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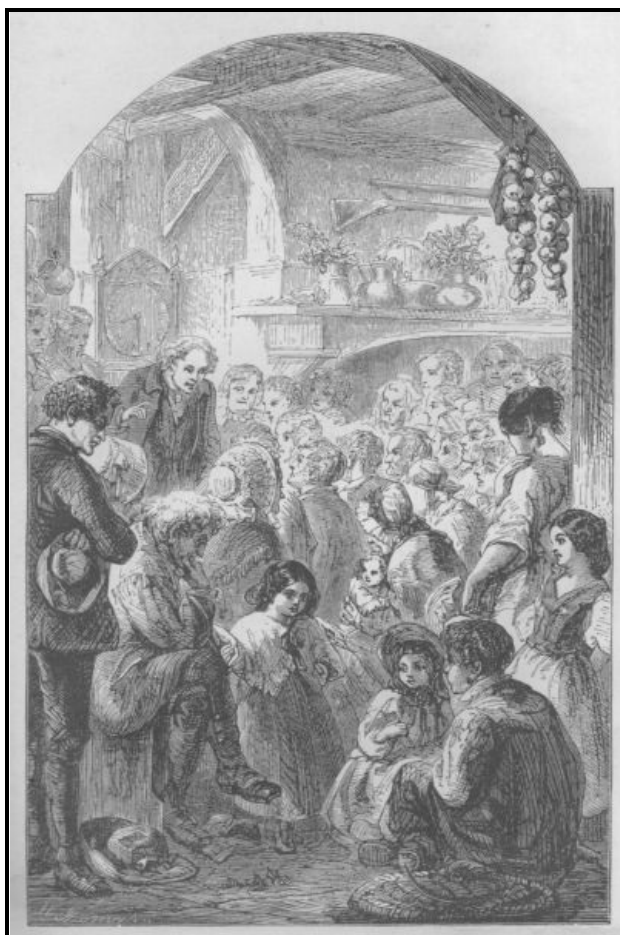
Author: Timothy East

Release date: January 27, 2014 [EBook #44769]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Chris Curnow, Robin Curnow, Julia Neufeld, One image courtesy of Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

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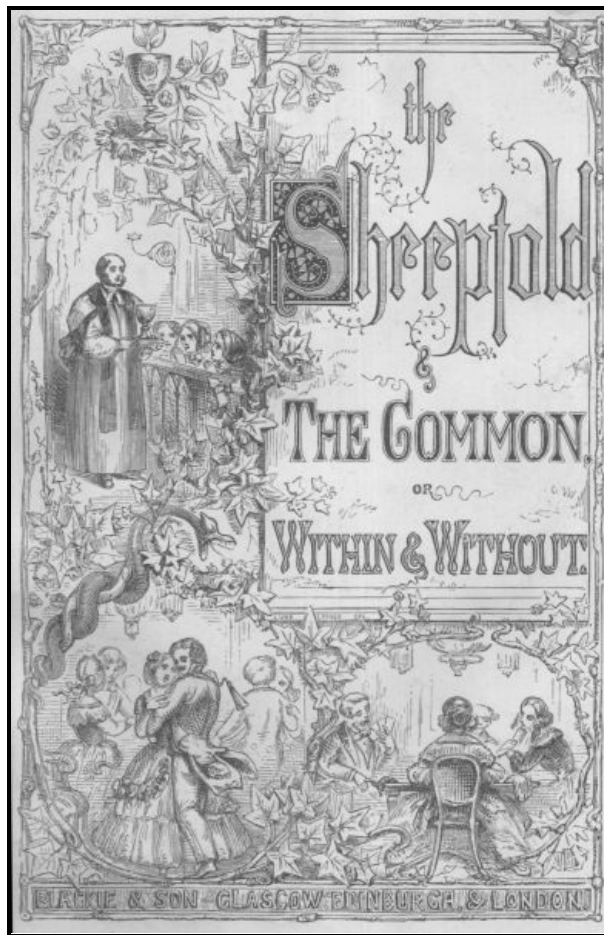
**JAMES GODWIN      W. L. THOMAS.  
THE FARM-HOUSE KITCHEN.**

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THE SHEEPFOLD AND THE COMMON.

