually, as in her case, the *opening of the heart*, rather than the awakening of the conscience.

This Volume completes the first Section of the Lady's Closet Library ; the next Series will be MATERNAL ; and illustrated still more fully by Allegories : of which Rachel's Marriage will be the first.

Newington Green.

CONTENTS.

	Page
The Lydias	9
I. The Heart Unveiled	19
The Pharos of the Nile	38
Unhallowed Curiosity Reproved	52
Zebah and Jambres	64
II. Christ's Parable of Development	67
III. Developments by Eternity	93
IV. Developments by the Sacrament	110
V. Developments by Zeal	131
Sheshbazzar's Fig Tree	151
VI. Developments by Dependence	160
VII. Developments by Obstacles	185
Entering Eternity in the Dark, prevented	206
VIII. Developments by Study	216
IX. Developments by the Spirit	232
X. Developments by Experience	267
Slippery Places	283

THE LYDIAS.

It is an era in both the life and character of a woman, who has never heard the Gospel faithfully preached, when she is first struck by the difference between legal and evangelical doctrine, ethical and experimental sermons. She may be perplexed, even displeased, for a time, by the "strange things" then brought to her ears;—they are so very strange, to one who never heard nor dreamt before that religion was any thing more than morals, worship, and taking the sacrament. But her displeasure, even if it amount to disgust, with the doctrines of Grace,

is a revolution in her mind, which tells upon her character, in spite of herself. She cannot forget that both the facts and phrases she has heard, are in the Bible. She cannot conceal from herself, that the EVANGELISTS of Christ, as well as the *Evangelicals* of the churches, say more about justification by faith, and regeneration by the Spirit, than she either likes, or ever pondered over. Thus she is compelled, however reluctantly, to suspect, that she may be wrong; —that her heart is not so good as she imagined; —that more than the decencies of morality and public worship, may be needful, in order to her salvation.

The progress of a mind, thus arrested by the peculiarities of the Gospel, and then reconciled to them gradually, is worth tracing, step by step. It will show both how *much*, and how *little*, a faithful ministry can do towards the conversion of the soul. It will illustrate and justify, equally

the fact, that “faith cometh by hearing;” and the fact, that “neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth; but God, that giveth the increase,” All in All.

You will not be less interested or edified, by tracing the influence of faithful preaching on the character, even if you never heard any thing but “the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.” For, however familiar you may have been, even from your youth up, with the truth as it is in Jesus, it seemed *new* truth to you, when it began to touch your heart; whether its first effect was pain or pleasure, hatred or love. For something is gained, when attention is arrested, or the mind disturbed, by the Gospel: whereas, whilst neither Law nor Gospel please nor displease, but both are heard without interest or discrimination, nothing is gained. It is, indeed, very melancholy, even awful, to see the heart of a creature, otherwise amiable

and modest, rising and writhing against the truths of a Bible, which she yet calls the Word of God ! She has not the hardihood to reject the volume ; but she has the effrontery to despise its great doctrines, and its humbling design. This is infatuation, as well as effrontery. Still, it is teaching her, in spite of herself, knowledge of herself, and especially of her heart. It reveals her to others also, as well as to herself. For whenever a faithful ministry gives serious offence, there is an end to *dead* silence about religion. Out of the abundance of the mortified and galled heart, “ the mouth speaketh ” gall and wormwood ; and thus betrays its own secret, and publishes an enmity which was not, perhaps, suspected before.

This also is not without its use. It compels her to *do* more and better, in her own way of being religious, as a set-off against what she has *said* in disparagement of spiritual religion. Ac-

cordingly, she tries to *make up* for her sneers and sarcasms against Methodism, (as she calls Evangelism,) by loud protestations of supreme regard to morality and devotion, and by a punctilious obedience to both. She feels that she has *committed* herself amongst her friends by speaking as she thought and felt, when she was exasperated by a sermon which proved her to be no Christian; and, therefore, she sets herself to disprove it, by becoming (as she says) "as good a Christian as any of them," in her *own way*!

Now, bad as all this is, it is better than that eyeless and aimless vacancy of mind, to which Law and Gospel are alike insipid, and morality and spirituality the same thing. Whilst that heartless and brainless apathy continues, no self-knowledge is acquired, and no self-control (which has any distinct reference to the glory or the will of God) is attempted. Preaching has as little effect upon such a woman, as upon

the pews or cushions of the Sanctuary; and the desk and altar, as little influence, as upon the swallows or the sparrows on the roof: whereas, when both the pulpit and the altar give offence by their fidelity, the very resistance they provoke, compels some inquiry and consideration.

I do not, of course, commend or admire the resistance, as such; nor in any way on its own account. It is bad in all its forms, and shameful in its spirit; for, it is "fighting against God." It sets, however, both Ministers and pious friends to fight against it. The young enemy of the Cross soon finds, that the Cross has champions, too powerful for her wit to answer, and too many for her interests to despise. She finds it prudent, if not necessary, to *mask* her enmity a little, and to bridle her tongue a good deal; that she may neither betray her ignorance, nor forfeit respect. She becomes glad to obtain a *truce*, when she discovers that neither her heart

nor her head gains any credit from her tongue or her pen ; and that her character is losing its influence by her spirit. All these are, indeed, *selfish* considerations ; but still, she is *considering* ; and that is something, which may end well ; whereas, “ ease in Zion ” always ends in “ woe ” through Eternity, to the women who *remain* at ease in Zion.

In general, such a spirit as I have now depicted, like that which “ goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,” resists the Truth, until the Rod break it down. It must “ bear the yoke in youth,” before it will lay its “ mouth in the dust,” for the sake of hope. There is the *secret* !—of more than one half of the vicissitudes of health, spirits, or circumstances, which occur in the case of young females, who resist the Gospel. They utter or evince their dislike of evangelical religion, so often and openly, that they are ashamed to retract their hard speeches, even when they

feel themselves to be wrong. They cannot brook the mortifying idea—of acknowledging their error, or of altering their tone. Rather than seem afraid, they do violence to the secret misgivings of their heart, and try to be more bitter than ever. Rather than yield with a good grace to the counsel or influence of pious friends, they *steel* themselves by any subterfuge or excuse, which Satan can furnish to sustain their pride. Yes; they will give in to the devil, rather than seem to humble themselves to any one!

In a case like this, (and it is not an uncommon case,) nothing but the Rod can subdue the rebel. At least, it is very rare to find such a heart “opened,” like the heart of Lydia, gently and gradually. Many such hearts are, indeed, turned unto the Lord; but, in general, it is by the *overturning* of health or prosperity. The stony heart is “taken away;” but, as in hard mines, only by boring and blasting! “Is not

my word like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer. xxiii. 29.

Grace is not less signal, however, when it opens the heart without the instrumentality of humbling providences. Lydia's heart, although less hard than the Jailer's, was equally *shut* against the power of godliness, until the Lord opened it. A midnight earthquake was not required, in order to open it: but still the things which shut her heart, would have kept it shut for ever, had not an Omnipotent hand interfered. It is not alone hearts like the Jailer's, which seem shut by "gates of brass and bars of iron," that need the mighty working of Divine power to open them. Trifles as well as enormities, and even social virtues as well as vices, can divert the heart from the things which belong to its everlasting peace. A female "seller of purple," or even a wearer of purple, may be as

thoroughly absorbed about her "raiment," as a miser with his gold, or a drunkard with his wine. The love of dress is, indeed, a very different vice from the love of drink: but still, it can *intoxicate*, although in another way. It may not harden the heart nor sear the conscience; but it does banish from both, in the case of many, all concern about Salvation or Eternity. Dolls and Dandies are, perhaps, the most arrant triflers with eternal things, that can be named.

THE LYDIAS;

OR, THE

DEVELOPMENT OF FEMALE CHARACTER.

No. I.

THE HEART UNVEILED.

PAUL says, that "whatsoever doth make manifest is light;" and, therefore, that is, of course, the greatest and the best light, which manifests to ourselves and others, most clearly, our true character. Now, nothing reveals our real character so much, as the way in which we treat the Saviour. We may be better in heart, than our love of Nature proves; and wiser in understanding, than our attention to Providence proves; but we are neither wiser nor better,

than our regard to Christ shows. That, whether great or small, shows what we wish to be, as well as what we are, in heart and life. What we are habitually towards the Saviour, we are really before God. The place which Christ holds in our esteem, is just the measure of our personal piety, and the evidence of our personal safety for eternity. We have no more religion than just our subjection to Christ; and, therefore, no more hold upon eternal life, than his cross and sceptre have upon our life.

This is a very solemn consideration ! It is, however, very pleasing. It simplifies personal piety, to those who have neither taste to listen to the voice of Nature, nor wisdom enough to interpret the voices of Providence. The want of such taste and tact, is certainly a defect; but it is not a sin, when there is no time to study Nature or Providence ; and it proves nothing against the heart, when Christ is pre-

ferred to both : whereas, were either preferred to Him, no relish for the works of creation, or for the wonders of Providence, would amount to a proof of real piety. For, what we “ think of Christ ”—not what we think of natural scenes of beauty and sublimity, or of moral scenes of mystery or wisdom—is the test of a heart right with God. This is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ. To know Nature, may be rational life ; and to know Law, moral life ; and to know Philosophy, influential life : but no knowledge is “ eternal life,” in principle or in prospect, save “ the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus.”

This ought to be a very gratifying fact to you, if, from the cast of your mind, or from the cares of your lot, you are unable to commune with the Eternal Power and Godhead, by the visible things of creation, or by the deep things of

Providence. You are a loser from this lack of taste and time; but you are in no danger of losing your soul, if Christ be precious to you. Indeed, in honouring and loving Him, you are virtually paying the best homage to both Nature and Providence; for all things, visible and invisible, were created, and are conducted, by him. It is well, to see the *chain* of universal being, and the *helm* of universal government; but it is better, to look chiefly to the hand in which they are held. It is, however, better still, to look at both. And you are more capable of doing so than you imagine, if you are charmed by the grace and glory of the Saviour himself; for no *vulgar* mind delights in Him. There are some of the natural elements of good taste in every mind, which has a spiritual discernment of His excellency and suitableness. The love of Christ in the heart, strengthens the weakest faculties, and elevates the lowest forms

of talent. It would, therefore, improve your love to Him, to trace his glory in some of the works of his hands, as well as in the grace of his heart. An occasional glance at the morning star, the rose of Sharon, or the lily of the valley, would not divert your attention from His atoning death, nor from his living intercession ; but keep up and increase your relish for both.

If, however, (which is most probable,) the cast of your mind be tasteful, your danger lies in the tendency of such a mind to rest in the enjoyment of the sublime or the beautiful, in scenery and sentiment, and to expend itself upon Nature or Art. This is the tendency of all superior minds, until salvation become their supreme good. Until then, they are as much diverted from God and the Lamb by refined studies, as the vulgar are by vice : for it is all mere pretence, to talk of rising through Nature up to Nature's God, whilst Nature is preferred

to Revelation, or more employed and enjoyed than Christ, as the medium of communion with Him. Such communing is not with God, as God is related to man, and man to Him. It is as if a traitor, admitted into the presence of his king, should pay compliments to the splendour of the palace, the elegance of the sceptre, and the beauty of the crown; but say nothing of the laws or the authority which he had outraged, and for the sake of which, palace, sceptre, and crown exist. It is as if a prodigal son, when re-admitted to his father's house, should do nothing but admire the family pictures, and the new furniture, which had been introduced whilst he was a wandering spendthrift. In a word, such communing with God, as the God of Nature, is out of all place and character, on the part of a creature who needs both mercy to pardon and grace to help. It is sheer impertinence in a sinner, however Poetry may laud

it, or History record it. She who has taste enough to admire the reflections of the Divine Image in the face of Nature, ought to have sense enough to admire the effulgence of the Divine Glory in the face of Jesus. She who can make a Bethel ladder, from earth to heaven, out of stars and flowers, mountains and forests, ought to have conscience enough to ascend it, only as a penitent, and never without the blood and incense of Atonement, as her warrant and plea.

“What think ye of Christ,” then? You cannot conceal your thoughts of Him, whatever they may be. You may not *tell* them to any one; but they reveal themselves, in spite of your silence. You deceive yourself, if you imagine that your secret is not known to those who have “been with Jesus.” It is no secret to any one, who knows his own heart; for heart answers to heart, in this matter, as “face

to face" in a glass. There is that about the claims of Christ, which brings out the secrets of the heart to the surface of the character, maugre all masking and manœuvring, by words or looks.

It is certainly a truth, which may well be a *truism*, that God alone knoweth your heart, or can search it. In like manner the question, "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him?" is unanswerable. He is both impertinent and presumptuous, who dares to judge the heart of his neighbour. His neighbour is, however, reckoning without his host, if he imagine that his conduct towards the Saviour does not reveal, both to the world and the church, the real state of his heart towards the Saviour: for that breaks out sufficiently, whatever it be, to settle the question, as to the place which Christ holds in his heart.

Simeon foresaw, in regard to the Jews, that this would be the case, and said, even whilst the Saviour was in his arms, " This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed," Luke ii. 34, 35. And, what a revelation of hearts accompanied and followed the manifestation of Christ to Israel! Wherever He came, men both saw themselves, if they were willing to look; and showed themselves, whether they were willing or unwilling. The peculiarity of his claims brought their inclinations to light, and their principles to the test, in spite of themselves. They, no doubt, would have said, had any one hinted that their hearts were self-righteous, ambitious, and worldly, and capable of even murdering the Messiah—" Who knoweth the *heart*, but God? Here is presumption!—a man pretending to sit in judgment

upon the *thoughts* of other men. What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him?" Thus the Jews might have clamoured down a Censor, by a plausible appeal to the secrecy of thought and feeling. They tried to silence Christ himself, when he charged them with murderous intentions. "The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil!—Who goeth about to kill thee?" John vii. 20. Thus they themselves did not know, or would not acknowledge, the depths of their own depravity. But neither their ignorance nor artifice could conceal their hearts from themselves or others long, when Christ pressed home His claims upon their faith and obedience. His demands upon their homage and submission, like the spear of Ithuriel, when applied to Satan, made them start up in their true character, and betray their secret designs by their public conduct.

It is the same still under the preaching of the Gospel. Christ faithfully preached, like Christ actually present, is both a discernor and discoverer of the thoughts and intents of the heart of all who hear the gospel. None can so hide themselves amongst the stars of sentiment, or amongst the veils of silence, as to conceal their prevailing and governing thoughts of Christ. Indeed, nothing reveals them so clearly, as the ways taken to hide them. They are known by their fruits, whatever foliage they may bear. Accordingly, the neglect of the Sacrament tells to all, who choose to listen, where there is not love enough to Christ to commemorate his dying love, or where the thoughts of the heart are occupied with discouraging views of Christ, or of the Sacrament. Attendance on the other ordinances of the Sanctuary, however frequent or regular, does not conceal this. In like manner, silence, when evangelical truth is maligned,

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or spiritual piety mocked, tells loudly, where the thoughts of the heart are either too few or too feeble to confess Christ before men. So also, a grudging hand in the cause of Christian charity or philanthropy, reveals a cold heart to all who have eyes to see, or ears to hear, however warmly the tongue may talk of Christ.

How true is the oracular proverb, that “as a man thinketh in his heart,—so is he.” His habits are the thoughts of his heart in action. His temper is the tone of his heart. His pleasures are the tastes of his heart.

I say, of his *heart*—not of his conscience, nor of his understanding: their dictates may be much better than his doings; but neither his doings nor his tempers are worse than his heart. It is just what he is; and he is just what it is.

This is true, in reference to religion in general; and is emphatically true, in regard to the

claims of the Saviour. There is no more HUMILITY in your heart, than just the degree in which you feel your need of Christ, and in which you have cast yourself upon his merits. You may not boast, like the Pharisee, of your own righteousness; nor, like the Jews, depend on it entirely; but you have renounced it no farther, than you have sought and submitted to the righteousness of Christ. The real measure of your humility before God, is just the length you have gone in prizing and praying for an interest in Christ.

O, nothing searches or tests the heart so thoroughly, as the demand upon it, to make Christ "*all and all*" in its hope of salvation! This claim rouses all the pride, or rallies all the deceitfulness, of the human heart. At this point, it becomes either truly humble, or "desperately wicked,"—for it is never so wicked, as when it agrees to make Christ "*all and*

own time—and suit my own convenience—and consult my own worldly interests, first—and then apply to Christ? If saying this pettishly would be bad, doing it coolly is worse! She does not venture to say it; but she ventures to take for granted, that it may be done by her, at least, without any great risk.

You see your own heart now—if you can look at the Lamb slain, without laying hold upon him for eternal life now. It is pouring out its secrets at your feet, at this moment. Its real feeling, in reference to our immediate application to the Saviour, is working in the veins of your head, and making your lips quiver, and rushing to your cheeks and eyes, whatever it be. Yes; you know exactly now, how your heart is disposed to treat the great Salvation. Whatever you are, no Nathan is wanted to fix his eye or point his finger on you, saying, “Thou art the woman.” You,

yourself, have already tried yourself by the heart-searching test, which the claims of Christ crucified furnish. Do not, however, stop yet. You can *afford* to look at the diseases of your heart; for you have the remedy of them all in your hand!

Consider! There is no more real GRATITUDE in your heart to God, than just what you feel for the unspeakable gift of a Saviour, and for providential mercies as the gifts of that Saviour. It is mere evasion of the claims of the Gospel, if not aversion to the supreme will of God, to look round upon your lot in its comforts, or upon your prospects in their brightness, and to conclude, because you are pleased, that you are grateful. For, had you risked your life to save a child from drowning, or from being burnt, whilst he was too young to appreciate your kindness, would you deem him grateful, if, when he grew up, he was

affected only by your subsequent presents, and quite unmindful of the great sacrifice at which you had saved his life? Even this would be no parallel to your ingratitude, if you can put God off with thanksgivings for temporal comforts, whilst his great Salvation is not prized. He gave you your temporal mercies, that you might have no excuse for neglecting eternal redemption. He placed you amidst all that pleases you, that you might have no outward hinderance in beholding or following the Lamb. It is not to try how you will feel or improve the gifts of His providence as such, that he has bestowed them upon you; but to try how you will employ them, as motives and opportunities to take care of your soul, by committing it to the refuge of the Cross and the power of Grace. In vain, therefore, do you give your heart credit for real gratitude to God, if you are more thankful for providences

which please you, than for a Saviour to deliver you from the wrath to come.

Thus, again, it is Christ that tests the heart effectually. It may seem a very susceptible and well disposed heart, whilst it is pleased only with the worth of good health, good spirits, good friends, and a good home ; but it is a hard and stony heart still, and is hardening itself even by its providential advantages, if it can enjoy these things without loving the Saviour, or without living to his glory.

Consider again : you have no more real love to God, than just the degree of your love to his salvation. As in domestic life, a parent is not loved at all, if not loved as a father or a mother ; so in religion, God is not loved at all, if the heart do not delight in him, nor seek him, as the God of salvation. What would a mother care for the admiration of her person, or a father for the admiration of his

talents, by a child who cared nothing about their parental love or relationship? They would not be satisfied. And can God be satisfied with any love, which has not both its source and centre in His own love to the world? Is there any love to Him, in any sentiment or emotion called forth by the wonders of Nature, or by the bounties of Providence, if the heart neither melt nor move on Calvary, or at the mercy-seat?

ALLEGORIES.

1. THE PHAROS OF THE NILE.

HILLEL, the holy, sat in the chair of Moses, and, at his feet, with the sons of the prophets, sat his only son, listening to the oracles of God. But Amram, whilst he seemed to listen like the young nightingale, to the parental lesson, was planning to forsake his father's

house, and his father's God. He had heard of "the wisdom of Egypt," and longed to decipher its mysteries, by tracing its hieroglyphic monuments. He knew that Moses was "learned in all the wisdom of Egypt," and had grown up to manhood amidst its pyramids and temples; and he suspected that the Hebrew law-giver had learned more from the Egyptian priests, than it was convenient to acknowledge. Their science, he thought, would unravel the mystery of the Mosaic miracles; and their ritual furnish the antetypes of Judean worship. Amram disliked both the system and the ceremonies of Judaism; and but for the miracles which attested it, and which he knew not how to disprove, he would have embraced at once the philosophy of Dedan and Deman. His own mind was powerful, and he imagined that the mighty mind of Moses had seized upon, and systematized, the occult principles of

Egyptian wisdom, as the basis of the Jewish theocracy. Amram was ambitious, and he imagined that if he could prove Moses a copyist, and thus disprove his inspiration, he might become the founder of a new religion, or, at least, divide the palm of immortality with the sages and hierophants of antiquity. As “a Hebrew of the Hebrews,” he saw nothing before him but mediocrity of name and rank. He disdained to flow, like Jordan, in one uniform channel; because, like Jordan, he must be lost in the Dead Sea of oblivion, however he swelled or swept on his Jewish passage to it. Any name that could be acquired in the temple or the sanhedrim, was not enough to gratify his ambition, nor to perpetuate his own name.—Judaism ! it was a system which he might not lawfully alter nor question, which admitted of no human improvements, and resented all human interference; which recog-

nised no moral distinction between genius and common-place minds, and gave no liberty to the Rabbi, which it withheld from the shepherd. Amram could not brook this. The eagle of Tadmor, he said, "was not made to be domesticated, like the stork of the desert, nor to be cooped up like the doves of Heshbon: the width of his wings, and the flashing of his eye, proclaim that space is his sphere, and the fountain of light his element.

In this haughty spirit Amram fled to Tyre, and embarked for Egypt. He could not, however, banish from his heart all the recollections of home. They awoke and sprung up at the touch of the most unlikely causes. All that was *new* in the scene and the society on board, recalled all that was *old* and familiar at home. A libation, or a hymn, to the God of the Winds, or of the Waters, compelled Amram to remember "the songs of Zion," and "the drink

offerings" of the Temple. A garland could not be thrown into the waves, nor a censer of incense burnt in the ship, without throwing back his thoughts to the Feast of Tabernacles, and the higher solemnities of the great day of atonement. And whilst he listened to the master of the ship, as he thundered out his absolute orders to the helmsman and the sailors, Amram *felt* that orders might be absolute without being unnecessary; and unintelligible, to him, without being unreasonable in themselves. This conviction was setting calmly in upon his mind, whilst wind and tide were in favour of the vessel; and it came in like a flood upon his soul, when the wind changed and rose to a hurricane. Then, strange orders multiplied, and sterner tones were employed by the captain. But they met the emergency: the vessel kept her path in the waters, and Amram felt that the captain was the best judge. He was

thus drawn, and then driven, to confess unto himself, that the vessel of the Jewish commonwealth might require laws and ordinances, which, though incomprehensible to him, were essential to her safety, in a world wholly given to idolatry. He almost repented of his experiment—misgivings of heart thronged in upon his spirit. But it was too late to retract. The tempest raged, “*and darkness was on the face of the deep.*” Amram felt then, that it was not by *science* that Moses divided the Red sea; and instinctively exclaimed—“The waters saw Thee! O God! the waters saw thee, and were afraid. At Thy rebuke they fled.”

But, at this moment, the Pharos of the Nile shone out in all its splendour; and, with its light, arose again all the visions of Amram. “It was,” he said, “to the ship, what Egypt was to the world, the pole-star to steer by. It was Egyptian light that flamed over Judea,

and flashed far out upon the three continents.” Whilst indulging this dream, the vessel was bearing up to the port, along a line of light which streamed from the beacon. But the light which thus divided the darkness, could not penetrate the waters. It flashed upon their surface, but did not reveal their secrets. The ship struck upon a sand-bank, and could not be got off. Rafts were then the only refuge. On one of these Amram pushed off with a single oar. He brought it close upon the line of light, and impiously said, that “the Pharos was his pillar of fire.” Gradually, however, the line of light became shorter and fainter, as he came nearer to the port. The beacon could not illuminate its own base. Its splendours flashed far out upon the distant waves, but left the breakers around it in deepened darkness. Amram felt then that the Pharos was not the pillar of fire. “May it not be, after all,” he

said, "but too true an emblem of the wisdom of Egypt? which may shine fair afar off, whilst 'the shadow of death' is around the Egyptians themselves. How many things occur to shake my confidence! I must not be too rash. If I escape, I will judge impartially. But—I will judge for myself, at all hazards." Thus he reasoned and resolved, whilst striving in vain to catch a glimpse of the landing-place. The Pharos threw no light upon it.