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**the  
Sheepfold**

**&**

**THE COMMON,**

**OR**

**WITHIN & WITHOUT.**

**BLACKIE & SON · GLASGOW  
EDINBURGH, & LONDON.**

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**THE  
SHEEPFOLD AND THE  
COMMON:  
OR,  
WITHIN AND WITHOUT.**

VOL. II.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."—JOHN x. 27.

"Them that are without God judgeth."—1 COR. v. 19.



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GLASGOW:  
W. G. BLACKIE AND CO., PRINTERS,  
VILLAFIELD.

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## THE SHEEPFOLD AND THE COMMON.

### OLD RACHEL, THE BLIND WOMAN.



And so I hear," said Mrs. Stevens to the Rector, when we were spending an evening at his house, "that poor Old Rachel is dead. I really thought she had died long since, as I have not heard anything about her for a long time."

"Yes, Madam," replied Mr. Ingleby, "she is dead, and was buried yesterday; she lies very near some of the finest of my flock."

"She must have lived to a great age, for she was an old woman when I was but a little girl."

"She was, I believe, upwards of ninety, and for several years she lived with some relatives in a state of almost entire seclusion. I had quite lost sight of her, and it was owing to a very casual circumstance that my acquaintance with her was renewed."

"How did you happen again to meet with her?"

"It was in this way. I required some one to weed my garden; and hearing that there was an active clever woman residing at Street, about two miles from the rectory, who was a good hand at such work, I took a walk to find her. On reaching her house I knocked at the door, but received no answer; and just as I was going away, rather disappointed at having made a fruitless journey, a neighbour stepped out of the adjoining cottage, and said, 'If, Sir, you want Mrs. Jones, she has just gone out, but I will go and look for her, if you will perhaps come in here, and rest yourself for a few minutes.' I thanked her, and followed her into the house, where she placed a chair for me, saying, as she left to go in search of Mrs. Jones—'It's no use, Sir, to say nothing to my mother there; she is quite blind, and so deaf, that she can't hear a word which nobody says to her.' The person to whom she pointed sat in an arm-chair, on the opposite side of the fire, wrapped up in flannel, her face nearly concealed by her cap and bonnet, and as motionless as a statue. I sat for a few moments in silence, and then, yielding to a feeling of curiosity, and I would also hope to a better motive, to endeavour to ascertain whether I could impart the soothing influences of religious consolation to the seemingly inanimate object that sat opposite to me, I arose, and placing my lips as near her ear as possible, without touching her, said, audibly and distinctly, 'You are very old.' No reply. This was followed by several common-place questions—such as, 'What is your name?' 'Do you want anything?' 'Are you in any pain?' These and other questions I continued to repeat; but they produced no more effect on her than they would have done on a log. 'Poor thing,' I exclaimed, 'it's no use to try, as she is living out of my reach. The door of access is locked, and the key lost.' I resumed my seat. My anxiety to gain access to her mind increased in proportion to the apparent impossibility of succeeding, and I made another effort. '*Do you ever think about dying?*' There was a slight convulsive movement of the hand, but this was no satisfactory proof that she heard my question; however, it showed that the inner spirit was awake, and might possibly be bringing itself to a listening attitude. I then put the all-important question—'*Do you know anything about Jesus Christ?*' Never shall I forget the effect of this question. Her hands were suddenly raised, her arms extended, and her face glowed with more than human radiance, and, in a tone of transport, she exclaimed, 'What! is that my beloved pastor? It was under your ministry I was brought to know Christ, and feel the preciousness of his love.' This unanticipated exclamation astonished and delighted me, especially when I recognized, by the sound of her voice, *Old Rachel*. To all my questions relating to her secular condition and wants, she was as insensible as though actually dead. I stood and looked on her with joyous wonder, never having previously known a similar case. I repeated question after question, but had no response, till I asked, '*Is Christ precious to you?*' Her reply was prompt and audible: *He is precious to my soul—my transport and my trust.*' The reply had an electrical effect on my spirit. Marvellous! I never witnessed such a scene as this. I varied my questions again and again; but there was no sign of hearing, or even perceptible motion, though I took hold of her hand. It was as though some angelic spirit kept watch, to prevent any thought relating to earth or time from obtruding itself on her attention, now she was waiting on the verge of the celestial world. One question more, and all intercourse was over. '*Do you long to see Christ?*' She instantly replied, '*My soul is in haste to be gone.*' Again she relapsed into her statue-like appearance, and in that state continued till the return of her daughter with Mrs. Jones, after transacting my business with whom, I took leave, and walked home, musing on the history of Old Rachel, and resolving that I would soon again pay her a visit."

"I should like," said Mrs. John Roscoe, "to have witnessed this scene, and heard the retiring spirit thus appearing to bear testimony to the more than magic power of the Saviour's name, and

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of the preciousness of his love."

"And so, Madam, should I," said the Rev. Mr. Guion; "it would have been to me like a voice speaking from another world, in confirmation of the genuineness of our faith, which sees the invisible, and holds conscious intercourse with Him, though we hear him not. I generally find, that a singular ending is closely connected with a singular origin, or a series of eventful occurrences. Can you favour us with some account of her history?"

"Yes, Sir, I can, and it is both interesting and peculiar. I did not know her till she was advanced in age, and had lost her sight; yet, before I knew her, I had often heard her spoken of as an intelligent woman, very fond of books, and remarkable for the neatness and cleanliness of her person, and her regular and punctual attendance at her parish church. When her sight failed her, she was compelled to relinquish the school by which she had gained her livelihood; but she was so much esteemed, that a good allowance was granted by the parish, and this was augmented by weekly subscriptions from some of the members of her church. On passing by her cottage one day, I looked in to see her, though she was not one of my parishioners; but as she had imbibed the Tractarian doctrines of her Rector, and felt a strong repugnance to evangelical truth, I at once perceived that my presence was more disagreeable than pleasing. I therefore withdrew, not intending to repeat my visit until I had prepared her to desire it. I soon hit upon a plan to accomplish this. The old woman had a little favourite grand-daughter in my Sabbath-school, and it occurred to me that I could employ her as the medium of communication; and I commenced operations by giving her and lending her some little books of anecdotes and descriptive stories. After the lapse of several months, I gave her, as a reward for reading to her grandmother, the sketch of the Rev. John Newton's conversion; and this was followed by a tract on regeneration, with which the old woman was so much pleased, that she requested the loan of another on the same subject. No great while after reading this tract she came to hear me preach, and soon became a regular attendant on my ministry; and ere long she sent to say she should be glad if I would call on her. I went; she apologized for her rudeness of manner on my former visit, and excused herself by referring to the influence which superstitious prejudices had acquired over her. From these superstitions she hoped she was now rescued by the attractive power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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"When it was noised abroad that Rachel, the old blind woman, had left the church, where Tractarian doctrines and ceremonies were the theme of the Rector's ministrations, she received a visit from some of her lady friends, who were very anxious to get her to return, intimating that if she did, they would continue their subscriptions towards her support, otherwise she must not expect to receive any more favours from them. She heard all they chose to say, and thus announced her final decision:—"I have, ladies, attended my parish church for more than fifty years without getting any benefit to my soul, but where I have been only a few Sabbaths I have heard and felt the truth as it is in Jesus, and there I shall continue to go as long as my feeble limbs will carry me. I thank you for all your acts of liberality and kindness to me, but I cannot barter away my freedom, and run the risk of losing my soul. I must live free, though in poverty; and my salvation is now the one thing I value above all price." She continued for several years both regular and punctual in her attendance on my ministry, but at length was compelled, by increasing infirmities, to give up her house and go to reside with a married daughter. Years rolled on—the grand-daughter had left my school—the cottage where the old woman had resided was occupied by another—she gradually faded from my recollection, and in process of time I had quite forgot her."

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"I used," said Mrs. Stevens, "to see her, with her grand-daughter leading her, coming to church and going from it; but she sat in some pew which concealed her from my sight when in the church."

"She was, Madam, one of the most retiring women I ever knew; she had a great objection to be seen, as she knew her conversion and her leaving the ministry of her former Rector had excited a good deal of talk."

"The circumstances attending her conversion to the faith of Christ," observed the Rev. Mr. Guion, "is an evident proof of its genuineness, and of its having been effected by the Holy Spirit; otherwise it would have been impossible for you to have gained her over to the reception of salvation by grace through faith, as she was so self-satisfied with her own Tractarian delusions, and so much under the power of the active agents of the same fatal heresy."

"I must confess that no event in my long pastoral career ever gave me more real pleasure, or excited purer emotions of gratitude to my Divine Master, than being allowed to witness the termination of her course—so unexpected, and so novel."