The God of his fathers did not, however, forsake Amram, although he had forsaken Him. His cries for help rose unpitied or unheard under the beacon, but they entered the ear of the God of Israel. "He sent from above, and drew him out of many waters." This signal deliverance silenced, for a time, his doubts of a special providence. He pondered over it until he was almost pleased with the doctrine, as it bore upon himself. There seemed a sublimity

in the idea that an invisible hand guarded him ! Might he not appeal to the fact, in attestation of whatever system of religion he chose to put forward ? What was the escape of Moses from the reeds of the Nile, compared with his rescue from its dark and stormy waters ? But—what, too, was *one* miracle in his favour, compared with the host of miracles which accredited the mission of Moses ? Amram saw this at a glance, and felt too, that if he admitted a special providence in his own case, he could not deem Moses unworthy of similar honour ; and thus the axe would be laid at once to the root of his objections against Judaism. For, if providences could prove the divinity of a system, that of Moses was demonstrated. Amram, therefore, forced himself back amongst his old doubts and cavils upon the doctrine of providence. He could not, however, shake off the suspicion, that the Pharos was an emblem of

the wisdom of Egypt—not, indeed, intended to be so—but truly so. The idea took hold of him at the very crisis of his danger, and it continued to haunt him wherever he went. Whether he saw the people kneeling before their colossal idols, or the priests ministering at their emblazoned altars, both seemed to him—under the Pharos! The devotion of the former, and the mysterious deportment of the latter, would tell well, in song or story, at a distance; and might even suggest high thoughts in a foreign land, as the Pharos could guide distant vessels; but where Ammon and the Ibis, Isis and Anubis, were alternately worshipped, the worshippers are truly under the Pharos! Whatever the system may seem or suggest to those who are afar off, it can only render the darkness visible to those who are nearest.

Amram was too keen a discerner of facts to overlook this. Neither the antiquity nor the

mystery, the splendour nor the power of the system, could blind him to its absurdities. He had no love, and but little veneration, for Judaism ; but he loathed *mean* ideas, whether embodied in miniature or colossal forms. A hawk-headed idol was, to him, a caricature of omniscience ; and a ram-headed idol, a parody of omnipotence. Idols, in every form, awoke his indignation, and made him blush for man. He blushed for himself too at this moment ; for the gods of Egypt, by disgusting him, had thrown his mighty mind, full-toned, upon the Revelation of the true God. “ By what but inspiration,” he exclaimed, “ could Moses have conceived and embodied the character of Jehovah ? there is nothing in these statues to suggest a feature of it. There is every thing in them to chain down the mind amongst the senses. Brute force is the character of all their power ; and passion, of all their beauty. What

is vast, conveys no idea of infinity; what is durable, no idea of eternity. Nothing is incomprehensible, except what is not worth comprehending. Even Jupiter Ammon was chiselled under the Pharos ! ”

Amram turned from the idols to the altars of Egypt. There the sacrifices were numerous, and the process of immolation solemn. For a moment, he seemed in the temple of his fathers. Blood flowed with equal profusion, and victims blazed with equal splendour. But here—the hecatomb terminated in *itself*. It looked back to no divine origin, nor forward to any divine end. Sacrifice was a shadow without a “substance.” Priests offered it with solemnity; but no prophet stood by to interpret it. It shadowed forth no coming Saviour, nor any real atonement. Amram felt all this; and confessed to himself, that whatever mystery hung over the Mosaic sacrifices, they did not terminate in

themselves, but all anticipated "good things to come." They were to him the *problems* of Judaism; but in Judaism alone he found a rational origin, or a useful design for sacrifice. As the type of a real atonement, its flames irradiated the past and the future with mysterious glory.

From the altars of Egypt, Amram turned to its tombs. He was still willing to detect or degrade Moses in something; and here man seemed destined for immortality! The embalming of the dead, and the embellishment of their sepulchres, threw all the sepulture of Judea into the shade. "Were not the pyramids, and the catacombs of Memphis and Abydos, bold and brilliant assertions of a glorious immortality? Were they not the store-houses of the resurrection? Judaism whispered the hope of immortality; but, here, was it not *thundered* through all the caverns of the grave?" Under this im-

pression Amram proceeded to examine them. He found, however, at every step, that whatever Egyptian sepulture implied for man, it implied for beasts and reptiles. They too reposed in all the enshrinements of mortality. Kings and crickets were equally embalmed and entombed. Amram felt as under the Pharos again ! In vain did the priests tell him of *Amenthes*, the Hades of the Egyptians. The return of souls to reanimate their bodies, was blended with the immortality of the Ibis and Ichneumon, and regulated by no law, nor related to any specific time. Then, the translation of Enoch, and the ascension of Elijah to heaven, came before Amram with a glory unseen formerly. They shone out, like the sun and the moon, upon the Mosaic doctrine of immortality ; and showed, at a glance, that Judaism was based upon the hope of eternal life ; and dim only by the splendours of its theocratic providence.

Amram had now seen enough of Egypt. He said, "I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father." Hillel, the holy, saw, at once, that his son was as weary of Egyptian wisdom, as the Tribes were of Egyptian bondage. He therefore welcomed him under the wings of the cherubim again; and, from the chair of Moses, magnified the God of Israel, who had, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, "brought his son out of Egypt."

II. UNHALLOWED CURIOSITY REPROVED.

AMRAPHEL, the son of Aholibamah, was of the nobles of Israel, and in the flower of youth. His mind was ardent as the autumnal lightning, and luxuriant as the vineyards of Engedi. He

had sat, from boyhood, at the feet of Benkadesh, the son of Hillel, the holy, hearing the words of wisdom, in doctrines which dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew. But CURIOSITY was the ruling passion of his soul—the star WORMWOOD, which made the waters of knowledge bitter. Like the wild gourds of Gilgal, in the great pot of the sons of the Prophets, it turned wholesome food into “death.” He became more curious than wise—more speculative than devotional. He would not have entered the Temple without putting his “shoes off his feet;” but if allowed, he would have walked into the HOLY OF HOLIES without atoning blood, or intercessory incense. He would not have approached the mercy-seat without humble prostration before the Shechinah; but, if allowed, he would not have hesitated to open its sides, to examine the pot of manna and Aaron’s rod that budded. Even at the risk of

overturning the golden cherubim upon the ark of the covenant, he would not have resisted the temptation to lift up its sacred lid, that he might handle the tables of the law : and yet he would have *given up* the whole of the law, and the prophets too, to obtain possession of the mysterious URIM and THUMMIM for one day. All forbidden knowledge, like the forbidden fruit of Paradise, inflamed his curiosity. The vision of the LADDER OF BETHEL would not have gratified Amraphel, unless he had been permitted to *climb* it, and to question its ascending and descending angels : but wherever the oracle of God commanded him to *stop*, there, chiefly, he longed for the wings of a dove, yea, for “the wings of the morning,” that he might *begin* his flight of discovery.

Amraphel loved to visit, alone, the solitary places which had been consecrated by the visits of the Shechinah, and heightened in their na-

tural sublimity by the altars of the Patriarchs, and the miracles of Moses. On entering such "holy ground," his enjoyment was perfect, and his emotions holy; but their sweetness was soon imbittered by his restless curiosity. If he knelt under the oaks of Mamre, where Abraham worshipped, his prayers soon subsided into idle ponderings upon the nature of the angels who could *eat* with Abraham. If he trembled at the altar on Mount Moriah, on which Isaac was laid, his awe soon relapsed into flippant doubts of Isaac's *willingness* to become a burnt offering; not considering that Isaac was, and knew himself to *be*, a type of the Lamb of God. If, on ascending Sinai, Amraphel said, with Moses, "I exceedingly fear and quake," he was not long upon the mount, until he was wholly engrossed with the question of Moses' *fasting*, and with examining whether Moses was likely to have found "honey from

the rock," and wild berries in the clefts of the rocks. When in the desert of Midian, he would have given far more to be able to distinguish "the bush that burned," than to have seen the cloud of glory that enshrined it: and yet if the bush had been known, such was the caprice of his taste, that he would have spurned it because "the glory was departed." Things, *as they were*, never pleased him. Thus, wherever he went, "the evil spirit" of idle or unhallowed curiosity came upon him; nor could the harp of Judah charm it away. He hurled his perverse taste, like the javelin of Saul, against both earth and heaven. Benkadesh feared deeply for Amraphel. The aged Rabbi saw in his pupil

"The great sublime of WEAKNESS and of FORCE."

He regarded him as a star in the Judean firmament; but felt that he was a "wandering star," and feared that he might strike off into "the

blackness of darkness for ever." One day Benkadesh found him on Mount Horeb, in the cleft of a rock : Amraphel was sure that it was the *very* cleft in which MOSES had stood, when Jehovah passed by proclaiming GOODNESS to be his GLORY.

" All hail, master ! " said Amraphel, as Benkadesh approached ; " you find me at last in my true element : this is the chief seat of the sublime. My voice awakens the very echoes which answered to the voice of Jehovah : my feet press the precise spot on which Moses stood with breathless awe, while the Shechinal vision passed by. I would rather have seen that " great sight," than have beheld the Spirit moving on the face of chaos in the morning of creation, for I would have contrived to see *more* than Moses did."

" Amraphel, my son ! " said the old man, " secret things belong unto God : enough was

said and shown to satisfy a humble mind, and to render the rocks of Horeb seats of sweet meditation. All the land of Canaan is flowing with the *milk* of instruction, and the *honey* of holy recollections."

" Rabbi, it is well said : Palestine is more than *sublime*. Traces of the ETERNAL ONE linger on the mountains of Judea, linking them inseparably to heaven. I have seen the Pyramids, the Acropolis, and the Aventine; they reach not to heaven, for the heavens were never *bowed* over them. It is like visiting the dark and deserted orbits of the fallen MORNING STARS : they awaken only painful remembrances ; but here—whilst some recollections are very painful, many are inspiring as holy oil, and all full of immortality."

" *Painful* recollections suggested here ! son of Aholibamah," said Benkadesh ; " where can you find them in that vision of GLORY which is

all goodness? The canker-worm of your curiosity would turn the fruit of the tree of life into poison. Cease, my son, to pervert knowledge.”

“ Rabbi, I have *sat* at your feet : now I *stand* at your right hand ; but I will confess like ACHAN. There is one thing in the voice from the cloud, which sets my teeth on edge, as if I had eaten sour grapes—which ‘ breaks them as with gravel stones.’ It is this—‘ *The Lord said, I will have mercy on whom I WILL have mercy.*’ Such sovereignty shocks me : it is a darker cloud upon the *will* of God than the thick darkness which veiled his *form* on Sinai. If my fate be *fixed* from eternity by his will, I am not a free agent : if the book of life has settled my destiny, no attention to the books of Moses can alter it. Rabbi ! this, ‘ ON WHOM I WILL,’ brings down the high recollections, as if Lebanon sunk to the level of the hill Mizar, or Jordan became as the brook Cedron. If good-

ness be the glory of Jehovah, how is his will thus *arbitrary* ? ”

“ Amraphel,” said Benkadesh, solemnly, “ thou art truly named—a *speaker of hidden things*. AHOLIBAMAH, thy father, must have designated thee in *vision*. May that vision be no farther realized in thy character ! The *cloud* of it was as a ‘ man’s hand,’ when thou wast a lad on Carmel ; and now it is spreading over and darkening the whole heaven of thy spirit. But, hear me, son of Aholibamah : gird up now thy loins like a man ; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Dost thou *need* MERCY ? It is because thou art a *sinner* : and surely a sinner cannot *claim* it as his *right*. Canst thou *compel* God to have mercy on thee, or *force* him to save ? Canst thou be saved *against his will* ? If not, salvation must be, in all cases, ‘ *agreeably to the will* of Jehovah ;’ and our duty, to cast ourselves upon his good will.”

“ Rabbi, thou reasonest well thus far : but decrees—DECREES ! they have bound up the will of God. Were there no decrees, I might throw myself upon the *freedom* of the Divine will with perfect safety.”

“ Amraphel, is Jehovah *immutable* ? ”

“ Verily, he changeth not.”

“ My son, abide by thine own acknowledgment. If Jehovah be essentially *unchangeable*, he was immutable from *eternity* ; and therefore his will would have been the *same* as it is, if there had been *no* decrees ; and our *dependence* on his will must have been the same too. Decrees did not give laws to his will ; but his will originated the decrees : and were they all annihilated again, his will would remain the same in their *absence*, as ever ; and therefore our duty remains the same in their *presence*. What we have to do *under* them, we should have had to do equally if *without* them—to

throw our souls upon the good pleasure of the Divine will for all the mercy we need. And what will could be so safely trusted as his will, whose glory is goodness?"

" Rabbi Benkadesh ! if I understand thee aright, thy wisdom has made me wise unto salvation. Light of Israel ! I see light clearly. It must be so : the will of the IMMUTABLE ONE would be—*must* be the same *with* decrees as *without* them. I see it ! they are the *forms*, not the *fetters* of the Divine will. But, why did not Benkadesh pour this light upon the school of the Prophets in Carmel ? Had it been my *morning* star, I had never followed the meteors of *fatalism* at DEDAN, or DEMAN."

" Son of Aholibamah, my instructions on Carmel were ' milk for babes ; ' whereas ' strong men ' can hardly digest this food. Even HILLEL, my father, (be his memory blessed !) found it too ' strong meat.' Listen,—I reveal both

his strength and his weakness : they may teach three more wisdom :—

“ ‘ Hillel, the holy, wished to explore and to explain the mystery of the Divine *decrees* ; and in order to prepare himself for such deep meditation, he spent two days in fasting and prayer. On the third, he ascended the top of Carmel, and sat down beneath the shade of a juniper tree. Here his mind collected its force, to cast its thoughts towards heaven and hell, eternity and infinity. But his thoughts recoiled on his own breast, like stones from the top of Gerizim. Hillel, at length, tired of his fruitless contemplation, turned, by chance, his eyes towards a spot of earth not far distant, on which something seemed to be *moving*. It was a MOLE, which, in his darksome abode, had perceived that there was such a thing as LIGHT ; and, forgetting the *weakness* of his organs, desired to contemplate the SUN at mid-day.

But no sooner had he left his element, than, blinded by the splendour of meridian beams, he wished himself again in his subterraneous lodgment. But ere he could accomplish his retreat, an eagle snatched him away, and flew with her prey towards the valley of the son of HINNOM. Blessed be God, said Hillel, who hath conveyed instruction to the mind of his servant, and thus warned him of the folly and danger of prying into that knowledge, which its *difficulty* shows to be *forbidden*.' Thus RABBI SMITHIUS wrote of Hillel, my father; and added, 'with respect to the decrees of God, the sons of men are moles, incapable of exploring the source of light.' "

III. ZEBAH AND JAMBRES.

ZEBAH, the priest, stood by the altar of the morning sacrifice, calm as the ascending column of its smoke, and glowing with devotion as its

lambent flame. His spirit, like Manoah's angel, seemed to ascend in the flames of the sacrifice. His tears were as the dew of Hermon, and his eyes "as the eyelids of the morning;" for he saw, in the shadows of good things to come, glimpses of their *substance*—CHRIST CRUCIFIED. "He shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter," said ZEBAH, "and make his soul an offering for sin. In faith of that real atonement, I present this typical one. We may not worship the God of our fathers otherwise; for without shedding of blood there is no remission." JAMBRES, the Sadducee, overheard the old man, and cast a scornful glance upon the priest and the offering. As Zebah retired from the altar, Jambres laid hold of his phylactery, and said, "Is not the God of Abraham our FATHER? I am a father; and to-day my children blessed my nativity. My first-born honoured my birth-day by a song of DEGREES, and the child of my

old age brought me a bunch of wild flowers from the banks of Siloam. I accepted both with equal pleasure, because both were offered with equal sincerity. And will not the God of Israel welcome any form of sincere worship?" "Son," said Zebah, "remember CAIN brought of *the fruit of the ground* an offering unto the Lord : but unto Cain and his offering, the Lord had not respect. ABEL brought a lamb to the altar ; but unto Abel and his offering, the Lord had respect. Fire from the Shechinah consecrated the *sacrificial* worship only. And had JAMBRES *forbidden* an offering of wild flowers, the gift would have been an insult."

No. II.

CHRIST'S PARABLE OF DEVELOPMENT.

THOSE of us who have been related to, or intimate with, a very eminent Christian, have often felt more than reprov'd, whilst studying her character: we have felt discouraged by the very excellences which most endeared her to us, because it seemed impossible for us to imitate them successfully. This is chiefly felt, when she is very eminent in those points of character, in which we ourselves are most defective. If we are rash or irritable, her calmness and prudence seem beyond our reach. If we are slothful, or soon weary in well doing, her diligence and perseverance, whilst they show us our duty and make us ashamed, lead us also to

suspect that our irresoluteness is unconquerable. If we are peevish or impatient under the trials of life, her meekness and submission appear impracticable in our own case. If we are unguarded with our lips, or capricious in our deportment, her equanimity and wisdom seem too much for us to acquire; and if we are not very devotional in our spirit, nor very spiritual in our conversation, her holy unction, and her high relish for divine things, awaken a fear, that we shall never excel in heavenly-mindedness.

Discoveries of this kind are both mortifying and painful to every heart which desires to be "right with God." It is, indeed, humiliating to see and feel the defects of our own character and spirit, and to feel too as if we should never get over them, nor be able to subdue them !

Some make a bad use of this humiliating discovery. They conclude that there are certain points about their character which cannot

be rectified, and thus come to reconcile themselves to their own faults and failings. They see that these things will be sad drawbacks upon their respectability, and comfort, and usefulness; but they make up their mind to risk these consequences, rather than encounter the trouble of trying to be consistent. They are conscious that they cannot be loved or esteemed much through life, and that they will not be at all missed by the church or the world when they die; they are sure that their character will have no weight, and their memory no fragrance; aware that they will not gain friends, nor conciliate enemies; and certain that if they are just borne with in society, that that will be all they can expect; and yet, in the face of all this, they will not make an effort to emancipate themselves from the galling chain of temper or habit! but recklessly submit to live unloved, and to die unmissed.

Now as this might, in our own case, be the

effect of giving way to the rash idea, that it is impossible for us to acquire a holy consistency of character, it is of the utmost importance to guard against such a suspicion. There is no real impossibility of becoming what others have become, nor of being what they have been, so long as there is no lack of the grace which made them what they were. Besides, the best did not acquire all their worth of character at once, nor some of their peculiar excellences soon. What was ripe and rich as "the full corn in the ear," before they died, was "first the blade." And when their piety was but in the blade, they, like ourselves, were often afraid that it would not ripen into "the full corn in the ear." They did not, however, "despise the day of small things," nor neglect to cherish the beginnings of the work of grace ; and therefore, He who began that good work, carried it on in its goodness, until their character was matured and confirmed.

It is of the utmost importance to understand and be familiar with the sober facts of growth in grace : for we are prone to despise it in “ the blade,” as too small to be worth cherishing ; and to despair of it in the ripe ear, as too great to be imitated by us.

That we may guard against both these extremes, I propose to trace the rise and progress of personal piety, agreeably to the fine emblem in the Parable. According to the Saviour’s account of the matter, the kingdom or the reign of God in the soul, begins,

In tenderness of heart, and humility of mind.

“ It is first the blade:”—and the blade of the young corn is, at first, peculiarly tender and lowly. A drop of rain or dew will bend the feeble leaf down to the cold ground, and the slightest breath of wind make it tremble.

Is there any likeness between this familiar fact, and the feelings of recent converts ?

I pause before answering this question ; for on a subject intended to regulate your ideas of a work of grace, I would no more hazard a fanciful remark, than I would a profane one. I know too well by experience, the anxieties of an awakened and inquiring mind, to trifle even for a moment with its solicitude.

Here, however, I am on safe ground. Tenderness is the chief characteristic of corn in the blade, and likewise of true piety at the beginning. The first proof of the good seed of the gospel having taken root in the soul, is, that it makes the conscience tender, the heart tender, the feelings tender !

We cannot then look back upon our past guilt and folly, without melting emotions of grief and shame. We are shocked at the review of our former life, even if there be no enormities darkening the retrospect.

We cannot look forward to the wiles of Satan,

or the snares of the world, without shrinking with dread from the bare idea of being betrayed and entangled again, by our old habits and temptations. The heart quivers, lest its holy resolutions should fail !

We cannot look within without being alternately pained, ashamed, and alarmed, to find so much ignorance, coldness, and deadness, in regard to divine and eternal things. Wherever we look we see that which makes us say with Job, " I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Thus, like the young corn, the young convert (however old in years) can hardly lift the leaf of her profession above the clod. She is afraid to assume the Christian name, although all her soul is intent upon being " altogether " a Christian. She almost trembles at the bare idea of thinking to unite herself sacramentally with the Church of Christ.

In the temple, she worships and weeps like the publican.

In her closet, she sometimes feels like the sinking apostle upon the stormy sea, when he cried out, " Lord, save—I perish !"

In her inmost soul, she feels that if the Lord do save her, she will be one of the wonders of sovereign and free grace.

Even in the world, and whilst busiest, she cannot forget what she felt in the sanctuary and the closet, when the solemnities and glories of salvation and eternity opened upon her mind. She must pause now and then, wherever she is, to steal a glance at her soul, and the Saviour of souls ! This is the living, though the lowly, plant of grace in the heart ; for it is first " the blade." Oh ! watch it, water it, prize it highly, expose it fully and frequently to the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, and of the Sun of Righteousness. Out of such blades of serious concern, have sprung up all the stalks of holy principle, and all the ripe ears of holy charac-

ter, which have ever blessed the earth, or been reaped by heaven.

The leaf must not, therefore, be despised nor neglected, if the full corn in the ear is desired. The tender plant must not be disturbed, if you would have it fruitful.

Some treat their first experience of the power of the Gospel, as children do the roots and seeds in their garden : they are for ever pulling them out to see if they be growing. We tell children to let them alone, if they want them to spring up and blow. Now when the serious, in their fear of deceiving themselves, and in their solicitude to be right, do nothing but suspect, and question, and torture, as on a rack, their own feelings, desires, and motives, instead of acting upon their convictions of duty and interest, how can they make any progress in happiness or holiness ?

It is, indeed, of immense, of infinite import-

ance, to guard against self-deception and hasty conclusions in our own favour. Many have deceived themselves, and we also are prone to mistake. But still, it is not fear alone that will prevent self-deception. Merely keeping "watch and ward" upon the heart, may keep out hypocrisy; but it does not let in hope; and whilst hope is not admitted, the best feelings will not ripen into principles, nor fix the character.

It will not do, therefore, to go on saying, "I am afraid to hope, afraid to venture." Afraid of what? Afraid lest the blood of the Lamb be insufficient to save you? Afraid lest God should be unfaithful to his promises? "No." Of what then are you afraid?

Whatever it be, I pray you to consider; there is nothing to remove your fear, if there be not enough in the work of Christ and the word of God to banish it. If Christ has not done enough

to warrant hope, He will do no more. If God has not said enough to warrant hope, He will say no more. Both have finished; the one, his atoning work; and the other, his inviting word.

“ But,” you say, “ the work of the Spirit, that is not finished; and what I fear is, that it is not begun in my heart.”