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"I have known," said the Rev. Mr. Guion, "some delivered from their terrors and misgivings, just prior to their departure, who have been in bondage all their life, through fear of death, and then they have felt even a transport of joy in anticipation of the end of their faith, but I have never known a case like this of Old Rachel."

"I recollect," said Mr. Roscoe, "reading in the *Times*, some years ago, the report of a case bearing a strong resemblance to it in some of its distinctive peculiarities. Mr. M—, of —, who had through a very lengthened course distinguished himself by his activity in secular life, and by his practical piety, when drawing near his latter end, appeared quite indifferent, if not positively insensible, to everything bearing a relation to earth, though surrounded by its wealth and honours; but even then he gave unmistakeable signs to his pious relatives, that he was filled with all joy and peace in believing, abounding in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."<sup>[1]</sup>

Mr. Lewellin remarked:—"An intimate friend related to me, some time since, the following circumstances, which belong to the same remarkable order with that of Old Rachel and Mr. M ——. He knew a Mr. Griffith, who left Wales when a young man, and settled in London, where he practised as a surgeon for half a century with very considerable success; but feeling the infirmities of age coming on, he disposed of his business and withdrew into private life. From his youth up he had maintained a good report amongst his Christian brethren. He lived for years after he had relinquished his practice, but latterly fell into such a state of apathy that he was unable to recollect his own children, and had even forgotten the English language, which he had spoken for more than fifty years, using, in his Scripture quotations and audible prayers, his native Welsh. He would remain for many hours in succession without appearing to notice any visible object, asking any question, or replying to any observation relating to secular matters. He had withdrawn from the world, living surrounded with invisible realities, the varying aspect of his countenance indicating some active process of thinking and emotion; but when he heard the name of Jesus mentioned, or any allusion to his love in dying for sinners, his eyes would sparkle with peculiar radiance, his hands would clasp together, and he would pour forth expressions of gratitude and joy, which betokened the vital energy of his soul, and the intense interest he felt in anticipation of the grand crisis. On his favourite theme of meditation he evinced no dulness, nor lack of mental energy; he would emerge from his seclusion to hold intelligible intercourse with his Christian brethren, when he heard them give utterance to the joyful sound, and then drew back, without any distinct recognition of their persons, to dwell alone in the pavilion of the Divine presence."<sup>[2]</sup>

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"These are spiritual phenomena," said the Rev. Mr. Roscoe, "which, like the phenomena of nature, are too plain and palpable to be denied, even though it may not be in our power to give all the explanations about the causes of them which our curiosity would like to receive."

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JAMES GODWIN. W. L. THOMAS.  
GEORGE III. AND THE DYING GIPSY.

Vol. ii. p. 7.

"Very true, Sir," said Mr. Ingleby; "but there are certain statements and expressions in the New Testament which throw light enough upon such phenomena to demonstrate that they have their *natural causes*, and thus they are rescued from the supposition that they are self-originated and self-sustained movements of the human spirit, in some complexed and eccentric condition of existence. Our Lord says to his disciples, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit' (John xv. 5). The life of the branch depends on its adhesion to the tree which supplies the sap of nourishment. Again, he says, 'I in them' (John xvii. 23). The apostle says, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. ii. 20). Again, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God' (Col. iii. 3), denoting its invulnerable security. From the passages which I have now quoted, and there are many others of the same import, we arrive at this conclusion, which is an explanation and a defence of the spiritual phenomenon, that there is an actual, though inexplicable inhabitation of Jesus Christ in the soul of a believer (Rev. iii. 20), sustaining the spiritual life within him, as the vine nourishes the branch which bears its own fruit. And as He has life in *himself*, he can do this with perfect ease, not only when the believer is in vigorous health, and in the full exercise of all his mental faculties, but when he is labouring under those physical diseases and mental infirmities which, by a slow progression, lead to his decay and death."

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The Rev. Mr. Guion observed, "That to deny the existence of such phenomena, and others which bear some affinity to them, simply because they are extraordinary, would be an act of absurdity which no spiritual or even philosophic mind would venture to defend, because the evidence in proof of their actual occurrence is so clear and conclusive. The real question of difficulty to decide is simply this:—Are they supernatural manifestations, or illusions of the imagination? but, in either case, they go off into their own element of mysteriousness, compelling

us to believe what we cannot explain. On a supposition that they are real manifestations of Divine power and love, which I fully believe they are, I cannot help thinking that the highly-favoured spirit (Old Rachel, for example), while in such a state of *lucid and active unconsciousness*, if I may use such an expression, must exist in something like an intermediate position between the material and immaterial world—dying off from one by a very slow progression, and getting meet for the other by a similar process; occasionally stepping back to give unmistakeable signs of the continued possession of the faculties of thought and emotion, and then retreating, as into a citadel standing near the dark frontier of the invisible world, and into which its celestial rays sometimes penetrate."

"In these cases of rare occurrence," said Mr. Roscoe, "it is the soul of the spiritual man retreating from visible and audible fellowship with his pious associates; but biography supplies us with *another order of moral phenomena* equally inexplicable, yet equally gratifying, tending to confirm the reality of the connection between the visible and invisible world which the Christian revelation so plainly and positively announces. I received, some time ago, the following statement from an elder of a Scotch church, on whose testimony I can place implicit dependence:—'About the month of August, 1838, I went to see my grandfather, a pious old man, ninety-two years of age. I sat by his bedside, and others also were with him. He had been silent and motionless for about five hours, when he opened his eyes, his countenance beaming with joy, and raising his hands he said, I see heaven open, and Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, and the angels of God descending to receive me. These were his last words, and when he had given utterance to them he expired.'" [10]

"This reminds me," said Mr. Lewellin, "of an incident which occurred at Stepney College,<sup>[3]</sup> not long ago. When Ebenezer Birrel, a student there, was dying, he requested all who were in the room with him to keep silence. He also was silent and motionless. At length he looked and gazed in rapture on some glorious object, which to him alone was visible, exclaiming, as he gazed, '*Beautiful! beautiful!*' and in uttering the word 'GLORY!' his head fell and he expired."

"The case of Dr. Gordon, of Hull," said the Rev. Mr. Guion, "differing, as it does in some particulars, from all the specimens we have had of these spiritual phenomena, is, I think, deserving of our special notice. 'He appeared,' says his biographer, 'just as he was expiring, no longer conscious of what took place around him. He gazed upwards, as in wrapt vision. No film overspread his eyes. They beamed with an unwonted lustre, and the whole countenance, losing the aspect of disease and pain, with which we had been so long familiar, glowed with an expression of indescribable rapture. As we watched, in silent wonder and praise, his features, which had become motionless, suddenly yielded for a few seconds to a smile of ecstasy which no pencil could ever depict, and which none who witnessed it can ever forget. And when it passed away, still the whole countenance continued to beam and brighten, as if reflecting the glory on which the soul was gazing. This glorious spectacle continued for about a quarter of an hour, increasing in interest to the last.'" [11]

"I have heard of other cases," remarked Mr. Ingleby, "bearing a strong resemblance to some which have been mentioned; but I have never made much use of them, except as supplementary proofs in confirmation of my own belief in the inseparable connection of the two worlds. They are not absolutely necessary to establish this great fact; yet we must all admit, that such proofs *can be supplied*, if it should please God to do so; and we know he has done it more than once. Not to dwell on the vision of the apostle Paul, I would just advert to the case of Stephen. When his enemies were gnashing on him with their teeth, expressive of their indignation against him, for accusing them of having betrayed and murdered the JUST ONE—'He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God' (Acts vii. 55). He saw clearly what the others saw not, and for reporting what he saw he was denounced a blasphemer, and was led out and stoned to death. This case settles two great facts:—First, that God can, when he pleases, unveil to mortal vision the glorious forms and appearances of the invisible world; and secondly, that he has done it."

"I feel unwilling," said the Rev. Mr. Roscoe, "to object to any evidence which tends to confirm our belief in the connection between the visible and invisible world; but I think great caution is necessary in employing such cases as have now been reported in proof of it. What the old Scotchman and the youthful student saw, or thought they saw, may, after all, have been nothing more than the illusions of their own disturbed imagination, left at the closing scene uncontrolled by the immortal spirit itself, while in the act of passing from its material tabernacle, and away from its material senses, into another, a higher, and more congenial economy of existence."