Well, the work of the Spirit is, to glorify the Saviour, by showing us from the word, that Christ has done enough to warrant hope. It is no part of the Spirit's work to give us such a good opinion of ourselves, as would encourage us to trust in Christ. We, indeed, want to see and feel something good in ourselves, before we venture to apply to the Saviour. But we shall look and wait in vain for this, so far as the Holy Spirit is concerned. His work is, to show us what is bad in ourselves; and that that is so much and so bad, that there is nothing between us and perishing, but the blood of Christ. Now,

if, after all your waiting and looking for something good in yourself to warrant hope, you find nothing, but are only kept from despairing, just by what you see in Christ himself, it really ought to occur to your own mind, that the Spirit of God has been doing much in you and for you, although, hitherto, you have not understood his doings well.

Weigh this ! ye who are afraid to take up the hope of salvation, upon the single ground of what Christ has done to save. That is enough to warrant you. You will never find any thing more. There is nothing more to find ! Throw yourselves therefore upon Him at once and fully, and fear nothing ; for he is able to save unto the uttermost.

The second step in the progress of the work of grace is, from tenderness of heart to strength of principle.

From " the blade " to " the ear."

When a stalk of corn shoots out the green ear from the sheath, it too is tender ; but it is full of sap, and erect in its posture. It is high above the earth, and, though heavy wind or rain bow it down to the ground occasionally, its tendency is to stand upright.

Here, again, I would carefully avoid all fancies. It is, however, the sober fact, that a work of grace proceeds from tenderness of heart, on to strength of principle.

The convert ventures (after many struggles, and fears, and ponderings) to avow herself as a convert. She goes openly, although timidly, over to the " Lord's side." Her convictions of duty and interest are too strong for her fears, and she gives herself to the church, as well as to the Lord, " according to the will of God." And having done so deliberately and solemnly, from that moment she holds herself to be a pledged woman, sacramentally bound by all

that is sacred, to fulfil her vows, and maintain her character. Still, however, her character is but in "the ear," at this time. As a whole, it is forming; but as a whole it is not fixed, nor uniform. Immediately before and after her first approach to the table of the Lord, there is a fine development of character takes place. Not for display, but as much from growth, as when the swelling ear bursts from its sheath. It is not character put on for the occasion, but put forth by her principles. It is the effect, not of an effort, but of the sweet and sanctifying influence of serious thought, fervent prayer, and unusual fellowship with experienced Christians. She is doing any thing but acting a part: she is acting out her convictions of duty and propriety, her sense of gratitude and obligation.

The work is, however, new to her; and, therefore, not altogether natural in all things. She is breaking off her old habits, and forming better;

but her new habits do not settle at once. Even the old ones seem, at times, as if they would resume their dominion. She discovers, indeed, that she is weaker, and that her heart is worse, than she suspected at first. She finds that she is not so much reconciled to all the way of duty, as she is to the way of salvation. She sees and feels that there is more both of work and warfare before her, than she imagined at the outset. And, by and by, comes the question—"Can I go on?" The pause of the soul, at this point, is awful! Going on, seems hopeless! Going back, is horrid! "Back to sins which have wrung my heart! Back to habits which must ruin my soul! Back to company which I can never respect! Back from the mercy-seat, though going on to the judgment-seat! Back from the cross, and hell meeting me!" Now is the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, between the old and the new nature! This, however, is

the storm which strengthens her principles by striking their roots deeper in her soul. She is afraid to go forward ; but far more afraid to go back ! She, therefore, determines to gird up her loins anew, and to throw aside every weight, and to grapple with her besetting sin, that she may run with patience the race set before her.

It is, my sisters, by a succession of these pauses and starts, that principle is strengthened, and character settled, until the believer is fixed in this final resolution, to go on at all hazards, trying to act as a believer, however she may feel.

Now this is just the point which some of us are come to. The blade is grown unto the green ear, and some of the grains are turning a little yellow, and some of them swelling, and there is sap in all the ear of our character. There is nothing fully ripe ; but much that is ripening ; nothing that is rotting.

Oh ! this is worth keeping from blast and

blight. We must not think of despairing of its coming to maturity !

It is, however, well and necessary to remind ourselves here, that one false step may prove fatal to our character ! If our honesty, our temperance, our virtue, fail once, farewell to character for ever, and to usefulness ! Is this too hard ?

The only answer I can return is, I do not wish it to be less hard in my own case.

There is no small degree of growth going forward at this moment by these hints ! Moments like this, are like those days in spring, which make us say, we almost see the corn growing. God sees his own kingdom growing in our hearts ; and we feel it !

Thus, also, as well as by other means, He makes his people revive as the corn, and grow as the vine.

Having thus seen how the principles of a holy character are formed and fostered, let us

trace how gracious principle and character are ripened.

Whenever Christian character has won from us the acknowledgment, that it was, indeed, "the full corn in the ear," or ripe for heaven, the following things will, in general, be found to have had a mighty influence in ripening it.

Regular attendance upon the public means of grace. We never see an eminent Christian character amongst those who are irregular and unsteady in their attendance and attachment to the house of God. They are always irregular and unsteady in something else. All regular worshippers are not, indeed, consistent characters; but none of the irregular are consistent. They are always inconsistent in more respects than this one.

On the other hand, all the eminent characters we have known or heard of, have been distinguished for loving and revering the house of

God. It has been to their souls, what their own house was to their bodies—their home. Its spiritual and temporal welfare lay near to their hearts. They identified their own happiness with its prosperity, weeping when Zion wept, and rejoicing when Zion was glad.

And what deserves special notice is, that just in proportion as the knowledge and experience of such persons were great, their love to the sanctuary was great too. Accordingly, even in old age, and when very infirm, what efforts they made to “appear before God in Zion?” And, when utterly unable to come out, how their fond recollections lingered on the sanctuary, how their souls longed to be there, as in the days of old!

Remember this, and be aware that if we would be flourishing and fruitful in old age, we must be planted “in the house of the Lord.” A half-hearted attachment to Divine ordinances,

will leave our character but half formed and very unripe.

Ripeness of Christian character has always been connected with an intimate acquaintance with the word of God. It is, indeed, usually connected with the love of reading good books in general; for an uninformed woman never acquires much weight of character, whatever be the real worth of her character in other respects. It is, however, Scriptural knowledge that ripens, and thus endears, the character of an eminently Christian woman. When the word of God "dwells in her richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," she can speak a word in season to them who are weary, can sanctify passing events by the suitable application of some text, and can throw light and loveliness upon general conversation, by the timely and happy introduction of some "lively oracle."

~~Such~~ a woman, by her promptness and pru-

dence, in handling the word of God, makes us feel, that it is worth knowing; that it is sharp and powerful; and that it is, indeed, a light to the feet, and a lamp to the path. Remember this, and be aware, that intimacy with the Holy Scriptures is intimately connected with the maturity of a holy character.

Ripeness of Christian character is much promoted by Christian fellowship. The fellowship of a church, in which the members know something of each other's religious experience, leads to mutual friendships, which lead on to mutual confidence. One and another becomes attached to each other, by an interchange of views, feelings, and experience; and thus they improve each other, and hold themselves reciprocally pledged to live and love as heirs together of the grace of life.

The happy influence of such friendships is incalculable! You never knew an eminent chris-

tian amongst those who have no pious friends. All the believers who have won our esteem, or been at all useful in the Church of Christ, have given their confidence to some of their friends, and gained theirs in return. Their friendships have, indeed, been select, but they have all had friends, and have ascribed to their counsel and knowledge much of their own comfort and steadfastness in the ways of God. How much some of us owe to our intercourse with judicious and experienced Christians! What "sweet counsel" we have had with some who are departed!

Ripeness of Christian character is much promoted, by discovering the influence which weight and worth of character secure. The high estimation in which sterling character is held, has a mighty influence in producing and sustaining sterling character.

Some are ashamed, if not afraid, to own this, because they deem the motive selfish, and the

complacency pride. But deem as they may, they cannot but feel pleased, when they find that their character gains due respect and influence. The discovery that the wise and good think well of them, have confidence in them, notice them, make advances towards them, or meet their advances more than half-way; this, whatever sciolists may say of it, is a discovery never made without as much profit to a woman's character, as pleasure to her heart. From that moment she feels that she has a character! and all her soul rushes into a high resolution to keep it. She feels, through all her soul, that it is worth keeping, both for its own sake, and for the esteem it secures. She sees, as in the light of eternity, that no gain nor indulgence, which lowered her character, could make her so happy as her good name does.

Ripeness of Christian character is much promoted by finding, that we can be of some use

both in the world and in the church. This is another discovery, which has a holy influence upon female character. And in general, it is really a discovery. Very few pious women step forward to be useful, from an idea that they have talents to be useful. They are drawn forward to visit the sick, or to advise the poor; and are themselves more surprised than any one else is, to find that they are not unacceptable, nor altogether unsuccessful. Thus they are encouraged to do what they can to promote the good of others. When, lo! they soon discover new motives for the maintenance of their own character. They must not defeat their prayers, nor their advices, by their example. They feel that they are pledged women; solemnly bound to give weight to their exertions, by the worth of their characters. “What would that poor man, that poor woman, that young person, whom I have visited and counselled, think, if I

were to act unworthy of my profession?—This is fine ballast in the stormy sea of life! We cannot carry too much of it.

The trials of life have a mighty influence in ripening Christian character. As the sharp winds and frosts of Autumn, as well as the sun of Summer, assist in ripening the corn; so the afflictions and calamities of life, as well as the means of grace, aid in maturing the character. What, indeed, would any of us have been, had not the rod of Providence, as well as the sceptre of Grace, touched us at some tender point? It is not David alone, who has verified the oracle, “It is good for me that I was afflicted.” You never yet saw a mother in Israel, nor a virgin of Judah, whom in all things you wished to resemble, who were not purified in the furnace. Be not too much afraid of God’s furnace! It consumes nothing but dross. You would not have been what you are, but for its purifying

influence: and, therefore, what you wish to be, may involve the necessity of new trials of both your faith and patience. Their trial, however, is more precious than that of gold!

No. III.

DEVELOPMENTS BY ETERNITY.

UNTIL the soul *set* itself to pass, or *allow* itself to be drawn, fully within the veil of Eternity, it will not remain long enough in the invisible world to imbibe much of its spirit, or even to acquire much acquaintance with itself. All *forced* visits of spirit to the world of spirits, are sure to be short visits. The soul will try to get out again as soon as it can, and will bring away no more of the impressions made on it by eternal things, than just what it cannot shake off.

Even forced visits are, however, not unimportant, happily ! A very short glimpse of Heaven or Hell, if very vivid whilst it lasts, is sure to

leave its *marks* upon the heart or the conscience. I certainly do not wonder at this; but I do rejoice, that such is the fact. For, had not Eternity the power of producing strong impressions in a little time, and in spite of ourselves, such is our reluctance to think of it, that we should never get under its influence, as a check or a charm. Accordingly, all our *first* impressions of Eternity were forced impressions. We did not court them. We did not wish for them. We did not expect them when they came. The sermon, the book, or the event, from which they sprung, caught us by surprise. We were not, indeed, *cheated* into our first sense of the infinite value of eternal things; but we were involuntarily drawn into it. All our voluntary contemplation of Immortality since, has grown out of, or been grafted upon, a conviction, as unsought for, when it came, as the light which fell upon Saul of Tarsus in the way to Damascus.

It is also worthy of observation, that the first effect of the light of Eternity upon the spirit, like that of the light from heaven upon Paul, is usually alarming. It awes, if not agitates, the mind. For it is a very rare thing indeed, to be fascinated with the glory of Heaven, before fearing the wrath to come. Heaven does not win much upon the heart, until Hell is dreaded. Accordingly, although a bereaved mother finds her only relief and consolation in tracing the spirit of her infant into the heaven of heavens, and up to the throne of God and the Lamb, even this sweet hope has no permanent influence upon herself, unless it awaken some fear on her own account. The consciousness that her child is now as pure and happy as the cherubim of glory, might be expected to "set her affections on things above," seeing it is unclouded by uncertainty or suspense. But, cloudless as this joy is, and dear as it is to her heart, her thoughts

soon cease to wonder, or wander, amidst the glories of Heaven, unless she allow them to meet the question—"What must I do to inherit Eternal Life?"—how can I obtain a title or meetness for that inheritance in Light, where my child is a cherub? If this inquiry do not arrest her, she soon tires—not indeed of the fond hope that her beloved one is happy—but of dwelling upon the nature or the degree of celestial happiness.

And if a glorified babe, shining as a star in the firmament of heaven, be not a sufficient magnet to draw, nor a sufficient link to bind, a mother's heart heavenwards, unless she fear as well as hope for herself, what can do so?

Again, I say, that Heaven does not win much upon the heart, until the conscience point to the wrath to come, or to the mighty change which must pass upon our souls, before they can be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

It is not as Heaven, exactly, that Eternity affects our minds at first. Neither is it (I readily grant) as Hell entirely, that Eternity arrests us. The usual impression of Eternity is rather a vast—solemn—and startling, though vague, idea—of both! The futurity of our spirits, like the futurity of our time, rises up before us, at first, not as light, nor as darkness; not as joy, nor as sorrow; but as a strange and startling vision of awful uncertainties and deep solemnities. We feel our Immortality, without daring to define it. We cannot disbelieve nor doubt it; but we can hardly dwell a moment upon either its dark or its bright side. Both “the lights and shadows” of Eternity pain the eyes of the mind, for a time.

Accordingly, the first transforming or practical influence of Eternity upon us, is, usually, a keen sense of the shortness and uncertainty of time; and of the infatuated folly of living as if there were no hereafter. We may not feel as if

the vision of Eternity had brought the valley of the shadow of death nearer to us ; but we do feel that death-like shadows fall from it, upon all the amusements of life, and upon many of the pursuits of life. Music, painting, and even general literature, start up before us, as *mockeries* to an immortal soul, and as *murderers* of precious time. It seems to us little short of madness, to have given our best hours and energies to things which can have no place in Eternity, and which are no preparation for it. We can hardly believe our own senses or recollections, that we had ever been so pleased and amused with trifles, as actually to forget our souls and salvation. Even the necessary and proper duties of life seem somewhat unwise, in kind or degree, then.

There is some extravagance, certainly, in this extreme view of the things of time and sense : but it is *moderation*, compared with the mad-

ness of excluding "the things which are unseen and eternal." The extravagance of despising or dreading earthly things, corrects itself soon, and does no harm even whilst it lasts. Not so, however, does the dislike of eternal things operate. It has no tendency to correct itself. It increases with age, and strengthens by indulgence. It begins in heedlessness, and ends in hatred of them.

It is, therefore, neither a matter of wonder, nor of regret, that the first clear sight of Eternal realities, should place all temporal things in an almost *contemptible* light for a short time. It is but for a short time. They soon resume their proper place and importance. Besides; it is not Eternity alone, that produces a temporary disgust and loathing of the pleasures and pursuits of this life. Sickness does it. Sorrow does it. Even satiety does it. Who says, oft-enest and loudest, "Vanity of vanities: all is

vanity, and vexation of spirit?" Not the woman who looks at the things of time in the light of Eternity; but she who looks at them in the light of her own *ennui*, and mortifications, and disappointments. There is no such soreness nor sourness of spirit created by taking a religious view of the world, as by taking a hasty view of it whilst the nerves are all shattered, and the mind jaded, and the heart sick, from dissipation and folly. Did these bitter moments of satiety and dissatisfaction cure the follies they punish, there would be no extravagance in the surprise, nor in the dread, which the first, keen sense of the solemnities of Heaven and Hell awakens.

Thus, the extreme (if it must be called so) to which the mind goes for a little, whilst the dead-lights and bale-fires of Eternity are falling upon Time, is produced by, as well as wanted to correct, the former extreme to which the mind went, when it made this world all and all. Had

this world been less loved, that world would have been less dreaded. Besides; nothing but a *shock* of surprise or dread, could effectually break up the infatuation of a mind, which has been absorbed with earthly things. The only way of bringing such a mind to sober or serious reflection, is, to arrest it at once, and powerfully, by "the powers of the world to come." This arrest may, indeed, occasion, at first, some hasty resolutions, and a few unnatural feelings, and not a few jaundiced views of men and things. But these will soon subside, and give place to the sobrieties of good sense and godliness. Even the *singularities* will not last long. Or if any singularity should remain longer than might be expected, it ought to create no great surprise, however much it is to be regretted. Singularities are not peculiar to the pious. The world has more *oddities* in it, than the church; and far more egregious fools. She is not, certainly,

a very wise woman, who counts music a sin : but she is a moral *idiot*, who can make it her chief enjoyment or pursuit. She who is afraid to dress, according to the standard of modest custom, has certainly not a strong nor a well-balanced mind : but she has a vulgar mind, or no mind at all, who can find happiness in finery. It is silly, as well as fastidious, to keep far behind decent fashion : but it is very, very *suspicious*, to keep pace with the costume of Almack's and the Opera.

But enough of this. I want to prove to you, that there is nothing in the light of Eternity, that necessarily or naturally imbitters or darkens life. It changes, indeed, the aspect of both business and pleasure. It eclipses the dazzle of wealth, and unmask the laugh of folly : but it exalts whatever is rational, and endears all that is pure or useful, in social and domestic life. Accordingly, you never hear the pious complain of

checks or interruptions to industry or enjoyment, arising from their regard to Eternity. They often complain, or at least deplore in secret, that this world, by its cares and snares, diverts them too much from the world to come. They will tell you, that they require to pause from time to time, in order to shake off the undue pressure of Time upon Eternity, and the disproportionate weight of the body upon the soul; but you never hear them say, that they are in danger of neglecting their business or their families, or of losing their relish for the duties of life, by the hopes or fears which Immortality inspires.

Indeed, character never takes a high tone of steadfastness or consistency, until it is adjusted to the claims of Eternity. It is the creature of impulse or of circumstances, until both impulses and circumstances are, themselves, controlled or regulated by "unseen and eternal" motives. You have, therefore, nothing to fear but every

thing to hope, from allowing the light of Eternity to fall freely and frequently upon all your habits, pursuits, and enjoyments. It will displace nothing good ; derange nothing wise ; sadden nothing which would cheer the evening of life ; and deprive you of nothing which would soften a dying pillow, or brighten the shadows of the everlasting evening. Why not, then, take habit after habit ; and temper after temper ; and taste after taste ; and pursuit after pursuit, unto the full blaze of illuminated Immortality ; and ask, as each passes through that fiery ordeal, —how will it look ? what shall I think of it?—how will it bear to be thought of,

“ Whilst Immortality endures ? ”

For, can you wish or consent to allow any sin or folly to go on unto the end of life, or even for another day, which through Eternity you must remember with shame, and condemn without one qualification ?

The adjustment of character and pursuits to the claims of Eternity, is, however, a duty never attempted upon a large scale, nor long persisted in upon any scale, unless the salvation of the soul, as well as the improvement of the character, become the supreme object. Happily, therefore, the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" follows, in the same breath, the exclamation, "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Indeed, all real and lasting moral improvement, suggested or enforced by a regard to Eternity, not only keeps pace with the attention given to the soul and the Saviour; but also springs out of it. All willing crucifixion of the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, and the spirit of the world, originates at the Cross of Christ, and is made willing by its constraining power. You will never be what you wish, nor do what you intend, even if your desires and determinations were ratified by solemn vows, if you try to be holy,

without drawing the hope of salvation direct from the sacrifice of the Lamb slain.

Now you can never be sure that you either feel your real need of the Atonement, or know the all-sufficiency of it, until you look at the Cross in the light of Eternity. You cannot "behold the Lamb of God" fully, nor aright, without looking beyond all that Time requires of you as duty; and all that the Church requires of you as character; and all that the world expects of you as consistency; and all that is needful in order to resist temptation, and endure trials well. This is, indeed, much! So much, that nothing but the fulness of Christ could furnish the grace, or the strength, necessary to produce it. It ~~is~~ however, only a part of your wants and responsibilities, as a sinner. Your soul must meet God at death, and your soul and body stand before Him at the Judgment-seat; and unless both are sanctified, neither will be

safe. You can only appear with acceptance then, in a Righteousness, pure and perfect as the Law; and even your own "robes" must be washed as white as "the great white throne." And, who can furnish to you such a justifying, or produce in you such a sanctifying, righteousness, but Christ?

It is all very well to look at the world, in order to see how much grace you need in order to pass unspotted through it; and to look at the church, in order to judge how much faith and holiness its sacraments and fellowship require; and to look at the probable vicissitudes of life and health, in order to calculate the amount of patience and strength which can sustain them: but, again, I remind you, you must face death—you must pass into the world of spirits—you must meet God! This cannot be done, as you now meet human scrutiny, and providential trials. You cannot meet God at his bar, on the

day of Death or Judgment, as you now meet Him in the sanctuary on the sabbath. Here you may prepare; but there you must be prepared. Here you may pray for preparation; but there you must possess it, or perish! For, when you pass into Eternity, and see in its actual light, all that is necessary as a title and meetness for Heaven, prayer, cries, tears, wrestling will be of no avail.

Why not confront your spirit now, with the scenes, and tests, and trial, it must pass then? This is the way to see what you need, and to set you to consider the sufficiency of Christ. For as it was He who brought Immortality to light, so it is Immortality that brings Him to light. Accordingly, whenever the Saviour claimed the faith or the love of men, whilst preaching His own gospel on earth, he invariably placed himself between the gulf of fire and the sea of glory; and pleaded, not by the reasonableness

of believing on him, nor by the propriety of it, nor by the present usefulness of it ; but chiefly, almost solely, by the eternal advantages of faith and the eternal punishment of unbelief. Heaven and Hell were never out of his hands. Like Moses, with the two tables of the Law, He came down from the mount of God with them, and returned with them. And what he did then, for the first hearers of the Gospel, you must now do for yourself :—place yourself between the glories of Heaven and the terrors of Hell ; and whilst you behold both, judge what He is, who can save from the wrath to come, and bestow eternal happiness.

No. IV.

DEVELOPMENTS BY THE SACRAMENT

THE Holy Sacrament is the last thing in all the circle of religious duty, with which half-hearted professors contract an unholy familiarity. Backsliders are almost apostates in heart, before they can take their place at the Lord's Table without self-examination, or without fervent prayer. Indeed, the spirit of prayer is gone, and the habit of communing with the heart given up, when the Sacrament leads to no secret intercourse with God and the Lamb. In general, however, backsliding is kept in check by the recurrence of the Sacrament. The fear of eating and drinking judgment, by unworthy communicating, compels a solemn pause for considera-

tion and prayer, which nothing else could create: and during that pause, the backslider gets such a sight of his guilt and danger, that he dares not approach the altar of God without resolving to "wash his hands in innocency." Piety is, indeed, at a very low ebb, wherever it is thus kept from expiring, by the dread of unworthy communicating. That dread, however, prevents many an apostasy in the church of Christ. A sense of sacramental responsibility is a balance-wheel upon many a conscience, which would otherwise run wild. It has also enabled many to recover themselves from the snare of the devil, and from the entanglements of the world. O, it was not without weighty reasons, that Christ gave the commandment, "This do in remembrance of me." He never showed more fully that he "knew what was in man," than when he bound his disciples to commemorate his death until the end of time. He saw

how the act and the obligation would tell upon their hearts and habits, when nothing else could keep either right with God.

This is, I am aware, the lowest view of the holy influence of the Sacrament upon Christian character : it will, however, prepare you to trace the power of that sweet influence, when it acts with other holy influences, upon willing minds and honest hearts. Then, indeed, nothing forms or unfolds character, so rapidly and regularly, as the Sacrament. Her first Sacrament is a new era in both the history and character of every pious woman, however her piety may have begun or operated at first. It did more and better then, however much or well it did before.

This fact is too little noticed by both sexes. Both would be pleased and improved by reviewing, from time to time, the history of their *first* Sacrament. It is the history of their best experience, in every case where it was a deliberate

step. This is true, whether the duty was suggested to them by pious friends, or by their own conscience : for in either case, the sense of duty, in this matter, leads to " great searchings of heart before God."

Perhaps you pondered the dying command of the Saviour in silence, long before any of your family or friends spoke to you on the subject, or suspected that it lay near your heart. If so, you have not forgotten, you cannot forget, the many lights in which the duty appeared to you, nor the strong light which it shed upon all duties. You remember especially how often and deeply it threw you in upon the state of your heart, and out upon the probabilities of your future conduct. At one time you felt as if you could safely venture upon the step ; and at another time, you durst not think of taking such a step for years. On some days you saw nothing but lions in the way ; and on other days, nothing

but angels guarding and saints gracing the way. Thus you were alternately cheered and checked—willing and unwilling—equally afraid of neglect and presumption.

You remember all this well. This, however, was not all that passed through your mind, when you began to weigh the claims of the Sacrament. It threw and fixed you upon the solemn question,—“Am I really converted to God? Is my believing, true faith? Does the change I have experienced amount to a divine change? Is it natural conscience, or the Spirit of grace, which has made me serious?” Occasionally, you did not know what answer to give to these momentous questions. Often, you were equally afraid to say either yes or no. You could not bear to think your experience altogether a delusion; nor could you venture to reckon it a reality. Thus it was a trying time with you then—was it not? You wondered whe-

ther any one else had ever felt as you did : but you were afraid to ask your pious friends such a question.

In this dilemma, you set yourself to observe with great attention,—how your heart felt whilst you were alone in prayer ; alone in pondering over the word of God ; alone in reviewing your past history. And you were so glad !—when it melted with penitence, or glowed with gratitude, or thrilled with delight, or overflowed with holy desires for more grace. Then, your closet was very dear to you : for it was none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven. Then, had the Sacrament been a closet-ordinance, you would have commemorated the love of Christ before leaving your closet ! Then, you did not leave it without saying to yourself, “ O, if these sweet feelings would only last, gladly would I follow them up by a public avowal of my allegiance to the Saviour.”

When, again, your closet felt like a prison, and your heart like a stone; so that you could neither pray nor meditate, weep nor rejoice, but seemed dead to all that was good, and haunted by all that was bad or foolish; you were ready to reckon yourself a hypocrite; or, at least, a creature of circumstances, instead of "a new creature in Christ Jesus." Then it was well, you thought, that you had not ventured to the Sacrament, during the impulse of former enjoyments, nor upon the faith of appearances! You were almost thankful that you had delayed; because you judged, that had this sad *blight* come upon your spirit after your first sacrament, it would have driven you to despair. This blight, however, like your former bliss, was not lasting. Some sermon or book dropped as the rain, or distilled as the dew upon your spirit; so that you returned to your closet as in the days of old, singing that new song, "He

restoreth my soul!" Then, all your sacramental feelings and desires sprung up again, and you became more absorbed than ever with the subject. It would not keep out of your sight, look whichever way you would, or at whatever you looked. If you looked at the great and precious promises, wishing to appropriate some one of them, which just suited your case as if it had been made for you,—in came the sacramental command, asking, How can you take that promise to yourself, whilst the precious blood of its ratification is not openly honoured by you? If, again, you looked within the veil, and began to realize the scenes of heaven, until your spirit felt as if it had been walking arm in arm with a saint or an angel; now upon the banks of the River of Life, and anon amongst the thrones and mansions of Glory, until you came in sight of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb;—that great sight soon reminded you of your neglect of the

sacramental Supper of the Lamb; and down your spirit dropped to the earth, ashamed, humbled, and self-condemned. You durst not return again to Heaven that night! Even in the Sanctuary, how often in the very midst of a sermon, which just suited your case and character in every thing else, has an unexpected hint about the Sacrament upset all your enjoyment, and hung itself, like a flaming sword, over the Grace or the Providence, you both wanted and needed to draw upon largely?

I need not illustrate this farther. Your own memory is furnishing better illustrations than mine. What I want you to observe chiefly, however, is, the influence which all this had upon your religious character at the time. They quite overlook or mistake the real benefit of the Sacrament, who think of it as only one of the duties of godliness, or as one of the means of grace. It is the very key-stone in the arch of

all duties, virtues, and enjoyments ; confirming them all, whilst sustained by them all. Many wonder, and some weep, because neither their comfort nor their consistency in religion is lasting, although their sincerity is unquestionable. The reason is obvious : they disobey the dying command of Christ ; and thus place themselves not only without the pale of his church, but in a position unfavourable to self-knowledge. They have not half the acquaintance with what is good or bad, weak or strong, in their own hearts, which those have, who have judged or rejudged all their experience, with an express view to the Sacrament. The latter have gone over, again and again, all the history of their conversion, and all the marks of their faith, and all the principles of their piety, observing how all this bore upon the Table of the Lord, as well as upon the hope of salvation : and thus they have seen the real state and strength of their princi-

ples : whereas, those who have examined themselves merely by the *moral* effect of their experience, have missed all the testing and establishment which springs from sacramental self-examination.

Thus, it is not the mere act of communicating, nor the happiness derived from it, which does all the good. The benefit begins with self-knowledge, and goes on throughout the whole process of preparation for the Sacrament. Eve did not know herself, until she tried herself by the command, "Thou shalt not eat:" and we do not know our own hearts, until we examine them by the command, "Thou shalt eat of this bread, and drink of this cup." Then comes the question, Am I fit to do this in remembrance of Christ? If not, can my piety end well? This is the reflection which leads to a thorough investigation of all our experience, spirit, and habits. And what discoveries it brings out!

We thought, when we first looked at the sacramental command, that it was timidity, or the fear of presuming, or only a sense of unworthiness, which held us back from the Table of the Lord. We had no suspicion that we were ashamed, as well as afraid ; unwilling, as well as unfit ! But when the sense of duty outweighed the sense of danger, we discovered that we did not altogether like to be sacramentally pledged and bound to a life of piety—that we were not quite prepared to commit ourselves finally upon a course of uniform obedience—that we had some worldly designs which Sacraments might prevent or encumber—that we were not so humble, nor so modest, as we supposed ! Thus we saw other hinderances, of a worse kind than the weakness of our faith and love ; and other reasons for delay, than our doubts and fears.

This was an *insight* of our hearts, motives, and character, which nothing else could have

given us. It led us to suspect all our former professions and experience ; and set us to begin anew the whole system of our piety. You remember this ! You were shocked to discern *idols* on the very throne of your heart ; to find out *reservations* for some indulgence of vanity or selfishness ; to detect something like *prevarications* in your penitence and prayers. How you abhorred yourself then, in dust and ashes ! With what new emotion you said, “ Behold, I am vile ! ” With what intense pain and shame you cried, “ O wretched woman that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ”

You had, indeed, said all this from the first, and not without feeling ! but now you felt it in a way unknown before. No wonder ! You had found out, that you were not willing to “ follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” although you had fled to him for salvation. This humi-

liating discovery might well fill you with confusion, and throw suspicion upon your sincerity, until, "with purpose of heart," you set yourself to follow the Lord fully.

Remember now, how you were assisted to this, when you *resolved* to do it. Whilst you only contemplated the remote prospect of sacramental consecration, you rather saw what you should be, than tried to become so. But when you determined to avow your principles, and to seal your resolutions, you began to turn the force of your prayers and watchfulness against those plagues of your heart, which you hardly knew to be evils, until you felt them rising against sacramental responsibility. These traitors you arraigned before the Lord; renouncing and condemning them as the enemies of his glory, and of your own peace. It was an humbling and trying exercise: but it was very useful! It was followed by the sweet consciousness, that you were

honest and in earnest before God. You felt through all your soul, that you were holding nothing back, and hushing nothing up, in giving yourself to the Lord, with an express view of giving yourself to the Church also. With equal composure and delight, you knelt then in the very blaze of divine Omniscience, saying, "Search me, O God, and try my thoughts; try my heart and reins; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." That prayer was not in vain. You felt that God was answering it, "whilst you were yet speaking." You rose from your knees, and left your closet that night—sure that you were not a hypocrite nor a formalist.

It is thus that the near prospect of the Sacrament, like the near and clear prospect of Eternity, brings us to the point, and unveils the secrets of the heart, and concentrates the whole soul in self-dedication. It is thus that the regu-

lar attendance at the Table of the Lord, prepares the soul to meet the Lord at his Tribunal, without that uncertainty and agitation, which his summons always produces in those who are not often thrown into deep self-examination, by frequent Sacraments. Do remember this ! You are lessening the difficulty and the dread of dying, every time you examine yourself in order to show forth the death of Christ. Your final act of self-examination will not overwhelm nor confuse you, when your summons comes : for it will not be a new thing to your spirit, to look all its principles and tendencies in the face. It will have seen itself so often in the holy light of the Altar, that the solemn light of the Throne will not be overpowering.

I throw out this important hint, that you may return with me willingly, to review the improvements you set yourself to make in your deportment, when you made up your mind to “ give

yourself to the Church, according to the will of God." Your design *crept* out somewhat, even before you spoke of it to your Minister or your friends. They saw with pleasure, the deep interest you took in hearing experimental and heart-searching sermons; the esteem you manifested for devout and holy Christians; the preference you gave to spiritual books and conversation; the prudence and meekness with which you conducted yourself, and the tenderness of conscience which marked all your deportment. Superficial observers may have deemed *all this* to be *put on* for the sake of appearances; but judicious Christians saw that it was *put forth* by your growth in grace. They understood and appreciated your motives and spirit, because just in the same way their own principles had operated, and their intentions had crept out, whilst they were feeling their way to the Table of the Lord. And how it gratified you, to find

that the wise and the good thought well of you ; and were as much delighted to welcome you into the fold of Christ, as you were to be admitted there ! And, from the time that you opened your mind and gave your confidence to some venerable patriarch or matron, did you not feel as if all that was good in your character and principles became stronger, and that your chosen counsellor had become to you almost a *second* conscience, whose influence mightily helped to increase the tenderness of your own conscience, and to keep you steadfast ? Thus what a gainer you have been by the fellowship of the Church ! Yes ; even if you have but little intercourse with your fellow-communicants, you feel that you are one of a flock which is dear to the Good Shepherd, and pledged, sheep and lambs of it, to follow Him “ in the regeneration of life.”

Well ; if all this had a transforming influence

upon your character, and a soothing effect upon your spirit,—remember the holy and confirming influence of your first Sacraments. The very first one, just because it was first, and thus somewhat embarrassing, may have disappointed you a little—as to enjoyment. But it profited you, even if it pained you. You did not repent the step, even if you could not rejoice that you had taken it. O, no ; the tears you shed at the Lord's Table were not from any regret that you had ventured there ; but shame and sorrow, that you could not be more collected, composed, and grateful. You wanted to have taken “ the cup of salvation ” from the hand of Christ, as you hope to take the crown of glory from his hand, with a heart burning with wonder, love, and praise. You wished and hoped to be absorbed, and lost to every thing earthly, whilst sealing your allegiance and consecration by the blood of the Lamb. But you failed,

perhaps, to communicate as you expected to have done. Well; even if you did, what you lost in enjoyment, you gained in humility and caution: for you retired from the Sacrament penetrated both with a sense of your own weakness, and with a conviction that more than Sacraments were wanted, in order to keep your heart and habits right with God.

Judge now of the entire influence which sacramental duty has had upon your whole character. Could you have been what you are in heart or life, had you not thus taken "the vows of God" upon you? Do you not see, and feel with all the force of a keen sensation, that you would sink rapidly, both in character and enjoyment, were you to forsake the Table of the Lord, and the fellowship of the Saints." If so, do tell your undecided friends, in some way, your own convictions and experience on this subject. You cannot do them a greater kindness. There is

no lesson they need more than the one you have learnt,—that the Sacrament tests and strengthens piety, by the self-examination it calls for.

No. V.

DEVELOPMENTS BY ZEAL.

ANY one can condemn Zeal which is “not according to knowledge;” and every one ought to dread blind Zeal, especially in religion. Zeal for God, when not according to knowledge, may not only do more harm than good, but it may do nothing but harm.

“Very true,” said a young man, whose thirst for knowledge was great, and whose love of solitude was strong; “I often tell my sister, that her Zeal outruns her knowledge, and may implicate her discretion. She will talk to the poor in their cottages about religion; and even in the Sunday School, she tries to explain to the children whatever she has taught them to read.

And, besides lending Tracts to the young and the old in the neighbourhood, she urges them to subscribe for Bibles, and even to save some money for sending the Gospel to the heathen."

"Well," said a friend, "what answer does your sister give to this charge?" "O, she evades or retorts it, by saying that my knowledge outruns my Zeal. Indeed, she is as much afraid of knowledge, which is not according to Zeal, as I am of Zeal not according to knowledge. She calls knowledge without Zeal, a sun without heat—a rose without fragrance—a fountain sealed—a miser's chest, without its chance of circulation at his death."

She who said so, had evidently more knowledge, both of human nature, and of divine truth, than her brother gave her credit for. Knowledge without Zeal is, at best, but a seraph's eye, without his wings; a cherubic wheel, without its motions.

It is high time "to turn the tables" thus, upon all who love knowledge merely for its own sake, or solely for their own gratification. The zeal which they condemn by the language of Paul, is not the zeal Paul condemned in the Jews. That was a legal effort to establish their own pharisaic righteousness. Hence he says, "I bear them record, that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge: for they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness, unto every one that believeth," Rom. x. 3, 4. Thus Paul's argument has no reference whatever to the Zeal which speaks, and acts, and gives, for the glory of Christ and the spread of the Gospel. Indeed, his argument is, itself, a fine specimen of that Zeal. It sprang from his "heart's desire and prayer for Israel,

that they might be saved." How weak, yea, how wicked, then, to quote it against Zeal for the glory of God in the salvation of souls! If any thing be "according to knowledge," Zeal to win souls to Christ is so. That, in fact, is in accordance with angelic knowledge; yea, in harmony with Divine wisdom: for all heaven, in rejoicing over the repentance of a sinner, is only reflecting the joy of the Godhead.

It is just as good for us on earth, as it is for saints and angels in heaven, to be zealously affected for the good of others. We no more endanger ourselves by trying to "convert a sinner from the error of his ways," than saints or angels peril their safety, or interrupt their communion with God and the Lamb, by rejoicing over the repentance of a sinner. A Christian can as well *afford* to forget himself occasionally, in caring for others, as any angel of all the host of ministering spirits before the throne,

can afford to minister to the heirs of salvation. Not even Gabriel himself, when sent to the earth on an errand of mercy, is safer to lay down his harp for the time, nor surer to find it in full tune on his return, than we are when we go out on errands of love to the poor or the perishing. We shall not find on our return, that we have lost our own comfort, or left the spirit of prayer behind us, where we visited in order to be useful. We shall always get good, when we try to do good to the souls of others. An angel dead or sick, from ministering to dying saints, is not a greater impossibility, than a Christian comfortless whilst comforting others, or walking in darkness whilst enlightening others.

This process of doing good in order to get good, is coming somewhat into notice and use : but the experiment is not yet tried upon such a scale, as to place its wisdom beyond all doubt. Zeal in a good cause is admitted to be a good

thing ; but the general opinion amongst Christians is, that there is something *better*, both as means of growth in grace, and as mediums of communion with God. And I readily grant, that Zeal, even for the glory of God, would be a bad *substitute* for prayer or meditation ; for sacraments or public worship ; and a base *excuse* for the neglect of family religion, or of the ordinary duties of life. No public duty can be even an apology for neglecting home ; and no kind or degree of public spirit, a set-off against a prayerless spirit. It is not the fact, however, that the zealous, as a body, are less attentive to the sanctuary or the closet, to home or business, than others. There is to be found, here and there, a bustling, gossiping gad-about, or an idle talker ; but, for every one of such, you may find, any where, ten, whose time is as much wasted by sloth, or whose hours are as much deranged by ill temper. There are a few “ busy-

bodies " in the ranks of the zealous ; but there are far more drones than wasps in the hive of the Church, still. But recrimination will not cure either evil. The work of faith, and the labour of love, must be done ; and, therefore, those who find fault with the way in which some conduct themselves, are bound to do the work better. For the real question is, not whether all the active are prudent ? but, whether any of the spheres of action can be safely neglected ?—not, should such a person go on ? but, shall the work of faith, or the labour of love, stop ? It is very easy to say, that certain persons would be better employed, were they to keep at home ; but if all keep at home, what must become of the ignorant, the afflicted, and the dying ? What a state the world and the Church would soon be in, if the home-keeping of fault-finders should prevail ! I envy not the home of the man or the woman, who can enjoy

themselves in the neighbourhood of *unvisited* and unaided homes of want, woe, and ignorance. The blessing of God is not in that house, whatever else be in it : and the more there is of this world's goods in it, the more certainly, if not suddenly also, will the curse of God fall upon it. There is no security against either a temporal or an eternal curse, in the case of unprofitable servants. And it is equally true, on the other hand, that it is a good thing for both worlds, to be zealously affected for the glory of God. God has then a reason for watching over both our spiritual and temporal interest : but, why should He care—what can He care, for the souls or the bodies, the property or the business, of those who care nothing about His poor, nor for His glory ? True ; the unprofitable servants are often prosperous masters in the world. What then ? “ The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.” And God calls every man a fool, who

like the prosperous farmer of the Parable, can take his "ease" in the centre of his goods, whilst the Church is languishing and the world perishing around him. But the safe position towards Providence, in which holy Zeal places both life and property, is not the only nor the chief good, which arises from identifying our interests and happiness with the kingdom of God in the world. It is good to be zealously affected in the good work of spreading the Gospel at home and abroad, because of the favourable position in which evangelizing Zeal places our own souls towards the Cross, the Mercy-seat, the Promises, and the Holy Spirit. These are all nearest to those, who love the souls of others, and care for the glory of Christ. No one sees her way or her welcome to the hope of salvation, so clearly, as she who watches and works for the conversion of the heathen. She has lights and helps in laying hold upon Christ for

eternal life, which mightily assist both her faith and patience. She can hardly despond, or doubt long in her own case, who keeps her eye upon the wonders of grace in the heathen world—they are so wonderful ! For what are the *peculiarities* of guilt or depravity, of weakness or unworthiness, in any case at home, compared with the enormities and horrors which meet in the character of abominable idolaters ? Who can despair, or fear rejection, that considers the welcomes given at the Cross, to cannibals, infanticides, and monsters of iniquity ? Who can question the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb to cleanse from all sin, or of the grace of the Spirit to conquer all depravity, that has read or heard of the thousands in the South Seas, in Africa, and India, who are washed, and sanctified, and justified ? Can we perish at the Throne of Grace, where they found mercy ? If the rainbow of that throne beamed hope and peace upon

the dark clouds of their horrible case, our case, however bad, cannot be desperate nor hopeless.

This is an argument against doubts and fears, not yet plied from the pulpit as it ought to be ; nor employed in the closet as it will be, when it is better understood. I, of course, do not under-rate the real worth of " Guides " to the perplexed and the doubting. I have seen their usefulness upon no small scale ; and feel overwhelmed with wonder and gratitude, that unto me who am less than the least of all saints, grace should have been given to write some of them : but still, there is no light upon the way of Salvation so clear or steady as the conversion of the Gentiles. This is the good old light of that " good old way ! " Experimental books may throw some of the same light upon Paul's Epistles, which they shed upon the Evangelists : but if Paul appealed to the " Living Epistles " furnished in the character of pardoned and sanctified ido-

laters, as outspeaking and outwriting himself, it is no great stretch of humility to confess, that the Mission Churches explain the freeness and power of Divine grace better than any Experimental book. I delight to confess, that I could not have written my "Guides," had I not kept my eye upon the successive groups and single individuals, from amongst the Gentiles, who came to the Fountain for sin and uncleanness, and were allowed to wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The only plausible objection against this line of argument from the heathen to ourselves, is, that we have sinned against the threefold light of Nature, Providence, and Grace; whereas they have only sinned against the single and shadowy light of Nature; and therefore, it is said, their welcome at the Cross may not prove that we shall be equally welcome. And I readily grant, that there is an aggravation in our

sins, not to be found in their enormities, so far as both affect God. Their enormities have, however, affected both their enemies and their friends, their neighbours and their families, to the loss of life, and even to the ruin of souls: and if that can be pardoned, none of our sins can be unpardonable. I do not think lightly of grieving the Holy Spirit, nor of sinning against Grace, nor of violating revealed Law, nor of outraging Conscience. God forbid! I see more than enough in each of these aggravations of our guilt, to justify God before the Universe, and throughout Eternity, were He to refuse to pardon us. But still, I see an aggravation in the guilt of the heathen, arising from the *victims* of their vices, or from the souls they have ruined for ever, which as much affects the first principles and final ends of the Divine government, as our sins can do; and which would as fully justify God in leaving those who have thus sin-

ned without Law, to perish without Law. I cannot but see, therefore, that if God can be just in saving them by the blood of the Lamb, he can be equally so in saving us. If He can both maintain and “declare his righteousness in the remission of their sins,” through the propitiation of Christ, he can also extend the golden Sceptre of Mercy to us, and we may touch it and live, without tarnishing either his justice or holiness. O, the Church did not know one half of the meaning of that Oracle, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;” nor did penitents know one tenth of the meaning of that Oracle, “He is able to save unto the uttermost;”—until they saw the saved of the Lord coming from the North and the South, the East and the West, of the heathen world, to sit with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. You now see that the Saviour’s “uttermost” in showing mercy to the chief of sinners,

goes far beyond both the weakness and unworthiness of the worst amongst us. This is a lesson worth infinitely more than all you ever gave or did, for sending the “unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles.” The Gentiles enriched by His riches, show how “*unsearchable*” is the fulness of His grace and truth ! Continue, therefore, zealous in aiding the spread of the Gospel : for its converts will aid you to hope in Christ for yourself, unto the end ; and then they will welcome you into their everlasting habitations, and aid you for ever in singing the New Song.

All this, however, is not the whole advantage of being zealous for the glory of Christ. Holy Zeal is one of the best safeguards against the prevalence of unholy and vain thoughts in the mind. These will arise and intrude more or less, at times, in spite of all ordinary watching, or even warring, against them. Indeed mere

watching, in order to keep the heart, however diligent, will often defeat its own purpose, and excite the very thoughts and feelings we want to suppress ; unless we take care to have something else to think of, than their suppression. You have found this to be only too true, when you have tried to shut out the vanities and vagaries, which were floating about in your mind. How they came—and what occasioned them—and why they haunted you, were a series of questions, which only entangled you more and more with the nonsense and folly you wanted to get rid of. In trying to *account* for certain trains of vain thoughts, and certain tones of wrong feeling, you threw both into a complete *whirl* of mastery and motion, which made all that was bad worse.

Let this teach you the real secret of keeping the heart—which is, to have something to think about, that will keep down foolishness,

and keep out trifles, by leaving neither room nor time for them. Such an antidote may often be found in the Monthly Reports of Bible and Missionary Societies, if you will only form and keep up the habit of keeping your eye upon the progress of the Gospel : for there is always something occurring, at home or abroad, of absorbing interest to a Christian, whether success or failure be reported. In either case you will be furnished with materials for reflection : whereas a vacant mind, like empty millstones, can only grind wildfire, or waste its own powers to no purpose, by friction.

Depend upon it—thinking of your own thoughts and feelings, is not the way to mend them, nor to increase the peace or the purity of your heart. Have something beyond yourself to think about—and let that something be what all Heaven is absorbed with—the outgoings of the kingdom of Christ around you and

all round the world—if you would eschew a vain or a vacant mind. I readily grant that there is a sense, in which you have need to think more about your own state than you do. This, however, is just what I want to help you to do. I therefore remind you, that you often think about your own state to little purpose ; and tell you plainly, that until you take a deep and lively interest in something connected with the glory of God, your mind and heart will often be a waste, and sometimes a “howling wilderness.”

Now, I beseech your special attention. You know what it is to be haunted and harassed, at times, by thoughts worse than vain, and feelings worse than foolish. I refer to dark views of life and godliness,—to dread forebodings and misgivings of heart,—to strange sinkings and anguish of spirit ; during which you can hardly hope or pray. Now nothing will remove or

alleviate this oppressive load, but the great and precious Promises. But you have found yourself—unable to lay hold of them for yourself. At times, you have been unable to find a promise, which exactly suited your case.

Now you may be under this dark cloud again! Prepare for it by stealing a march upon Satan, —or rather *prevent* it, by so acquainting yourself with what God is doing at home and abroad, that Satan shall be unable to find room for his temptations, or to present your case in a desperate light. This preparation you may make, by keeping your eye upon the successive trophies of Grace, as they arise to prove the fullness, freeness, and power of Grace.

And have your *hand* at God's work, as well as your heart in it, if you would be holy or happy. The activities and ingenuity of wise Zeal, are fine preventives against both temptation and depression. A *collecting-round* once

a quarter, or once a month, associated with the circulation of Extracts and Sketches, is one of the best antidotes for low spirits and dismal thoughts. You will both see and hear much, that will reconcile you to your own trials, and tend to relieve your own fears. You could never despair, and but seldom despond or droop, if you would only take God's advice, and "look upon the things of others," as well as upon your "own things."

And do consider, how holy Zeal will enable you to keep on good and peaceable terms with all your Christian friends. You cannot afford to quarrel, nor to take offence at trifles, whilst you have to carry on your work for God. You can never have time, nor be tempted, to embroil yourself in the disputes or quarrels of others, whilst you have a great public cause to sustain, and endear, and adorn.

O, like ESTHER, "you are come to the king-

dom at a time " when all the influence of your character and spirit is wanted by the Church of God, and will tell upon the highest destinies of a redeemed and regenerating world. Well might HANNAH MORE say, " Had any patriarch or saint been asked, in what age and in what nation he would have wished his lot assigned him,—is it not more than probable that he would have replied, In Great Britain, in the beginning of the Nineteenth Century ! " Study then that Pauline Oracle, " It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing," Gal. iv. 18.

ALLEGORY.

SHESHBAZZAR'S FIG TREE.

SHESHBAZZAR sat under "his vine and his fig tree," as in the days of old; solitary, but not disconsolate; infirm in body, but not enfeebled in mind. His friends called to congratulate him

upon his safe arrival. The time of the evening sacrifice was just ended, and they found him sitting under his fig tree. It was, like himself, an aged tree; but, unlike him, it was *barren*! It had not only ceased to bring forth fruit in its season, but its leaves also were withering, and many of its branches were bare. The nightingale had forsaken it as an unsafe shelter for her young, and the turtle-dove felt too much exposed amidst its scanty foliage. The raven of Tadmor alone perched on its topmost bough, and the wind from the wilderness moaned amongst its branches: but still Sheshbazzar continued to sit under it. He had sat under its verdant canopy with the wife of his youth, and with the children of his old age; and the tree seemed to him to have decayed as they died one by one, and to be dying with himself. It was, therefore, dear to him, although barren. All his tenderest associations and recollections hung

upon it. But his friends disliked it, even to aversion, because it was an emblem to them of nothing but his bodily infirmity and domestic desolation. In his character, he was still as a tree planted by the rivers of water, and bearing fruit in his old age. His spirit was still stately as the cedars of Lebanon, flourishing as the palms of Olivet, and dewy as the mulberry trees of Baca. His friends saw and felt all this, and said to him, " Let us cut down the fig tree ; why cumbereth it the ground ? You cut down the fig trees on the *hill* of the vineyard, when they became barren ; why spare this tree in the *valley* ? " Sheshbazzar looked up to it, and saw that there was nothing in its visible aspect to plead for it. A shower of withered leaves fell from it, as the startled raven on the top flapped his heavy wings, and flew away towards the wilderness. The old man was silent. He seemed to his friends about to say, " Cut it

down." One of them sprang up, saying, " I will bring the *axe* ;" another said, " Bring it quickly ;" and all were prepared to cut down the barren fig tree.

Sheshbazzar became unusually agitated. The tender recollections of the days of the years of ancient times thronged in upon his heart. The spirits of his " DEAD " seemed to gather around the tree, and to encircle and enshrine it as with " a wall of fire." Their looks appeared to say, " Spare it another year ! " At that moment, the fatal axe gleamed upon his eye. He had not spoken, and his silence was regarded as consent. But when he saw the axe about to be laid to the root of the tree, he sprang forward, clasped the hoary trunk in his arms, and exclaimed, " You must cut *me* down with it—for we can only fall together ! " His friends were amazed and melted. The man who had lifted up the axe, dropped it as Abraham did the sa-

crificial knife at the altar on Moriah. For a time, none knew what to say—for the old man clung in silence to the fig-tree. At length they ventured to repeat their former saying,—“ You did not spare the barren fig trees on the *hill* of the vineyard ; why spare this one in the valley ? ” Sheshbazzar turned round and said, “ Depart in peace, my children, for the night. I am too much agitated to explain or improve this event now. Come to me again after the time of the morning sacrifice.”

They came agreeably to his appointment, and found that he had been up early in the morning digging about the tree, and enriching the soil around all its roots. He wiped the sweat from his furrowed brow, and welcomed his friends with his usual smile, and sat down under his vine with them, and took up his parable thus : —“ The period was, when the vast universe was an utter blank—a vacant wilderness of space,

unplanted and unsown. Then the ELOHIM (the Godhead) alone existed in its own unfathomed essence. Its bliss was its own being. But the Elohim had planned from eternity to render the universe one vineyard, planted with "trees of righteousness" which should bear fruit to the glory of God. He spake, and it was done. Intelligent beings, of all orders, sprung up in space, like the trees of Paradise. Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, covered the hills of immortality, as the cedars cover Lebanon. The sun of divine benevolence shone impartially on them all; the dew of heaven lay on their branches; and the fertile soil of *motives* was rich and deep about all their roots. No winters wasted their vital energy; no storms tarnished their beauty; no mildew fell upon their leaves or buds. The *Elohim* walked amongst this angelic hierarchy, in all the calmness of complacent majesty, seeking fruit; and,

for a time, finding it in rich and ripe abundance. The harvests of glory were glorious for ages of ages ! But, lo, on one occasion, God came into that quarter of the celestial vineyard where LUCIFER—an archangelic fig tree—grew : He ‘ came and sought fruit thereon, but found none.’ He looked around, and saw, with indignation, a ‘ third part ’ of the angelic fig trees on that once fruitful hill, all barren. The leaves of intellect were still verdant on their branches ; but the vital sap of integrity was dried up within. The trees were not only barren, but seemed also to shake their empty branches in scorn of his disappointment. Then went forth the judicial sentence, ‘ Cut them down ; why cumber they the ground ? ’ And there was no intercession for them—no mediator between God and rebel angels. The axe was laid to the root of these trees at once ; and they fell—and great was their fall ! and as they fell—so they lie, bound

in bundles, by chains of darkness, for burning.

“ This awful catastrophe was soon followed by the sudden and entire barrenness of the *human* fig trees in the earthly quarter of the great vineyard. They too, at first, had their fruit unto holiness, and their end promised to be everlasting life—for ministering spirits from the throne sang around them like the birds of Paradise, and God pronounced their first fruits ‘very good.’ But soon the crooked serpent of Tophet coiled himself around their trunk and branches, and they became barren. Then went forth from the throne the sentence, ‘Cut them down:’ and they would have been cut down; but the Angel of the Covenant pleaded for them, and pledged himself to restore them to fruitfulness. Thus, to His intercession, the parent trees owed their escape from the axe of justice; and to Him we are all indebted for our place and privileges

in the vineyard of Jehovah. I feel this in my own case ; and therefore spared the barren fig-tree, as an emblem of myself."

The friends of Sheshbazzar felt reproved and instructed at the same time. "If you, father," they said, owe so much to the intercession of the Angel of the Covenant, how much more do we owe!" "My children," said the old man, "I would not lessen your sense of obligation : your debt is not less, and mine is more, than you suppose. But let us both, henceforth, study to bear more fruit unto the glory of God, that we may not be cut down as cumberers of the ground : for if God spared not the angels who kept not their first estate, He will not spare those who remain barren in the vineyard of the Covenant."

No. VI.

DEVELOPMENTS BY DEPENDENCE.

It is but too common to think oftener and more deeply of what God expects from us, than of what we expect from him. He certainly expects and demands much from us, although nothing unreasonable : but, how much do we also expect from both His grace and providence ! Has God nothing to do—nothing to give—nothing to bear, on our account ? True, we have much to do and endure for his sake ; and it is not wrong to feel this, nor to say this ; so long as we do not count our duties too many, nor our trials too severe : but still, we must not forget what God has to do and endure for our sake. Why, there is not one command binding upon us, that does

not bind God to do more for us than he demands from us. If He exact obedience, he pledges himself to give both the inclination and the ability to obey. If He enforce submission, he binds himself to give sufficient grace for it, and to bring good out of the evils which call for patience and resignation. In regard to whatever God says, "Do this in remembrance of me," he actually engages, by implication and oath, to remember us, more frequently, and more feelingly, than we can remember him.

It becomes us, therefore, to look quite as much at what we need, and at what we expect, and at what we desire from God, as at what God expects and exacts from us. It is all very right to say, when the circle of duty opens upon us, vividly, in all its vastness, "Thy Law is exceeding broad:" so it is; but it is not broader than His glorious Gospel! The promises of His grace are quite as many and as great, as the precepts

of His law. The round of duty is not wider, nor more regular, than the range of gracious privileges and eternal prospects. So also in regard to trials. It is all very well to remember, that "many are the afflictions of the righteous:" but we must not forget, that "the Lord delivereth them out of them all," and sustains under them whilst they last. He has to exercise both sympathy and care towards us, whenever we have to exercise faith or patience towards him. If our eye must look up to heaven, HIS eye must specially look down to the earth, on all those occasions when either our work or warfare is unusually hard.

Thus it is, in fact, only "doing as we would be done by," to keep for ever in sight "the things we look for" from the hand and heart of God, as well as "the things which accompany salvation," that God looks for from us. And if you will apply this golden rule between God

and yourself, just as you apply it between yourself and others, it will soon assist you mightily, both in obedience and submission to the divine will. Whenever you set yourself to number and weigh "all things pertaining to life and godliness," soul and body, time and eternity, which you need and hope for from your heavenly Father, you will not wonder that he should say to you with great solemnity, "Seeing ye look for such things, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."

You will be both struck and affected by this question, if you connect it only with the very *narrowest* view you can possibly take of the grace you are *sure* to need. Put out of sight for the moment, if you will, all risk of temporal reverses, of satanic temptations, and even of mysterious providences; and think only of the degree of grace you require to keep you alive to the worth of salvation, and able to cherish the hope

of it. Neither the hope of it, nor the relish for it, is natural to the human mind. Both are easily impaired, and frequently lost for a time. All their power and permanency depend upon the continued influences of the Holy Spirit. Should He cease to work, you would soon cease to feel as you do.

Thus, even if nothing very trying or perplexing should ever occur in your experience, you will need, all through life, both the watching and the watering of the Holy Spirit, to preserve you from relapsing into insensibility or aversion to divine things. But such a relapse you dread and deprecate. The bare idea of an unfeeling heart, or of a seared conscience, is horrible as well as painful to you. Whenever you think of either, you are ready to say, "O, any thing rather than this: any discipline of grace or providence, however trying, rather than become heedless of the great Salvation!" I knew you

would judge thus. This is exactly the way in which an honest heart feels. Well; just look now at what the Holy Spirit must continue to do for you, in order to keep you from forsaking the Cross and the Mercy-seat. He must do much, even if there were nothing to tempt you away from them, but the tendencies of your own fallen nature. Yes; should Satan never assail your faith, nor trials ever shake your patience, nor depression ever sink your spirits, the COMFORTER must "abide with you," if you would abide in Christ. Whenever, therefore, you think of abiding in the True Vine, do think of the grace you will need to enable you to do so, as well as of the duty of doing so. This is the true, the only effectual way of keeping up the duty, or of going through it in a right spirit. If you forget or overlook either the condescension of the Saviour, in continuing to allow you to remain and ripen among the branches to which

he is the life-giving Vine; or the pains which the Holy Spirit must take to keep you from being fruitless, and thus from being broken off, you will not make any great effort to be firm or fruitful, nor will the little effort you make be very cheerful. Indeed, you will try how little will suffice, exactly in proportion as you forget how much must be done for you. Let it, therefore, sink deep into your soul, and let it settle there as a living and abiding conviction, that the grace which opened your eyes to the glory of Salvation, and to your own need of it, must keep them open to both for ever: that the grace which opened your heart to prize and welcome the gospel, must keep it open for ever: that the grace which won you to pray and meditate, to watch and war, must maintain the spiritual habits it thus began in the good work of conversion, until the day of Jesus Christ.

This fact, when vividly realized, gives quite

a new aspect to the path of duty and holiness. It is thus seen, as the path which Providence guards; which the Saviour graces by his presence; which the Holy Spirit never forsakes: and, thus, keeping in it, is felt to be keeping under the wing of Providence; keeping at the side of Jesus; keeping company with the Comforter. Then, following holiness, is felt to be "following God as dear children;" to be following the Good Shepherd as lambs of his redeemed flock; to be following the Eternal Spirit as living witnesses to the power and freeness of his grace. These are inspiring considerations: for if we are somewhat stimulated and encouraged to follow holiness, because that is following "them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises"—much more may we keep up heart by the consciousness of walking with the Father, Son, and Spirit, who led all the saints in heaven safely through the wilderness!

Having thus looked at how much must be done for us by grace, even under the most ordinary circumstances, I might now pass on at once to the other side, and suppose cases of extremity, which would require extraordinary help from God. I want you first, however, to be fully aware that, in no circumstances, have you so much to do for God, as God must do for you. This is true, in reference to all the duties of godliness. And none of them will be well discharged, if this is not borne in mind. You cannot, especially, be "*a cheerful giver*" to the cause of God, without remembering habitually, how much you yourself are already a debtor to, and how much you must be for ever dependent on, His bounty. Now the claims made upon your money for any cause, however good, do not, as money claims, naturally call up this recollection. Did you ever observe this fact? They appeal to what you have in your

own hands : and thus, to the sense of possession, not to the sense of *dependence* : and, unhappily, our natural sense of dependence, as to worldly things, only begins where possession ends. So far as we have in our own hands the means of meeting the liabilities of our station, we feel ourselves to be independent. We would not, of course, say, that we are independent of God, in any way or degree ; but still, it is only too true, that our sense of dependence on Him is, in general, very slight, so far as we are provided for already, or can see our way clearly. We do not feel powerfully in this matter, until we come to the point where our own resources are inadequate in their amount, or uncertain in their tenure. Hence it is, that direct money claims do not appeal to our best principles, nor call forth our best feelings. They do not intrance nor entangle our hearts with the cords of Love, which run through that question, “ *How much*

owest thou my Lord? " It is when this question comes up under a melting sermon on redeeming love; or at a sacrament enshrined with bright tokens of the Divine presence; or whilst the closet is alternately a Bethel and a Calvary; that we meet it fairly, or even try how far we are willing to answer it. Indeed, we never "devise liberal things," to the full extent of our ability, but when eternal things lead us out amongst the Ebenezers of our past mercies, and up to the Pisgahs of our future hopes.

Now this is not as it should be. Our liberality, whilst it should always be regulated by even rigid honesty, should never depend upon excitement. The wants and woes of the world do not stop, when we are not upon the Mount, nor whilst we are in a bad or low frame of spirit. It is all very well, to yield to the fine impulses of the moment, when we are carried "out of the body," by overpowering eloquence, or by melting

manifestations of the Divine presence: but the wants and woes of the world go on, when the tongue of eloquence is silent, and when the open vision of heaven closes; and, therefore, both our doing and giving should go on, not according to our spiritual frame, but according to our actual ability.

Is this a hard saying? Is it too much to expect, that you should always keep in view your ability and obligations, and act accordingly? Do you feel this to be somewhat of a trouble, as well as a tax? Be not hasty: but judge righteous judgment in this matter. God does, indeed, expect you to give "according as He hath prospered you," and according to "what you have," even when there is not much prosperity in your lot. This is, however, but one side of the question. The other side of it is,—what do you expect and need from God? He expects, and his cause needs from you, all you can

honestly do for them : and you also expect and need from his providence, a great deal more than all your own property is worth, were you to give “ all your goods to feed the poor ” and teach the ignorant. I will not ask just now, “ What have you, that you have not received ? ” but,—What have you that you can either keep or enjoy, unless the Lord keep your house ? Money cannot purchase life, health, nor reason. It cannot even protect itself. All protecting investments are dependent on His protection. And even if they were not, you are entirely so.

You no doubt dislike, and very properly so, all teasing and inquisitorial applications for money. No one has any right to pry into your affairs, or to prescribe your givings. You are amenable to God only, for the degree or the direction in which you apply your own property. I readily concede this ! But, what a concession it is ! You escape, indeed, from the hands of

man by it. It takes you fully and finally out of them : but, to place you and all you have, *where* ? “ In the hands of the LIVING GOD ! ” I hope you prefer this transfer of your responsibility. You may well do so : for God would not alter his claims upon you, were you to prefer to put yourself into the hands of man again. You are, therefore, fast, whatever you feel.

It is with no intention of frightening or mortifying you, that I thus fix you amongst the claims of this duty. I want to relieve your mind from all dread of the hands of God, as well as to rid you of all fear of man, in this matter. And you will have no occasion to live in trembling or timid suspense, as to the hand of Providence, so long as your own hands give according to your ability. Only keep in sight, from day to day, what God must do for *your* life, health, reason, family, and affairs ; and with all this before you, ask yourself,—how you would like

Providence to grudge every thing you need, or to cut down your portion to the very least you could live upon? This process of judging will soon cure both griping and grudging, in any heart where there is any "good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." Thus the golden rule, (as it is well called,) "Do as you would be done by," is just as applicable, and useful, and necessary, in order to maintain a good conscience towards God, as towards men.

This is not, however, the only duty, in which we need the help of this maxim. Both it, and the consideration, that "it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure," must be brought to bear directly upon all that is included in the solemn injunction, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. ii. 12, 13. Now one thing expressly included in the spirit of this injunction, is, the command, "Save yourself from this untoward

generation," Acts ii. 40. Upon this Pentecostal command, are founded all the apostolic protests and warnings against conformity to the world, and against the love of the world. You are thus bound by God, to come out, and to stand out, in open separation from the gay and the ungodly. Neither your friendships, nor your fellowship, must lie amongst the votaries of pleasure, fashion, or frivolity; but amongst "the excellent of the earth," even if they be unequal in rank and polish to your ungodly neighbours.

Is this a hard saying? Are you ready to ask, "Must I, then, prefer, and show a preference to, the pious in my circle, however inferior they may be in talents, property, and influence, to worldly people? Must I deny myself the pleasure of listening to the wit of the clever, and the speculations of the curious, and the politics of the public-spirited, and the playfulness of the

literary, and the music of the accomplished ; because they have no piety ?”

Do not caricature nor exaggerate the command, “ Come out from them, and be ye separate ; and ye shall be my daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty.” You know, for He has told you, that you must go out of the world altogether, were you to “ keep no company with unbelievers.” He has even bound you to be as a light, shining in the midst of the crooked and perverse generation around you. You are no more at liberty to retreat from all intercourse with the worldly, than you are at liberty to prefer their company to that of the godly.

But there would be no end and no use of arguing this matter, in detail. Your chief friendships and your chosen fellowship must be now, with those amongst whom you wish your eternal friendship and fellowship, even if their present sphere and acquirements are beneath your own.

And if you feel that this involves some coming down on your part, just remember how much God must condescend, in continuing to be your Friend, and in admitting you to have fellowship with him ! He does, indeed, expect much from you, as one of his daughters, towards the poorest and plainest of his children ; but you also expect God to be a pitying, providing, and loving Father to you : and can you, dare you, “ despise one of His little ones ? ” Better that a millstone were hanged around your neck, and you cast into the depth of the sea !

And as to trying how far you may safely conform to the spirit and pleasures of this world, do not entertain that question as an abstract one ; but look at what you need and expect from God, in order to your passing safe and unspotted through the world. Why ; after the very utmost care you can take, to keep clear of all unnecessary and undue exposure to the snares

of the world, you will still require the eye, the hand, yea, the Spirit of God, to be upon you for good every day, and all through life. Recollect, ponder, digest the fact, that God has more to do, than merely to pardon the sin of conformity to this world : He has to counteract all its baneful effects upon the heart and conscience, and to prevent a worldly spirit from becoming a reprobate spirit. And can you, dare you, expect God to do all this, if you try how far you can compromise between Him and the world ? You do expect Him to keep you from being “ condemned with the world ” at last : let that expectation, therefore, with the recollection of all the grace necessary to realize it, be the undying and undimming lamp, in the light of which you look at God’s interdicts against the pleasures and vanities of the present evil world.

This maxim must be brought to bear also upon the duty of maintaining a forbearing and

forgiving spirit towards offenders. When Peter was told that he must forgive his brother 490 times, ("seventy times seven,") if necessary, he exclaimed, "Lord, increase our faith." He did right. Had he not prayed thus, he would have proved that either he did not intend to obey the Saviour's command, or that he was ignorant of the degree of grace which is necessary in order to obey it aright. For, who could rally his benevolent, or suppress his irascible, feelings, so often, towards the same offender, without an increasing faith in the solemn assurance, that our heavenly Father will not forgive our trespasses, if we do not, from the heart, forgive them who trespass against us?

This is, you know, the law of our Father's house; and such is its awful sanction! I know not, of course, how you approve of either: but, for my own part, I require to look around me, on all sides, in order to get hold of some motive,

which shall carry me beyond a sullen or silent obedience. I dare not think of disobeying, in the face of such a threatening : still less dare I add insult to rebellion, by presuming that God does not mean all that he threatens ; or by questioning Him, how his threatening not to forgive me, agrees with the letter of some of His promises ? I leave all that fool-hardiness and fiend-like insolence, to those who venture to make God “ a liar.” But still, I must frankly confess, that, like Peter, I want something to help me, to go all the length which God commands me to proceed, in forbearing and forgiving. I cannot get on by mere law, even when it sanctions thunder.

How do you feel on this point ? If you are really anxious to please God by your spirit, under all provocations and offences, you will be glad, like myself, to throw your spirit fully into the mould of the maxim, “ Do unto others, as

you wish God to do unto you." Now although seventy times seven offences from the same person, are certainly a startling number, and happily an improbable one, except from a brutish husband or a sottish wife, still, great as the number is, it will be exceeded by my offences against God. I shall need forgiveness from Him oftener, in the same space of time. Were there, therefore, nothing to influence me in the sweet hope that my past sins are forgiven, I may well be forgiving even to the end of life, seeing I shall need so much forgiveness from God every day.

You see, you feel, how this consideration sways and sweetens our spirit! There is no getting over it, with either a good conscience, or an unblushing face. If we only hesitate, or falter, or try to refine away something of the duty, we are thrown upon the embarrassing question,—how should you like God to make your pardon such a doubtful and heartless thing,

as you are trying to make that offender's forgiveness? Thus, nothing will do, but "do as you would be done by."

This maxim is of special use, to prevent you from "wearying in well doing." Those who think it a very easy thing to persevere in the work of faith or in the labour of love, in a Sabbath School, or in a Tract district, or in the cottages of the sick and dying poor, have never, or not long, tried the experiment. Those who do thus shine as lights in the world, by holding forth the Word of Life, are not indeed strangers to enjoyment. There is pleasure in their work, as well as in their reward. If it were otherwise, they could not persevere as they do. Still, they feel that the moral lights of the world cannot move so easily or equally, in their spheres, as the sun in its orbit, or the stars in their courses, although the same Omnipotent hand sustains and guides both. Neither the support

nor the guidance is of the same kind, because not for the same purpose. Christ holds, indeed, all his stars in his right hand, and has not lost his hold upon some of them, even when they cease for a time to feel it, or imagine that he has let them fall; but still, all whom He loves, have to “keep themselves in his love,” and to “abide in his love,” that they may be kept by his power, and know that they are kept by him. He keeps only “through faith, unto salvation.” Whenever, therefore, they cease to live a life of faith in the Son of God, they are almost sure to weary of a life of usefulness. They may try to throw the blame of their spiritual declension in secret, upon their public engagements, and make out a plausible case about the want of time for prayer, and meditation, and reading: but they themselves know better! They may, indeed, come to believe their own tale by repeating it often: but at first, they wearied in

public well doing, by wearying in secret well doing. They had left their closet, before they forsook their post in the School, or in the district, or in the Committee.

Do not abandon your post of usefulness, whatever it be. You cannot afford to do so; for you cannot go on in piety, without help from God : and how can He help you, if you cease to help others? Feed his lambs, if you would have the good Shepherd keep you in his fold, or lead you to green pastures and still waters.

No. VII.

DEVELOPMENTS BY OBSTACLES.

DID you ever mark the peculiar beauty or point of the command, " Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven ? " I refer chiefly, now, to the emphatic expression, "*so shine.*" Some make their light shine *so*, that men neither glorify God nor admire them, when they see it. It is so evidently paraded for the sake of shining, that it disgusts the attention it draws, even when " good works " are the brightest rays of it. Ostentatious benevolence, and consequence-seeking zeal, and selfish urbanity, and all rivalry in well doing, defeat themselves, so far as the glory of God, or the

credit of the practitioners, is concerned. The poor, indeed, are benefited by the alms, and the ignorant by the instruction, and the neglected by the attentions, of the aspirants for compliment and popularity ; but whilst their pensioners and protégées applaud them to the skies, spectators see through them, and rate them very low.

The opinion of mere on-lookers is not, indeed, of much importance, in one sense. The selfish and the slothful are but too ready to suspect the motives of the liberal and active, in order to rid themselves of self-condemnation. Strangers themselves to all the fine impulses derived from the cross of Christ and the crown of Glory, from the love of God and the worth of immortal souls ; they take for granted, because these high and holy considerations have no constraining influence upon their own minds, that no mind is influenced by eternal things.

Hence, there is always a class of spectators around the path of the devoted, actually upon the out-look for something to palliate their own idleness: and by them the modest are confounded with the vain, and the simple-hearted with the self-complacent, and all the benevolent with the ambitious. This is very pitiful. It is often spiteful. But still it is not exactly right to despise the opinion of even such on-lookers. Neither their suspicions nor their insinuations of base motive should, indeed, divert us from the open and onward path of duty: but that path, be it remembered, leads towards *them*, as well as towards those we already care for and assist. It is as desirable to disarm their prejudices, and as necessary to try to win their souls, as it is to act for the good of the more deserving and candid.

Do look into this much overlooked fact. It involves the salvation of more than one, perhaps,

in your own circle. If you are trying to benefit the poor and the ignorant in your neighbourhood, some of the selfish are sure to look with both a jealous and a jaundiced eye upon your humble efforts. You have, no doubt, found already, that your movements are watched, and your motives criticised. You have good reason to think, that you have not credit for all the disinterestedness or singleness of heart, which you feel. A bad construction is, perhaps, put upon your best efforts for the cause of God and Humanity, by some one who cares for neither. Now this is certainly trying to both patience and temper : for it is at no inconsiderable inconvenience or expense you endeavour to be useful. It is, therefore, not a little mortifying, as well as discouraging, to have your very motives and designs called in question, by those who give nothing to the poor, and do nothing for the perishing. Such people might, at least,

allow those to work in peace, who are willing to be "workers together with God." If Meroz herself will not "come forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty," she ought surely to "bless Jael the wife of Heber," for acting the part of "a mother in Israel."

I readily allow all this, and feel it deeply. This is not, however, a Meroz, which may be cursed bitterly or solemnly. "The Angel of the Lord" commands you, in this case, to return good for evil. And you may do so, to the very individual who maligns you most. Yes; you may win his or her soul, to "glorify your Father who is in heaven," even if you should never meet on earth. It may be impossible to meet the person for mutual explanation. It may be quite certain, that no written explanation would be fairly interpreted, or even well received. It might, indeed, only make bad worse. Not by any *direct* effort, therefore, can you do good to

such a person. You are completely shut out from all conversation and correspondence. Your means of doing good, in that quarter, are not, however, exhausted, so long as there is room for improving in the degree or the spirit, in which you are trying to do good in other quarters. It is, therefore, worth your while, and imperatively your duty, to "let your light so shine," that even your enemy may glorify God in the day of restitution.

This is, you think, very unlikely : and, certainly, I will not venture to say yet, that I think very differently from you. Still, let us not forget, that this enemy is a rational, an accountable, an immortal being : let us not feel less concerned for the salvation of one who sins against us, than for one who sins against God : let not the injury done to ourselves, make us indifferent about what becomes of the soul of the offender. You do not allow that person's

scandal to scare or to alienate you from your duty to others. You will go on trying to be useful to some, however one or two may misrepresent you. Well ; try to do your duty to others in such a way, that the misrepresenter, " seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

This is not hopeless work. It is, indeed, hard work : but, just because it is so, it is the more likely to be blessed by God. The Apostles evidently thought so. " For so is the will of God," says Peter, " that by well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." " Having your conversation honest (your conduct honourable) amongst the Gentiles : that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation," 1 Pet. i. 12, 15.

This maxim is so often inculcated upon all

who met with persecution or reproach for well doing, that I cannot but conclude from its repetition, that the Apostles recognised a special providence in the case, whenever the well doing of a Christian drew upon him the spite or jealousy of any of his neighbours. Ill will on their part, is made such a signal for good will on his part, that it is impossible to think otherwise. Peter evidently saw more in their malignity, than their bad spirit. He saw in it also, an uneasy conscience, and an unhappy mind, which, like Cain's, hated the light, because it reproved them. They could not forget the light, nor look away from it, although every glance of it mortified them. He thought of more, therefore, than their exasperation. It struck him, that God had thus fixed the persecutor's eye upon the active Christian, for the eventual good of the persecutor himself, in the day of merciful or providential visitation. Peter, therefore, fixes

the eye of that Christian upon his worst enemy, that he may study to be his best friend, by leaving in his mind such a conviction of good will, as might shame him out of ill will, at some future time. And this line of conduct had often the desired effect then. The near prospect of death, or the heavy pressure of calamity, led many enemies of the Cross to seek both the forgiveness and prayers of the very Christians they had persecuted for years. And, what a pleasure it must have been to a Christian, to be thus called in as a counsellor and an intercessor, at the death-bed of one who had only lived to malign him ! Even if this did not happen, what a relief it must have been to be able to say, when an enemy died,—I did all I could to make him think well of the Gospel !

And it is not by accident, nor without special design, that your movements have drawn unfriendly eyes upon you. These eyes are turned

upon you, that your meekness of wisdom and of well doing may turn them upon the Lamb of God, from whom you draw your strength and derive your model.

If, therefore, your light may so shine, as to lead even your worst enemy to glorify God eventually, much more may it have this effect upon those who respect you. A very special providence, indeed, connects you with such of them, as still remain unconverted or undecided : for they respect you, notwithstanding your religion ; and, in some degree, because you are religious. This is no trifle in their case, nor in yours. It is an opportunity often trifled with : but it involves weighty responsibilities, on both sides, and most on your side ; for you have the light, which such friends and relatives need. You not only have the light, but you have let it “ so shine ” before them already, that it has not prejudiced them against you, nor against religion

itself. You are not held weak by them all, because you are serious; nor sanctimonious, because you are strict; nor visionary, because you are evangelical; nor singular, because you are devotional. You are, of course, regarded as somewhat too rigid in both your faith and practice, by your undecided friends: but still, they respect you more than they would if you compromised, and more than they do the lax in opinions, or the inconsistent in morals. Thus you occupy high vantage ground already, for trying to make your light so shine, as to allure those whom it has not alienated, and to win those whom it has not offended. Again, therefore, I remind you, and adjure you to remember, that this is not by accident, nor is it a mere matter of course, nor is it without a special and gracious design. So far, God has "set a tabernacle" (I will not say for you as a "sun") but for you as a star, that nothing may be "hid

from the heat" of your piety, throughout all the circle of your direct influence. Now, were you placed thus in any heathen or Mohammedan land, would you not feel yourself pledged to consider and to try how your light (having won respect for yourself) might win glory to God and the Lamb? And will you do less at home, than you would do abroad? Would you reckon it a signal and summoning providence, in a country of idolaters, if God gave you "favour in the eyes" of a few, and enabled you to win golden opinions by the silent weight of your character? Would not that both encourage and constrain you to try to save those you had thus conciliated? You would not think well of a Missionary's wife, if she did not follow up all the influence she acquired, both amongst her own sex, and towards any one whom her husband welcomed as a guest. You expect her, especially, to take a very lively interest in the salvation

of her female domestics and visitors. Are the souls of your's less valuable, or your obligations less solemn? Judge righteous judgment, in this matter!—for you must meet your circle at the judgment-seat of Christ.

This is a solemn consideration; and, to me, it would be very alarming, if there were no other ways of making my light shine, than by *speaking* to the careless and the undecided. It is no easy matter to tell a fellow-creature in plain terms, “I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” This may, indeed, be said to a “perverter of the right ways of the Lord,” without either shrinking or ceremony: but thus it cannot be said, (and thus it ought not to be said,) either to those who have only a form of religion, or to those who neglect the forms of religion. They are, alas, in this state to an awful degree: but they must not be addressed in this style. It was only to

such men as Elymas, and Simon the Sorcerer, and to the despisers who had long spurned gentler means, that the apostles spoke in thunder. Their ministry at first, and for a long time, was a ministry of Reconciliation, which, whilst it went for ever upon the principle, that all had sinned and come short of the glory of God ; and thus must perish, without an interest in the blood of Christ ; yet it did not brand all with the same epithets, nor treat all with the same severity. It made, indeed, no distinction between male and female, moral or immoral, so far as either the way of Salvation, or their need of a Saviour, was concerned. In this respect, it placed all on a level before God, and left nothing for the best to look at for mercy, but just the Cross of Christ. It did not, however, confound the moral with the vile, nor the heedless with the hardened, nor the ignorant with the spiteful or the despising ; but kindly laid

hold on any good point, in any character, upon which winning motives could be hung, or attractive light concentrated.

This fact should never be forgotten, in any process for winning souls. Never shut your eyes upon, nor appear to be blind to, any thing which is good about the character or disposition of the unconverted. Do them ample justice; yea, be even generous towards whatever is pleasing or promising in them. This, instead of betraying you into unfaithfulness with their conscience, will enable you to be thoroughly faithful; because it will exempt you from all suspicion of being actuated by pride or prejudice. In fact, you may go any length in fidelity, whenever you have lodged a conviction that your spirit is candid, and your purpose kind.

But, speaking at all is the difficulty! So it is: especially in the case of those who are above us in rank, talents, or acquirements. Even in the

case of those who belong to our own circle, it is not very easy to time or temper such hints, as would be really "a word in season;" of which they would say, "Behold, how good it is!" Indeed, there are both times and tempers on the part of others, when any thing said about religion, would be more likely to make men dishonour God, than induce them to glorify him. I have not, therefore, most faith in direct speaking to the unconverted, upon the state of their souls. They should always be readily and kindly answered, whenever they start any serious question, and especially when they ask you for "a reason of the hope that is in you." Never fail to give that reason with promptness and manifest pleasure, even if you can only quote the chief promise on which your hope rests. Indeed, it is always better to refer to what God says of your way and welcome to hope for salvation, than to appeal to your feelings or expe-

rience: for even when they are most satisfactory and soothing to yourself, they are least intelligible to the natural mind. Real christian experience can only be "spiritually discerned," so far as it consists in heartfelt enjoyment. In this form, you cannot make it "so shine" before others, that they shall glorify God on your account. This inmost light of the inner sanctuary of your heart, can only be understood and appreciated in the world, as it lights up your face with hope, and your spirit with composure, and your character with holiness. And these things are understood, even by the natural mind: yes, and somewhat valued too: for it is not so *easy* as it either seems or pretends to be. It has, indeed, no conception of the way in which happiness arises from communion with God; or from believing views of the Cross of Christ; or from the consciousness of the work or witness of the Holy Spirit; or from searching

the Scriptures in the closet or the sanctuary. Thus far the natural mind can make nothing of the joys of the spiritual mind. They are all foolishness or mysticism to it. But it can make a great deal of self-evident happiness, when that is seen *in* religion, and arising *from* religion, and is sustained *by* the beauty of personal holiness. Then, almost any one recognises a general state of mind which, in one sense, he would be very glad to possess. He himself, however he may deny it or contrive to hide it, is not happy: he is afraid of death, whenever he suspects any danger: he cannot bear to think of Eternity; and yet he dare not rid himself of all belief in a future state: even Providence is rather terrible to him, when his life or his affairs are in any thing like jeopardy: occasionally also, he has acute stings of conscience, and deep sinkings of heart, which make him equally afraid to look far backward or far forward.

Now it is chiefly in reference to this prevalent state of mind in the world, that Christians are bound and encouraged to be "the lights of the world;" and, therefore, each of them may "so shine," that men, seeing their happiness as well as their holiness, may glorify God. Here, then, your light may shine, to a good, even to a saving purpose. "Much speaking" is not wanted, in order to prove that you have found "rest to your soul" in Christ. Perhaps, the less that is said the better. Real happiness in religion supersedes, in a great measure, the necessity of talking about it. It speaks for itself, when it irradiates the eye with calm serenity, and the spirits with meek cheerfulness, and the lips with the law of love, and the whole deportment with humble consistency. Then, like "day unto day it uttereth speech," and like "night unto night teacheth knowledge," without either giving offence, or appearing officious to the listeners.

Thus, happiness sustained by holiness, will make itself felt; and is, of all things in private life, the most influential and effectual in leading the witnesses of it, sooner or later, to glorify God, by seeking for happiness in His great Salvation. You have most likely said, by this time,—But I myself am not thus happy, either in or from religion. Well; even if you are not so happy, you are happier than your careless friends; happier than you were before you were serious, or than you would be were you to relapse back to the frivolities of the world. Let, therefore, this light so shine, that all may see whatever real satisfaction you have in the good ways of God. By no means pretend, nor allow it to be supposed, that you have more enjoyment in religion than you actually possess. Let no one form an idea from your words or your spirit, that there is nothing but pleasure in religion. You know better than this; and they

ought to know that there are trials as well as transports, sorrows as well as joys, crosses as well as crowns, in the service of God. A life of faith on the Son of God, involves work and warfare, as well as hope and comfort. Never try to *cheat* any one into the narrow way, by representing it as never rough nor thorny. When you do speak of it, speak according to the Oracles of God, and agreeably to what you have found the path of holiness to be : taking special care, however, to distinguish between what you found it to be whilst your views of the Gospel were but comfortless ; and what you have found it to be since you began to find, that the belief of “ good news ” is the *clue* to a “ good hope through grace.” Do not, I beg of you, represent “ the way everlasting,” as it appeared to you, whilst the glorious Gospel itself seemed to you little more than a new Law, with merely “ better promises ” than the moral Law.

Perhaps the following Allegory may embody the case of some prodigal you know; and thus enable you to speak a word in season to him, when he comes to his right mind again.

ALLEGORY.

ENTERING ETERNITY IN THE DARK, PREVENTED.

ADMATH was brought up in "the hill country of Judea," and thus escaped, while he abode under the paternal roof, the actual dominion of the passions. But, like the ripe clusters on the vines of Sibmah or Eshcol, the purple bloom of which will bear no handling, his simplicity was the simplicity of ignorance, not of principle. It was too pure to "devise mischief," but too weak to resist temptation. His father thought not of this, when a situation was found for Admath in Jerusalem. The old man suspected no evil from the influence of the Judean metropo-

lis. Christianity was, indeed, in it ; but was it not still, “ the holy city ? ” the seat and shrine of the lively oracles and the everlasting covenant ? Would not Admath witness the daily sacrifice and the annual great atonement ? Would not his Sabbaths be spent in singing the song of Zion in the temple, and in hearing the law expounded from the chair of Moses ? The old man was *sure* of it, and the young man *intended* nothing else : but “ he that trusteth to his own heart is a fool.”

In this native simplicity Admath came to Jerusalem. He was dazzled and delighted with the scene. Strength and beauty were united in his form, and he was noticed “ in the gate.” Admath was gratified by the attention which he attracted, and soon began to display his manly form to the utmost advantage, by dress. “ The sons of Belial ” discovered his foible, and resolved to strengthen their ranks by his company. Their

advances were, however, cautious. The distant notice of to-day was followed only by a formal salutation to-morrow; and successive recognitions ripened but slowly into familiarity. But when he began to *speak* with the sons of Belial, he soon proceeded to *walk* arm in arm with them. Occasionally he was startled by the freedoms of their speech; but was not the danger defeated by his own innate dislike of an aspid tongue? And was not intimacy with young men of high spirit and apparent wealth, the way to get forward in the city and in the world? Would he not see *life*, and thus learn how to reach eminence? He allowed himself to think so, and eventually ventured to try the experiment. But having never made JOB's "covenant with his eyes," nor pondered SOLOMON's warnings against "wine," Admath soon lost his *cloak*—and then his character. He became a son of BELIAL.

His aged father heard only of Admath's suc-

cess in the world ; and the old man died blessing his son, whom he fondly imagined the LORD had blessed. The benediction smote Admath to the heart. He felt that his father's cleaving *curse* had been deserved. Conscience compelled a pause to his mad career : the accusing spirit of his father seemed to warn him to “ *flee from the wrath to come.*”

Then, for the first time, he began to consider seriously the claims of CHRISTIANITY. Hitherto he had heard of it only as it was denounced in the Sanhedrim, or as it was caricatured by the sons of Belial ; and therefore he had regarded it as equally unworthy of his notice as a Jew and as a gentleman. But both his Judaism and his Sadduceanism gave way before the terrors of his conscience, when the grave of his father spoke to his heart. But not willingly, nor soon, did he come to the determination of visiting the Christian church in Jerusalem. He went to the

morning and evening sacrifice, until the altars seemed to burn only in mockery of his misery. He sat by the chair of Moses listening to the reading of the law—and only felt the sense of his condemnation deeper in his soul. He mingled with the strictest sect of the Pharisees—and found them either hypocrites or presumers. He tried every tree on the Judean Gilead to find “balm” for the wounds of his spirit—and only when he found *none*, did he resolve to visit the Christians. And when he did, it was as Nicodemus came to Christ, “*by night.*” Nor did he enter their sanctuary as a penitent, but assumed the port and bearing of a casual spectator—looking as smiling and safe as if he had never known sin nor sorrow. His audacious stare almost disconcerted the minister as he arose to preach the Gospel. ADMATH, however, was soon tamed and attracted, when he heard of a “peace that passeth all understanding.”

keeping the heart and mind, and reigning unto eternal life : of reconciliation to God, and of a hope full of immortality." These were the very blessings which he wanted ; but they were obtainable only through faith in the blood of Christ, as the Lamb of God—and he could not brook the bare idea. It seemed an insult to himself and to his country !

He retired indignantly—and threw himself upon his bed to compose his spirits. But in vain : darkness was, as usual, " no darkness " to his conscience, but the full moon of her light. It was to the blessings he had heard of, what the deep blue of the midnight heavens is to the stars. He could not forget the glad tidings of " *peace* with God." But the *medium* of that peace—the Cross ! he despised it. Still the peace itself, however, fascinated and fixed his thoughts upon itself. It would not retire from his view. Whichever way he turned, it shone

“ as a light in a dark place.” He called it a *meteor*—but still it glowed like the morning star. He called it a *dream*—but, when the day broke, and the sun arose above Mount Zion, it was still before him undimmed and undiminished. No reality ever fixed his attention so entirely. He recollected, too, that peace with God seemed to reign in the *looks* as well as in the mind of the Evangelist—and that it seemed the very element in which the Church breathed.

Thus exercised and agitated, ADMATH resolved to search the Scriptures, to ascertain for himself if Jesus was the Christ. He did, and, to his surprise, found the prophets full of *such* a Messiah as he had joined in rejecting. He was confounded! Had the Masters in Israel no eyes? He could see *nothing* but predictions of a *divine* and *atoning* Saviour! He was ready to rush out and charge the whole Sanhedrim with having never read their own *Prophets*.

He was sure that they must have overlooked ISAIAH entirely, or “*sawn asunder*” his book, as their fathers did his body. How else could they have rejected Jesus of Nazareth? The burst of this glorious discovery overpowered ADMATH. His health was shaken before, and now it sunk under the weight of its new views and feelings. He drew near to the gates of death: but although all was light as to the general truth of Christianity, all was dark as to his own personal interest in it. He saw clearly that Jesus was just such a Saviour as he needed; and was persuaded that his person was divine, and his work an atonement. He believed all this with the heart, and rejoiced that it was true; but how to obtain an interest in Christ crucified, he knew not. He prayed for salvation through the Lamb, slain—but felt nothing which amounted to an *answer*. He solemnly renounced all other grounds of hope but the

Cross; but was afraid to hope for acceptance on that ground. He could not relinquish his hold of the Cross—but he could hardly see how it would avail on his own behalf. All was suspense and uncertainty in his soul—and yet all was solicitude!

In this situation the Minister found him. ADMATH welcomed him; but to the question, “Is all well, my brother?” he answered, “I AM GOING INTO ETERNITY IN THE DARK! I have examined and embraced the Gospel; it is glorious! it is the truth of God! its salvation is all my desire; but I know not how to obtain it for myself. For *myself*! oh, I am utterly unworthy of it! I dare neither hope nor despair; but I am going into eternity in the dark! I know not what will be the issue!”

“ADMATH,” saith the Evangelist, “it will be peace, if you believe in Christ for the salvation of Christ. His is a *holy* salvation.”

“ Yes ! and for that I love it,” said ADMATH.

“ Oh, yes ; its holiness is its glory ! Even to *know* it makes sin odious. I have hated sin since I loved salvation. But I am going into eternity in the dark ! I may be ‘ *unholy still !* ’ ”

“ Not whilst God is true, Admath : he that believeth shall never perish, but have eternal life ; and you are quite sure that you *believe* all that God says of his Son.”

“ Yes, yes ! but I do not *feel* as if I were safe.”

“ My brother ! how can you *feel* it before you BELIEVE it ? He that would feel safe for eternity, must first *believe* that he *is* safe ; and a believer in Christ is warranted to do so.”

“ Aye, *there it is !* I never saw it before. ‘ *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have SEEN thy salvation.* ’ ”

No. VIII.

DEVELOPMENTS BY STUDY.

It is a fact, equally remarkable and pleasing, that whenever the principles of Grace seat themselves in our minds, we not only “cease to do evil” as formerly; we also resolve and set ourselves to “do well,” almost instinctively. I mean, that even before we have time to study the Scriptural system of well doing, and before our own plan of improvement can be arranged, we begin to do better; not indeed without design, but almost without any other rule than the new tendencies of the heart itself. From the very moment it is melted or warmed by the glories of Salvation, it is willing to do better than formerly, and desirous to do well in future. This

fact has always appeared to me a decisive proof of the reality of the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, as well as of the power of Divine Truth itself: for, let the persons thus awakened to the worth of their souls, belong to whatever class of society, and differ however much in knowledge or talent, each of them is equally intent, at first, upon well doing. Even a person who has hardly ever given a thought to the theory or the practice of holiness, until the very moment of his being arrested by some great truth of the Gospel, is, from that moment, as willing to do well, as the person who saw, before his conversion, something of the beauty of holiness. Yes; and both persons are equally afraid, at the time, lest any thing should prevent them from doing so well as they wish.

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“Is not this the finger of God?” I readily allow that there is much general knowledge afloat, on the subject of what is right and pro-

per. Even those who have gone farthest astray in the paths of sin and folly, carried with them, and kept whilst there, some sense or convictions of their duty to both God and man. No man has every thing to learn on the subject of well doing, when he is converted, however ignorant or vicious he may have been before. No ; the Spirit of God found some sense of good, as well as of evil, in the sinner's conscience : and, of course, all that sense, together with all his general knowledge of right and wrong, rallies and converges in one focus, which forms something like a law of duty, when concern for the eternal salvation of the soul comes home with power to the heart. But still, not all this, nor all that the best instructed or the best inclined in morals know, before their conversion, will account for the concern, the solicitude, the simple-hearted willingness to do well, which is felt and manifested when the grace of God touches the heart.

Whoever has studied that willingness like David, will explain it like David : “ Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” You, no doubt, recollect with pleasure, how instantaneously you ceased to do evil, and how instinctively, as it were, you began to do well, when the Spirit of God began the good work of conversion in your soul. You did not delay either step until you had a complete plan, or a formal system of rules : but went to your closet, to your Bible, and to the Sanctuary, as naturally as the babe turns to the maternal bosom, or as the young bird nestles under the maternal wing. You felt your need of mercy to pardon, and of grace to help ; and that sense of need drew you away from whatever you saw to be wrong, and carried you far in amongst the duties of godliness. Hope or fear, like Lot’s guardian Angel, not only hastened your steps from the broad way, but also directed them in the narrow way.

This is that state of mind which God calls, "thy first love;" "the love of thine espousals." He says of it, with touching tenderness, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." Israel was (then) Holiness unto the Lord, Jer. ii. 2. You, too, remember this! Perhaps, you have occasion to say, when you compare your present with your first love, "My soul hath it still in remembrance, and is humbled within me." If so—there must be something very cutting to you in the appeal, "Ye did run well; what did hinder you," that you did not continue to run as well as you began? Is there, then, less readiness, less alacrity, less willingness, on your part now, to follow the Lord fully, than when you first came over to the Lord's side? Has any duty become, as it were, a hardship or a tax, that was once a delight? Has any

ordinance, which was once your element, become insipid or irksome to you? Can you do some things now, and leave others undone, which you durst not, when the morning dew of grace was upon "the tender herb" of your piety?

I do not multiply nor point these questions, in order to fix your memory or your conscience upon all the causes of this declension in running well and doing well. You yourself know the moral causes of the falling off, better than I do. They are before you at this moment! You see clearly, both what impeded your steps, and what impaired your relish, in following holiness. Yes; and you have seen all this before now! Did you, however, never see nor suspect, whilst thus looking at the causes of your failures and falling off, that not *learning* to do well, has been one great cause of your not doing so well as you, at first, hoped and intended?

Consider this. Well doing is not only not natural nor agreeable to us : it is also *unknown* to us, in some parts both of its form and spirit, until we sit down at the feet of Christ to learn it from the word of Christ. The inclination to do well is, indeed, the great thing : and whenever it is felt, much good will be done by the sweet influence of its own good tendencies. In many things, the principle of grace is almost a law to itself at first, by the very force of its own nature. As the sight of "the cloud" on Sinai suggested to the Jews many ideas of their duty to God, before God began to speak, or they to hear, the words of the Law ; so a sight of the Cross on Calvary, suggests to a penitent many an idea of well doing, even before he sits down under it with his Bible open, to ask the question, " Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ? " Who can wonder at this ? For, how could any one look upon that Cross, where Emmanuel bled and

died for sin, without seeing and hearing from His sacrifice, almost a *system* of duty? I do not wonder, even when I see a penitent so taken up with the great sight of the Lamb slain, that she hardly thinks, for a time, of any thing else, and scarcely feels her need of any other rule of life, than just the native and ennobling tendencies of His death. Paul was certainly more influenced by the Cross, than by any formal rules of duty, when he said, "I am crucified unto the world, and the world unto me."

Still, whilst the inclination to do well is the grand thing in religion, it is not every thing. Yea; whilst the Cross is the chief constraining power in godliness, and to a very great extent the regulating power too; even the Cross is not the only place, nor the only way, of learning to do well. It suggests much duty we did not think of before, and gives new force to all our old convictions of good and evil; but it does not

give "line upon line," nor "precept upon precept," on the subject of every duty of life and godliness. It is the strongest and steadiest light of Revelation, upon them all; and the only effectual motive to cheerful obedience: but it neither sets aside the use of the rule, nor supersedes the necessity of learning to do well.

We, alas, are, however, somewhat inclined to make the Cross and Grace do so. At least, we are but too ready to take for granted, that the willingness to do well, which they create, will keep up, without much care on our part. We do not trust the principle of grace entirely to its own vitality, nor depend upon its own unaided influence for every thing practical: but we are very prone to allow it no more help, than just what it may get from the general reading and hearing of the word of God. Sitting down, with child-like docility, to learn all the parts and spirit of every positive duty, is not very common.

It is, indeed, true, that we know our duty better than we practise it. It would, indeed, be well, if we acted up to all we know already. These proverbial confessions are, however, mere evasions of the direct claims of the authoritative command, "Learn to do well." The knowledge we do not act up to, is, in general, not knowledge derived from learning at the feet of Christ, but notions forced upon us by example, or picked up by accident, or acquired without pains-taking. Whatever we seriously search out for ourselves before God, by prayer and consideration over his word, we do act upon, more and better, than we act on any principle which has cost us no thought or prayer. In the case of the Holy Sacrament, for example, we *learned*, as well as felt and reflected, before we ventured to come to it. We not only listened to the Saviour's command, "Do this in remembrance of me;" we also looked directly into our Bibles, to learn

why it should be done, how it should be done, and in what spirit it should be done. Thus, we did not leave that duty, at first, either to our general sense of obligation, nor to our generous feelings of gratitude ; but helped both, by taking express lessons on the subject. We did not allow ourselves to suppose, that we had nothing to learn, because we had much desire to come to the Sacrament. No ; the very strength of our desire, and the depth of our sense of duty, sent and set us to learn to do well at the Altar of God. We read, and pondered, and prayed, and planned, and examined our principles, motives, and feelings, in order that our communicating might be an act of holy well doing. Accordingly, there is nothing we do so well in religion, as we, in general, “ DO THIS.” The return of the Sacrament, leads always to some preparation of heart, and almost every repetition of it is followed by a resolution to be more prepared

to do better next time. On this point we still feel, that we have yet much to learn, and great improvements to make.

In like manner, in regard to that "work of God," believing aright, or to the saving of the soul, we are still learning to do well. We not only took many lessons on the subject, when we first saw that Salvation was by faith on the Son of God ; but we have taken many lessons even since we had some faith ; and we feel yet that we need more. So much is this the case, that we are occasionally so afraid of an error, a mistake, or a failure here, that we actually begin again at the very beginning of believing, lest we should deceive ourselves, or overlook any thing which essentially belongs to true faith in Christ. Our education, on this point, is not finished, nor do we think it finished. We are very thankful when we can even think it well begun.

We also carry on no small process of learning

from day to day, how to prevent the cares of the world from destroying the power of godliness in our hearts. We find that it will not do, to leave either our principles or feelings to take their chance of all the tear and wear of life, without any safeguard or help from the word of God. We have learned, by bitter experience, so much of the treachery of our own hearts, and of the deadening and distracting influence of the world, that we are glad to learn from our Bibles how to keep our hearts right with God, and how to counteract and surmount the withering influence of the things of time and sense. Here, then, are three things, in which we have really been scholars, and for which we are still at school, without the prospect or even the wish of leaving it soon. In all these cases, we lay our account with having still to learn, as well as to try, to do well. But is there nothing else in which this process is necessary? Are all other duties so

simple and easy, that they have only to be named, in order to be well done? Does faith require to be studied; but patience come by instinct? Do sacramental feelings depend upon looking at sacramental principles; and temper, contentment, and self-government, need no rallying nor regulating, by bringing them "to the law and the testimony?"

I readily and gladly allow, that the ordinary duties of both life and godliness are very plain. She that runs may read. But, then, she must *read*, if she would run well: and one reading is not enough. Paul saw clearly from the first moment of his conversion, that contentment would be essential, in order to doing or enduring well what he had to go through: but it was not until twenty-seven years afterwards, that he ventured to say, "I have learned—in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." He did not, of course, require all this interval of time to

learn the lesson. He exercised much contentment and self-denial too, from the very moment of his entering publicly into the service of Christ; but all these years did elapse before he fully mastered the lesson; and even then, he said of his contentment, and every thing else that was good about him, "I am not yet perfect!" "I follow after!" was his maxim and his practice, in reference to all grace and godliness, twenty years after he had taken lessons on both in "the third heavens."

I will neither graft too much upon this example, nor enforce it beyond your sphere and circumstances. You have not to act the same part as Paul. The same spirit, however, is necessary, if you would do well, even in your more ordinary duties. You too must be humble enough to "learn to do well," and patient enough to "follow after" whatever duty or grace you do not excel in at once.

This is a maxim of vital importance, in the case of every religious habit and temper, which you find difficult to maintain. Many persons, when they find that they do not succeed, at once and easily, in overcoming a wrong habit or temper, succumb to it; and then try to persuade themselves, that it is their besetting sin, which, as it "easily" besets them, can never be conquered. This conclusion they draw from the fact, that every one fails in something. Now this is the fact. It does not, however, follow, that you must continue to fail at that point where, hitherto, you have been most defective. Why; the very pain and shame it occasions in your own mind, show that you have only to help your conscience by some new lessons in the School of Christ, in order to be more than a conqueror by his blood, over the chief enemy of your peace.

No. IX.

DEVELOPMENTS BY THE SPIRIT.

THE first harvest of the fruits of the earth was not *sown* : it was created. “ God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth : and it was so. The earth brought forth grass, herb, and tree.” But it never did so again, without sowing. As this was the first unsown harvest, so it was the last. Never since has God said to the earth, “ Bring forth,” but in connexion with sowing. Once, and once only, He gave “ seed to the sower, and bread to the eater,” from plants which sprung as spontaneously from the earth, as light shone out of darkness, at His own

command. Man then reaped what he had not sown : but ever since, his harvests have been the fruit of seed and the effect of sowing. This connexion between sowing and reaping, no man ever thinks of setting aside, or of finding fault with. It involves labour, and patience, and expense ; but these, however grudged, are universally and uniformly given, from age to age. No man ever dreams of harvest, apart from " seed-time." And yet, every man knows and believes too, that God *could* produce another Paradisaic harvest, by merely saying again, " Let the earth bring forth." He, who at first " made every plant of the field *before* it was in the earth, and every herb of the field *before* it grew," Gen. ii. 5, could easily do so again.

" Earth would obey her Maker's voice,

And yield a rich increase,"

now, as then, were He to repeat the original command. No one doubts this at all ; but no

one expects this. No wise man wishes for any thing of the kind. The very utmost we desire is, that good harvests should invariably follow good tillage and sowing. And they do follow these so regularly, that no husbandman is afraid or unwilling to sow, from year to year.

Thus, reaping is now thrown upon sowing, every where and for ever; and wisely so: for the body requires exercise as well as food, in order to its support; and the mind itself takes more interest in the produce of labour and skill, than in spontaneous growth. Men are savages, wherever they can eat without working.

It is, however, worthy of special notice, that, notwithstanding all that men do and endure, in order to secure an abundant harvest, they are entirely dependent on God for success. Did not he open the windows of heaven, and shed down the early and the latter rain, no opening of the earth by the plough would fertilize the

soil. The plough is not the key of the skies. Seed, however good, exerts no direct influence upon the sun or the stars, the winds or the dew. Seed depends on them ; not they upon it. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of any thing being more completely dependent on the good-will and power of God, than the fruits of the earth. Neither the seed nor the sower have any control over the " sweet influences " of the heavens. Except by *prayer*, we have no voice whatever in the rising or setting of the sun, or in the alternations of wind and rain. After all that science has discovered, and experience taught, we must answer the following questions just as Job did in the infancy of the world, Job xxxviii. 24, 38. To all this we must say with Job, " What shall I answer thee ? I will lay my hand upon my mouth."

Thus it rests with God alone, and on the good will of God entirely, to make the earth fruitful,

by the agency of the heavens in watering and warming it. In this sphere of operation, man can do nothing but watch and pray. But this inability to control the elements, or to contrive to do without them, does not prevent tilling or sowing. No man ever thinks of saying,—I will not crop nor cultivate the earth ; for I have no power to regulate the heavens, and no absolute security that *my* own fields will be fruitful.” Every man knows that God could cause it to rain in one place and not in another, and thus make one district like a “ well-watered garden,” and another like “ Gilboa, without dew or rain ; ” but no man so suspects God of partiality, as to fear more for his own farm than for his neighbours’. He just fears and hopes in his own case, as they do for their farms ; so far as crops depend upon Providence. Indeed, all farmers, proverbial as they are for complaining about the weather, would reckon any man both absurd

and criminal, who should tempt Providence by doing nothing with soil or seed, because he can do nothing effectual without sun and rain.

Such then is the state of the case in regard to the harvests upon which the life, health, and happiness of the body depend: sowing must precede reaping, and good seed be the source of good crops. He who sows *tares* cannot reap wheat, nor can he who allows thorns and stones to cumber his grounds, expect abundant crops, even from the best grain.

Now it will be readily admitted, that there is *some* analogy between the harvests of the earth and the harvest of Heaven. It is quite needless to prove this to any one who has read the Bible. The word of God abounds in illustrations, arguments, encouragements, and warnings, drawn from husbandry, to commend and enforce piety. The question, however, is, how *much* analogy is there between the process of securing an earthly

harvest, and the process of securing a heavenly harvest? Where does that analogy or parallel *begin*—where does it *end*—where does it *differ*?

Let us glance at the last question first; for there are differences. No farmer reaps without sowing; but many reap without *praying*. Now no man can reap eternal life without seeking it by prayer, as well as preparing for it by holiness. No quantity of the good seed of truth, sown in the heart, will bear fruit unto eternal life, or to holiness of life, without prayer. It is not in this harvest, as in earthly harvests, that the prayers of a few secure a crop to all. All ought, indeed, to pray for seed-time and harvest: but many who do not, obtain all the advantages of both, in virtue of the prayers of “the faithful in the land.” The prayers of the Church will not, however, avail thus for the prayerless world. They have an influence upon the Salvation of

sinners; but only such an influence as leads sinners to pray for themselves.

Here then is a difference which must never be lost sight of, nor lessened at all. The prayerless cannot reap eternal life, whatever they sow. There is no sowing to the Spirit, without praying for the Spirit. The praise of Heaven is the harvest of prayer on earth.

Still, notwithstanding all its necessity and importance, prayer is not exactly *sowing* to the Spirit; is not, itself, the *seed* of eternal life or holiness. It brings down upon the heart the quickening and fructifying influences of the Holy Spirit, which are to the heart, what warmth and rain are to the earth, indispensable; but it does not supply seed nor supplant labour. Divine influence itself does not do that. It often raises the harvest of holiness and glory from very little seed, but never from soil alone. The glad tidings of the Gospel, and the practical duties of

godliness, and all the means of grace, are the seed which the Holy Spirit waters and watches; and, therefore, where they are neglected, he does not bless. Truth must be sown in the heart, and duty sown in the life, and both sown to the Spirit, if we would reap life everlasting from the Spirit.

There is by far too little of this direct and deliberate sowing unto the Spirit; and hence the little he works or witnesses at present. Men refuse to sow, and therefore He refuses to water. They neglect the seed, and He will not fertilize the soil. For it is not now exactly as it was when the Gospel was first preached to the world. Then, almost all the seed was in the earthen vessels of the Apostles and Evangelists. Hardly any one could sow unto the Spirit, until they *gave* him the good seed of the kingdom. For a time, therefore, they were emphatically, indeed almost exclusively, the Sowers; and then, God

gave the chief "increase" to their public sowing and planting. But when God multiplied the copies of his word, and the sanctuaries of his worship, he threw the duty of sowing upon all who had access to them, as well as continued to devolve that duty on his ministers. He called on hearers and readers to sow for themselves, when he thus put the seed into their own hands, or within their reach. Thus the command, "Search the Scriptures," kept pace with the diffusion of the Scriptures. Nor was this all. The necessity of personal sowing arose out of ministerial sowing. It began the moment any man was called on to Repent and Believe the Gospel: for no man could do either, without first considering the evil of the sin, and acquainting himself with the truth to be believed. It was, therefore, the attention and consideration which the first converts gave to the Gospel, that constituted their first sowing to the Spirit.

It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to convince any one who dislikes serious reflection, that this was the process by which the first hearers of the Gospel repented and believed. All, indeed, will doubt it, who want excuses for idleness or delay. Conversion was then so sudden, that it is not easy to see any thing but the sowing of the Apostles and the watering of the Spirit, falling on the heart together, at the same moment. There was, in most cases, no obvious interval between the ministerial appeal and the divine operation. This fact, however, should convince all who observe it, that these hearers gave *intense* heed to the word, and were themselves sowing it, as well as allowing it to be sown, in their hearts. To doubt this, is to say, that they repented without the knowledge of sin, and believed without the knowledge of the truth. But their repentance was "towards God," and therefore they must have considered his charac-

ter; and their faith was "towards the Lord Jesus Christ," and therefore they must have weighed his claims upon their confidence: especially as their repentance was deep, and their faith rejoicing. No matter, therefore, for my argument, however rapid or brief was the consideration they gave to the Gospel, in hearing it: they must have considered it seriously; and therefore the more rapidly, the more seriously. All that I want to prove, however, is, that they were not heedless—not listless—not trifling, when the Spirit gave power to the word. They may have come to it only to mock it, or to amuse an idle hour; but they did not spend that hour in that spirit. At some point in the sermon, they must have set themselves to consider, and allowed themselves to be convinced; and then began—their sowing unto the Spirit. Not, however, that they knew then that this was the kind of hearing which the Holy Spirit would bless.

Perhaps many of them were not aware that there was such a Spirit in the Godhead. Most of them were no doubt surprised, when the Apostles told them that their new feelings and desires were the first-fruits of the Holy Spirit. This information would, however, only make them the more glad that they had given good heed to the glad tidings of the Gospel; and more thankful that they had not trifled with a Gospel which the Eternal Spirit makes power unto salvation.

Thus we arrive at the historical and sober fact, that the kind of hearing which the Holy Spirit blessed then, as sown unto Himself, was very different from that formal, listless, and heedless attention which the undecided now give to the Gospel. No wonder, therefore, the Spirit does not work now as he did then. Many, now, turn the necessity of his working into a reason for not caring *how* they hear. They call the

Word a dead letter, because it is the Spirit only that quickeneth ; and thus make no use of the Word. They say they can do nothing without the Spirit ; and thus justify themselves in trying nothing by which the Spirit is likely to help or meet them.

There is something equally ominous and awful in this perverted state of mind ! For, what does a man really mean, when he coolly says —“ I cannot convert myself ;—I can do nothing without grace ; how can I help it, if the Spirit do not give me a new heart ; I cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean. If the Spirit would do for me what he has done for others, I should do as well as others ; but how can I be godly without grace ? ” There is, indeed, much truth in all this. There is, however, one terrific truth in the centre of it all, which few notice, and which if the man believed, he would utter all the rest with weeping and gnashing

of teeth. For his words mean—that he may be a lost man to all Eternity—that there may be no mercy in God for him—no grace in Christ for him—no life in the Spirit for him. He says, he has found none yet. He says also that he cannot *seek* for any. He even adds to this horrid account of his state, that he cannot help it! Why; this is almost like being in Hell already. But the man says all this coolly. He proves it logically! Yes; and thus proves that he does not believe a word of it; for if he did, he would writhe in anguish and shriek in agony.

I want you to *sow* unto the Spirit, in your own mind, the good seed of heavenly principles, and of heavenly character, if you would reap a harvest of holiness or of immortality. And this is not so difficult, nor so irksome, as many suppose.

It is impossible to look unto Heaven, listening to the songs of saints and angels, without feeling persuaded that our sentiments must harmonize

with the creed of Heaven, before our souls can be meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. We may look round the churches on earth, and not feel that it is necessary to agree with any of them in all things. They differ from each other on some points, and therefore it cannot be very unsafe to differ somewhat from them all, on points of "doubtful disputation." No church on earth is infallible; and therefore no man can risk his soul by disbelieving in any human creed, whatever article he cannot find in his Bible.

We do not, however, stand in this relation to the church in Heaven. We cannot differ from it in sentiment, without both sin and risk. It is infallible and uniform in all things. Its creed is as perfect as its character, and as plain as its glory. I mean, that no man can be at any loss, whilst listening to the worship of Heaven, to discover what saints and angels believe. There is, indeed, mystery in their creed; but there is no

mist about it. They honour God and the Lamb equally, and ascribe all salvation entirely to the blood of Atonement. This is so obvious and universal throughout the General Assembly, that it would be absurd to think of joining in their worship without embracing their creed. We cannot enter Heaven without entering into the spirit of heavenly sentiments.

Those who have weighed the facts from which this solemn conclusion is drawn, have felt it to be their imperative duty, to sow the good seed of these heavenly sentiments in their minds; and that, not once or twice only, but often, and always in prayerful dependence on the Spirit of God. Yes; the seed of that truth which is the grand theme, the chief joy, the everlasting song of Heaven, is sown to the Spirit, in the fond hope that he will so watch and water it, so ripen and perfect it, that the soul shall be as ready, at death, to cast its crown at the feet of the Lamb,

and strike its harp to his glory, as any spirit around the throne. Does then your heart respond to this? Do you sow to the Spirit, the seed of this part of the harvest of glory? Perhaps you can say with truth, "I have often gone forth into all the fields of my own heart, sowing this precious seed; and not seldom weeping whilst I sowed, lest it should fail to take root in the stony and thorny ground of my nature. One thing I am sure of: all my hope of its bringing forth fruit unto eternal life, rests upon the promise and power of the Eternal Spirit.

It is then your solemn and settled persuasion, that without sowing unto the Spirit the seed of heavenly *sentiment*, you cannot reap the harvest of heavenly safety. You could not cherish the hope of worshipping the Lamb at the throne, if you did not adore him on the footstool. Your only hope of dwelling with Him there, arises from depending entirely upon his Cross here.

You have no hope of glory, apart from glorying only in the Cross of Christ.

This is a fine lesson learned from Heaven. And then, it is as surely true as it is sweetly true. You are just as right in this part of your faith and practice, as the infallible church in Heaven. Nothing can prove your creed to be wrong on this point, but facts which would prove that Heaven rings with lies, and teems with error. Go on, therefore, sowing this seed to the Spirit, with confidence and constancy. I say with *constancy*, as well as confidence; for if you stop sowing, the hope of reaping will not go on well. You must “grow in the *knowledge* of Christ,” if you would grow in grace, or in the hope of glory. Indeed, it is much the same in religion as in husbandry: no farmer has *two* crops of corn from *one* sowing. No farmer allows a field of corn to sow *itself* by shaking. It would perhaps yield something, but certainly

not a crop, if allowed to shake its grain upon the ground. So it is in religion. We must continue to sow, if we would have hope continue to grow. It will not sow itself sufficiently for holiness or happiness. Accordingly, hope becomes very weak, and happiness in religion dies, and even holiness decays, whenever we depend upon our *recollections* of the Gospel, so as to give up searching and pondering the Scriptures. It is just as impossible to keep up a good hope by the recollected knowledge of last year, as to reap a good crop from grain that had sown itself. The good crops are all upon the fields which are ploughed and sown every year. And lively and lasting hope through grace, is found only in hearts where the word of God is sown regularly and prayerfully.

We indeed are very ready to take for granted, when we have got hold of cheering and sustaining views of the Gospel, that they will last for

ever. We are so pleased to see our way and welcome to the Cross clearly, that we feel sure we can never lose sight of it again ; never forget it ; never cease to value it. The truth as it is in Jesus, seems then brighter in our hearts than it is in our Bibles. It is so vividly and sweetly before our minds, that there seems no need for reading it in the Scriptures. Thus,

“ Our hearts presume they cannot lose

The relish all our days,”

it is so strong a relish ! What, however, is the result, when we yield to this temptation, and try to go on upon the stock of our old knowledge ? Alas, it is this : our bright views of the glory and grace of the Saviour, grow dimmer and fainter, until they actually fade away : one promise after another is let slip, until our hold upon them all is well nigh lost ; even our principles themselves get into confusion, and do not work well ; and thus our hope, and peace, and

comfort, ebb away until we are almost at our wit's end, and ready to deem ourselves hypocrites or apostates. This comes of ceasing to sow the seed of hope anew, from time to time. The Spirit refuses to water the *old* seed, when we refrain from sowing more. Whereas, whilst we keep up our acquaintance with the truth of the Gospel, by keeping our Bibles in use, He keeps up our hearts and hopes. We are never left altogether "comfortless," whilst we are careful to "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly." Then we have both wisdom and spiritual understanding enough to live upon Christ.

Were these experimental facts more attended to, there would be far less fluctuation of hope. It staggers, because it is not kept upon all the breadth and length of its foundations, as these are laid in the Scriptures. They are not laid so wide or deep in the memory. There, the grounds of hope will not keep together long. One falls

out entirely, and another loses its place, and all crumble, until hope has hardly a point to stand on. In speaking thus, I do not forget that the first Christians had to live their life of faith, chiefly, on *recollected* truth. The generality of them had not the Scriptures to search. Most of them had to make and keep Memory their Bible. All of them had, however, that to do or endure, which kept Memory in lively exercise. Persecution or reproach threw them for ever upon their principles for support. It is not so with us. Our memory depends most upon our Conscience. There is but little in our lot, or in the intercourse of life, to remind us often and powerfully of the glorious Gospel. We are, indeed, in great danger of forgetting its chief glories, whenever we cease to study them in our closets, with the Bible in our hands. Nothing but devotional habits can keep truth habitually before our minds. There are not martyrs nor miracles

around us, to emblazon or endear it. We must come to its Oracles often, if we would retain its comfort, or live under its authority. In a word, we must continue sowing unto the Spirit, until we reap life everlasting. I have not dwelt longer upon this part of the subject than its importance demands. Heavenly *sentiments*, in regard to the Person and Work of Christ, are essential to well founded hopes of heaven. She who has not a heavenly creed, will not acquire a holy character. More is wanted, however, than harmony of sentiment with saints and angels. We see and hear amongst them, more than their opinions or feelings. Their *spirit* towards all the will of God and the Lamb, comes also equally before us, when we notice their worship. Their *enjoyments*, as well as their engagements, are revealed to us, and that for practical purposes, or to enable us to understand duty as well as faith.

What else, then, are you sowing unto the Spirit, besides the good seed of heavenly sentiment and emotion? A right *character* is as necessary as a right creed, in order to meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light: for “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Now this requires just as much attention and care from us, as the Cross of Christ demands. He endured the Cross for the express purpose of fitting us for the crown, by its sanctifying influence. He “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Now, what place has this holy purpose of Christ’s in your heart? What place, compared with the importance you attach to adoring His divinity, and depending on His atonement? On these points you would not fail nor falter for worlds. Here you are equally afraid of error and defect. You often test and

try your faith in Christ, by your feelings towards his supremacy and sacrifice. Any low estimate of His grace or glory, or even a languid sense of them, startles you. You are not easy, and do not feel at all safe, until by resowing the seed of truth, on this subject, you regain your convictions.

This is all right. You cannot be too careful to keep up a settled persuasion, and adoring sense, of the glory of the Lamb slain. Are you, however, equally careful to be faithful to the practical design of His sacrifice. You watch your principles, and are alarmed when they waver, and uneasy until they settle again at the magnetic pole of the Cross. How do you feel when your *practice* varies from the standard of duty? Does a wrong action pain you as much as a wrong emotion? Are you as ready to crucify the lusts of the flesh, as the lusts of the mind? Do you take as prompt and prayerful measures

to subdue a bad habit as to escape from a sceptical or heretical principle ? Are you as much afraid of lax morals, as of legal or latitudinarian opinions ?

These questions are not too many nor too minute. Yea, they are not pointed enough. There may be a general consistency of character, and yet some inconsistency which, though it do not unchristianize us, disqualifies us for communion with God, and prevents the witness of the Spirit. There may be nothing before man, that affects our standing in the fellowship of the Church and the esteem of the world ; and yet there may be something so wrong before God, as to be fatal to all enjoyment in the Sanctuary, and to all peace and pleasure in the closet. What does the sacramental Table say to this ? Could the Closet speak, what would it protest against ? What does the Holy Spirit remonstrate against oftenest and loudest ? It is *that*, whatever it be, which

unfits for secret prayer; which makes the Sacrament appear hazardous; which darkens our prospects, by disabling us to appropriate the great and precious promises to ourselves.

Now there is only one effectual remedy in this case;—sowing to the Spirit. We shall never succeed in resisting temptation, nor in conquering our easily besetting sin, by mere resolution or watchfulness. Prayer itself will not prevent the dominion of our besetting sin, apart from sowing to the Spirit. Accordingly, even the Saviour did not pray for the sanctification of his people, without an express reference to the force of truth on their consciences. “*Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.*” Besides, we shall neither watch nor pray much against temptation, if we do not also plant against it both the strict counsel and the stern warnings of the Word of God. Remember how the Saviour himself sowed truth as fast as Satan sowed

temptation. He neither threw himself upon his own divine strength, nor upon the power of prayer alone; but met all his temptations by the Sword of the Spirit. He set “*Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not,*” against every sinful proposal which the tempter made to him. And we can only cleanse our ways by taking heed unto the word of God.

If you have never noticed this fact sufficiently until now, you do well to ponder it deeply from henceforth. The power of truth, when sown to the Spirit, is mighty to prevent sin, and defeat temptation. The act of using the truth of God for this purpose, is, when deliberate and solemn, like taking a sword and shield directly from the hand of God, to employ them in dependence on the Spirit, and in the presence of all heaven, for moral conquest. Then, the truth, thus wielded, is as if we heard God saying, “*Thou shalt not.*” And, who would yield to or tamper with sin, if

she heard God saying in thunder, "Thou shalt not;" or whispering in love, "O, do not this abominable thing which my soul hateth?" You feel that a visible flaming sword, waving between you and any temptation, would hold you back. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, and were it well wielded in the light of Eternity, it would flash as effectually as the flaming sword of the destroying Angel.

It is not, I am aware, exactly in this heroic temper, that the spiritual warfare against the world, the devil, and the flesh, can be habitually carried on. We may kindle up to this height of holy bravery on *field days*, or on great occasions, but we are incapable of being always thus upon all our mettle. Sowing to the Spirit is more within our reach daily, than warring to the Spirit.

Perhaps the best thing we can do, is, to single out the sin that most easily besets us, and

the temptation that has most frequently betrayed us, and the habit which is farthest from holiness, and the temper which is most unlike Christ, and that tendency of our nature which stands out most against grace, and disturbs most our hope and peace; and then, to sow against them all the good seed which the word of God furnishes. There is plenty of good seed, to supplant any wrong habit or temper, however bad. And it ought to be used impartially. It all came from the Spirit, and should all be sown to the Spirit; threatenings as well as promises; warnings as well as counsels; any thing and every thing that God has said against sin. Some are more *nice* than wise in this matter. They object to plying or awing themselves with the fear of Hell, because, forsooth, fear is a very low motive, and love the only supreme principle of obedience, and hope the grand means of sanctification! They talk about being *sweetly drawn*.

away from sin, and of purifying themselves as Believers, only by the great and precious promises. But, commend me to the Believer, who submits meekly to be *driven*, as well as drawn away from sin! The man who cares not what keeps him unspotted from the world, if he only be kept from evil. Your “Lord, Lord,” men, who will do nothing but “eat and drink” in His presence, in order to keep out of evil, are sure to be workers of iniquity, and as sure to be disowned by the Judge, as they dishonour the Saviour. He taught the use of fears as well as of hopes; and we have not learned of Him all the truth as it is in Jesus, if we do not ply our consciences as honestly with the fear of Hell, as with the hope of Heaven. Remember, it was to his disciples the Saviour said of darling sins, “Cut them off, and cast them away,” if ye would not be cast into hell fire. It was to the members of a Christian Church Paul said, “If

ye live after the flesh ye shall die." It was to avowed and acknowledged Christians John said, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

It is very pitiable when a man or woman, in order to save their hopes, and yet indulge their besetting sin, ask, in the face of these warnings, Where then is the perseverance of the saints? Where is it? Why, where it ever was and will be—*with the saints*. What have they to do with it, who are any thing but saints? Their certainty of persevering to the end, can be no security to a man who loves sin better than holiness, and the world more than heaven. Such a man is no saint, whatever be his creed. "He that saith, I know God, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." It may be in his creed, and on his tongue, and in his library; but the truth as it is in Jesus is not in his heart nor conscience.

I do not, however, mean to say, that the truth is in no man, who disobeys *any* commandment of God. This is not what the Scriptures teach. They denounce, indeed, every man who sins wittingly and wilfully, especially if he plead the abounding of grace as his excuse. They anticipate his damnation, and declare it "just," before it is proved to be so at the judgment-seat. They do not, however, unchristianize every man who has *any thing* unchristian in his character. They set him the task of crucifying the lust, and abandoning the habit, that they condemn in him: and then, if he will not, they denounce him too, to the same doom with hypocrites and unbelievers. The real question, therefore, in our own case, is not, have we "no sin?" but are we ready, for the sake of Christ and Heaven, to give up whatever sin we love, or have allowed to reign? Now I tell you again, that the mere resolution to give it up, or to watch against, or

even to pray against it, will not subdue it. Indeed, there will be no continued watching, nor intense prayer, unless there be also sowing to the Spirit. This remark should not need to be repeated. We have both watched and prayed ; and yet, there is something wrong remains in our habits and spirit ; yea, something so wrong, that it often darkens all our hopes and completely upsets our enjoyment. Now this, whatever it be, must be put down by the force, and kept down by the weight, of all the truth which God has uttered on the subject. We must sow, if we would reap.

No. X.

DEVELOPMENTS BY EXPERIENCE.

No truth is more proverbial amongst the pious, than the sufficiency of grace. “My grace is sufficient for thee,” is one of the kind assurances from the lips of the Saviour, which every Christian remembers and repeats. Like the New Song in heaven, it has never ceased on earth, since it began. It was a special message to Paul at first : but it has so suited and soothed all Believers, in all ages, that they have made it special to themselves; and kept it up so steadily, that it might be the very echo of the Saviour’s voice, when he spoke to Paul from heaven. It is still the first thing which a Christian says to himself, whenever outward or in-

ward troubles increase upon him. It is both the first and the last thing he says to others, when they are sinking under calamity or fear. In all spiritual emergencies it comes first to our lips, and is the last thing to lose its power on the heart. We can hope even against hope, whilst we keep hold of this assurance : and when we let it go, all hope goes with it for a time.

I need not say that it is let go at times, notwithstanding all its power to soothe and sustain. There are moments of darkness, or depression, or temptation, when even the unsearchable riches of the Saviour's grace seem insufficient to meet the wants and weakness of the soul. Then, its guilt seems to go beyond the riches of His pardoning grace ; its depravity beyond the reach of His sanctifying grace ; its anguish beyond the power of His reviving grace. All this is, indeed, a mistake ; but still, it does occur. It is not uncommon. It ought, however, to be

very rare : and it would be so, were the *principle* which regulates the supply of sufficient grace, as familiar as the promise of that grace. The all-sufficiency of grace is just the “ strength ” or “ power ” of Christ, to save and sustain “ to the uttermost : ” and the principle or rule of its exercise is, “ My strength is made perfect in weakness.” The extreme of our weakness is, therefore, the very point at which His power is most open to us. Yes ; when we are weakest, we are most welcome to lean on His strength. Were this well understood, the sufficiency of grace would never be doubted as fact, nor fail as experience. It would always be found sufficient, if we just threw ourselves simply upon the power of Christ, whenever we are ready to sink.

But if, instead of thus looking to, and leaning upon, what He is *able* to do for us, we only look within ourselves for marks of grace, or for

our old grace to put forth new strength, we shall often be disappointed. And, we *ought* to be disappointed, whenever we try to find in "grace received" in past times of need, strength enough for new times of need. This is a lazy process, and a somewhat legal one too; for when grace received is expected to do every thing, just because it is real grace, it becomes almost as much a legal refuge as Law could be made. I mean, that no past experience must be relied on, or looked to, so as to stop or lessen dependence on a present Saviour. Christ will not allow even his own grace in the heart, to divert or divide our confidence from himself. It is His own *present* strength, and not our own *past* strength, that He perfects in the time of extremity. He will have the soul look to Him, not to itself, in the day of trouble. What He can do for it now, not what He has done formerly, must be the grand object of faith, when trials press heavily,

or temptations come in like a flood. Then is the time—to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;” instead of trying to rally or exert our own strength only.

This is a lesson not easily nor soon learnt. I never understood it at all, until I found myself brought so low, that all hope of my life was given up. I could do nothing. Medical skill had done its utmost. I was thus shut up to one point—to what God could do at the gates of death. I saw clearly that all depended entirely upon His will. I left myself, therefore, simply in His hands. From that moment I was more composed and easy, by far, than I had been whilst looking the one hour to God, and the next to the physician; or one day to divine power, and the next to human means and probabilities. Thus I verified Paul’s paradox, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” I had no strength of hope nor of resignation, whilst my thoughts were

divided between God and man : but when I allowed the full sense of my weakness to throw me fully on the will and power of God, I felt more safe than ever youth, health, or spirits had made me feel. Yes ; the single consideration, “ it all rests with God now, whether I live or die,” was more satisfying and soothing than hosts of human probabilities.

I have verified the principle also, in the case of lowness of spirits. Few, perhaps, are subject to greater depression. But I have suffered so often and so long, that I can almost say of this infirmity, “ I glory in it, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” It has so completely shut me up to depend on nothing but His power, that I am far happier in resting upon it alone for safety, than ever I was whilst my spirits were all vivacity. In “ the power of Christ ” to spare and preserve my mind from sinking utterly, I have a simple and sure refuge

I can make nothing of any other means of relief, until I begin there. Indeed, I have no heart to try natural means, until I take hold of the supernatural hope,—that the Saviour can uphold me! Apart from His power to lean on, it would be both useless and impossible for me to try the effect of air and exercise, or of a change of scene and pursuits. No one uses natural means more promptly or fully than I do; but all my faith in them is founded on the power of Christ to bless them.

I write thus freely about myself, because I want to bring clearly out to you, and to bring directly home to you, the fact, that the sufficiency of grace, is just the power of Christ to save and sustain. Now you can make something of this truth, even when your trials are heavy, and your temptations haunting, and your spirits low, and your soul desolate. Then, the sufficiency is in Christ, not in your own grace,

however much grace you had before your present difficulties began. Paul had much grace, long before the fiery trial of his faith began : and, perhaps, never so much as at the moment when “ the messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him ;” for then he had just come down from the third heavens. But it was not enough for his new conflict. Accordingly, the Saviour did not say to him,—Your grace is sufficient for you ; but, “ My grace is sufficient for thee.” Thus the apostle was thrown as fully and directly upon the fulness of grace in Christ, (so far as the new conflict was concerned,) as if he had not had a spark of grace in his own heart.

Did you ever observe this ? If not, you have missed one half of the invaluable lesson taught by Paul. Read the narrative, 2 Cor. xii.

The *danger* was (you see) lest he should be “ exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations,” thus made to him whilst in

Paradise. He was in no danger of being puffed up by them, so long as he remained in "the third heaven." Every one he saw there was so unspeakably his superior in all things, that nothing he heard required any other balance than the presence of perfect saints and angels. But when he came down to the earth again, laden with celestial visions which he was not even allowed to utter to any man; then, all men were his *inferiors* in knowledge and enjoyment. Thus his position became as perilous as it was sublime. Nothing could keep him humble enough then, under this "exceeding weight of glory," but an exceeding weight of trials. Nothing less than *buffetting* from "a messenger of Satan," was sufficient ballast upon the sail he began to carry; for it was, most likely, carrying him away somewhat *beyond* plain people and plain preaching. To keep him, therefore, at his old work of an evangelist,

and in the true spirit of that work, new and heavy crosses were laid upon his shoulder.

Now, any abundance, as well as the abundance of revelations, has a direct tendency to exalt us above measure. Few or none can bear meekly an abundance of comfort, ease, or even of health. Temporal prosperity in any thing, even when only on a small scale, is very apt to throw the soul off its guard in some way, and thus to bring spiritual life to a low ebb. Hence some get above seeking good from the means they first got good from ; and others get above doing good to the poor or the perishing. One becomes too fine, another too delicate, and a third too selfish, to take any lively interest or personal share in the welfare of the world or the Church. Public duty is done by paying proxies ; and even the sabbath is not sanctified as a whole.

Now, although this getting *above* old rules, old means, and old friends, may go on for a

time, without bringing any thorn into the flesh, or any messenger of Satan to buffet the spirit, both the thorn and the rod are growing as fast as the new habits of self-indulgence. Body or mind eventually smart for the falling off of diligence and devotedness. A crisis comes, which past grace is not sufficient to meet.

This happened in the case of Paul. He had real grace and great grace ; but not enough to grapple effectually with his new trials. The thorn in his flesh began to rankle even in his spirit. What was to be done ? He did just what we all do at first in the day of calamity ; —besought the Lord thrice, that the thorn might depart, or be taken away from him. It was very troublesome, and occasionally so tormenting, that he thought that it was the great cause of his spiritual anguish and darkness. He, therefore, took for granted that if *it* were only removed, all would be right again, between his

soul and God. It never occurred to him that his heart was not right with God, on a turning point in duty ; nor that it would have been much farther wrong, if the thorn had not checked him as it did, and when it did. No ; he had not observed how much he had allowed himself to be elated and inflated, by his new position in the world ; nor had he paused to calculate how the self-complacency and consequence which were growing upon him, would make him useless in the church. It was the *thorn*, and nothing *but* the thorn, (he thought!) that was doing all the mischief. Although it was really doing more, at the moment, for his own good, and for the glory of God, than all his old grace and godliness put together, he rashly or weakly concluded, that it alone was spoiling his peace and weakening his hands. He therefore did nothing, at first, but pray that God would pluck it out. “ Lord, what is man ! ” Well might

Paul have adopted the language of Asaph, and said on reviewing this sad mistake, "So foolish and ignorant was I; I was as a beast before thee." It was this, all this, he meant when he said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

This is a very instructive and impressive lesson. You did not, perhaps, expect to find Paul so like yourself. Perhaps, you are hardly willing yet, to admit this humiliating view of his case. You thought more highly of him, and took for granted that he was quite above all such tempers. So did I, until I began to look into his spiritual history, and to take the facts of it from his own lips. Whilst I listened to the compliments which others pay him, instead of weighing the complaints and confessions which he himself makes, I never suspected him of any tendency to vanity or pride. I read the strong things he said about his indwelling sin, without

ever dreaming that he had given outward proofs of its power, in his conduct or spirit. Not many proofs of it, certainly ; but still some : and this is one of them ; he was forgetting himself and some of his duty too ; and did not know that he had changed for the worse, even when a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him. How like he then was to one of old, whom God smote for the iniquity of his covetousness ! He did not understand the rebuke ; but “ went on frowardly in the way of his heart, although God hid His face from him. In both cases, God had to say, “ I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him.” Do you not see your own picture in Paul, so far as the thorn and the buffeting are concerned ? You want to get rid of them ; and like him at first, you are doing nothing but beseeching the Lord that they may depart. You think all would be right with you, as in the days of old

when the candle of the Lord shone upon you, if your great cross, your heavy burden, your darkest cloud, were only taken away. Ah "you err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God," in this matter. The worst thing that could befall you, whilst you are so prone to forget yourself, would be the immediate removal of your worst affliction. It is a messenger of Satan, and the buffetting you endure is not joyous but grievous; but still, not so grievous as being given up by God is; not so dangerous as the disposition they are checking; not so ominous as a "seared conscience" or a heart "past feeling."

This deserves consideration. God is dealing with us as with children, whilst he chastises us. Were He to let us alone, our case would be hopeless. A messenger of Satan is, therefore, although Satan neither intend nor know it, an Angel of Mercy to you, even when his "fiery darts" are

fiercest. For, if you were really going wrong, and getting into a worldly or high spirit, the best thing that could have happened to you is, the fall of a cross on your shoulder, which you feel unequal to bear ; or the settling of a cloud on your spirit, which imbitters or makes insipid all your earthly comforts. You may call this desertion,—abandonment,—reprobation ; but it is no such thing. It is just God's way of preventing apostasy, and curing backsliding.

It is, therefore, well that you are low ; well that you can no longer enjoy the comforts, which exalted you above measure ; well that the worldly lot you expected so much happiness from, leaves you quite miserable at times. I congratulate you, and thank God on your behalf, that you are thoroughly disappointed in the quarter you expected so much satisfaction from. It was but a "broken cistern," when you were hewing it out at a rate of thought and labour, which

left neither sufficient time nor heart for eternal things : and now, blessed be God ! it is a *broken up* cistern ; and the fragments of it so shattered and scattered, that they cannot be put together again. “ It is,” as Sheshbazzar said to Rachel, of her sanguine visions, and sentimental vagaries, “ an EDEN, you cannot *locate* ; a BABEL, you cannot *complete* ; a ZOAR, you cannot *save* ; a GOSHEN, that will not be ‘ light ’ again ; a PILLAR of cloud, which will never brighten into a Pillar of *fire*, in the wilderness.”

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me neither poverty nor riches." And the *prayer* of his youth became the *song* of his old age. ELZAPHAN, the scribe, had been his school-fellow : but although he had knelt at the same altar, he would never say *Amen* to the prayer against riches. He made *haste* to be rich, at all hazards ; and ceased not to intrigue until he became the chief scribe of the Sanhedrim. Then his mansion rose on Gilead, like the palaces of Tadmor. He clothed himself with the purple of Tyre, and drank the wines of Sibmah in vessels of the gold of Ophir. The Law ceased to be read in his family, and the Prophets would not venture to his insnaring table. SADDUCEES alone thought themselves safe in his company. Thus when he was *full* he denied God, and forgot who gave him corn, and wine, and oil. Like Jeshurun, when he waxed fat, he kicked.

Rabbi Asaph looked upon the companion of his youth, and wept for him. He meditated to

remind him of their simple life on Carmel, and to tell him that his new elevation was as perilous as if he stood on one of the snowy summits of Libanus, when the south wind begins to blow. "Thou hast set him on *slippery* places," said the Rabbi, "and I must apprize him of his danger, that he fall not." The old man went to the steward of Elzaphan; but, having no *gift* in his hand, he was refused admittance to the master. He applied to the men-servants to be introduced; but the pampered menials jested at the *sadness* of his countenance, and told him to come again, when wine had made his heart glad. He entreated the maid-servants to lead him into their master's presence; and they said unto him—"Go up, thou bald-head: Elzaphan will not see thy face to-day, because it is sad." Rabbi Asaph left the gate in sorrow, exclaiming, "Thou hast, indeed, set the worldly in slippery places: too slippery to *stand* on, or

climb up to, with safety. Elzaphan has gained the pinnacle he coveted: but it is a giddy elevation to himself; and as inaccessible as a precipice of ice, to all who would warn him of his danger. Blessed be the God of Agur, who hath given me neither poverty nor riches."

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