"True, Sir," said Mr. Ingleby; "but then, if we admit that they really are illusions, we must also admit that they are illusive only by a *forestalling process*; the imagination bringing to the senses, yet bounded by the material economy, objects of vision belonging to another state of existence—framing types of invisible realities—lifting up, in the living temple of humanity, prefigurations of what will be seen when the fulness of time comes for the disembodying of the soul and its glorification. The illusion then relates, not to the UNREALITY of *what is seen and felt*, but to the *unreality of the act of vision*, and its *consequent excitement and impression, both mental and physical*." [12]

"We know," said Mr. Roscoe, "that God very rarely deviates in his providential administration, from the established laws of his government; but we also know that he does sometimes, and for the purpose of making us know more impressively that he is the LORD, who exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things he delights. Hence, there have been two translations from earth to heaven, without the intervening infliction of death, but only two, since the fall of man. In reference to the remarkable cases under consideration, there

may be some difficulty in deciding whether the persons actually saw what they are reported to have seen, or were imposed on by the mysterious action of their own imagination; but yet I cannot bring my mind to the conclusion, that the visions were positive illusions, and that the happy spirits who saw them, and spake of them, and whose radiant countenances betokened the truthfulness of their testimony, were dying under the spell of self-deception. Such cases, we know, but very rarely occur, and when they do occur they make their appearance quite unexpectedly; but I think they occur often enough, and with such varying peculiarities, as to make us hesitate to pronounce them positive illusions, even if we cannot admit with confidence that they are positive realities."

"At any rate," said Mrs. John Roscoe, "the spell of self-deception, if they were deceived, was soon broken, as in each case death came immediately after they uttered their last joyous exclamation; and then the sublime vision of immortality opened upon them, with all its glorious realities."

The Rev. Mr. Guion here remarked that, "in general, the Lord's people die in hope and with great calmness; and sometimes they rise to confidence, and even to joy, and joy unspeakable. Few, indeed, rise higher than this; but I have known enough, and heard enough, to satisfy me that some do. The case of Dr. Gordon, who uttered no exclamation, is to me a decisive proof of this. He is calm, motionless, wrapped in profound thoughts, when his countenance, which had long been marked by the lines of disease and pain, begins to radiate, till at length its lustre was so clear and bright, attended by an ecstatic smile so ethereal, that the spectators were awestruck, standing and gazing for the space of a quarter of an hour on this more than human vision. At least, they thought it more than human while they were gazing on it."

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"Every effect," said Mr. Ingleby, "must have some adequate cause; and this extraordinary radiation on the countenance of Dr. Gordon was produced either by the action of his own thoughts, or by the intervention of a supernatural power. If produced by his own thoughts, what a hold must his soul have taken of invisible realities when he was dying, to give such a glowing brilliancy to his pallid face! If produced by the intervening action of supernatural power, it was a premature shining forth of the glory to be revealed more fully in the disembodied state. In other words, he did what was done by the impulse of his *own* conceptions, or God was especially with him in his dying chamber, shedding upon him some effulgent rays of his own glory."

"But to return," said the Rev. Mr. Roscoe, "to the case of Rachel, the old blind woman, which, because it is capable of a more practical bearing, I must confess, interests me more than the splendid case of Dr. Gordon, interesting as it is. But, before I touch on this, will you permit me to ask how long she lived after your unexpected interview with her? and whether there was a recurrence of the astonishing responses to your inquiries?"

"I sat gazing on her," said the Rev. Mr. Ingleby, "some time after I ceased speaking; and before I left her, her countenance had resumed its statue-like appearance of positive insensibility; and every feature was fixed, as though set by the cold hand of death, and there was not a movement of any part of her body, except the breast and the shoulders, from the more powerful action of the lungs. The following week I took a friend with me, in expectation of having another interview with her; but I was disappointed. On entering the cottage, her daughter informed me, that having awoke in the night, and thinking she heard her mother utter some sound, she went with a light to her bedside, when the old woman, after a slight convulsive struggle, raised her hands, and said, '*Dear Saviour, I come to thee,*' and died."

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"What a splendid transition!" said Mrs. Stevens; "the cottage exchanged for a mansion! What a glorious sequel to all her privations and sufferings! Her happy spirit, long confined in total darkness, is at last liberated, and is now beholding the glory of Christ, and living and moving amidst the celestial beings and sublime grandeur of immortality."

"And yet we are told," said Mr. Roscoe, "that the faith of Christ, which unveils such grand prospects of a future state of existence, is a mere delusion, and that we who indulge them are self-deceived. If we admit this, we must also admit that it is a very remarkable delusion, as it usually comes in its most vivid forms, and with its most attractive influences, just at that period of human existence when all things of earth and of time are vanishing away. At that awful crisis, when the pomp of distinction, the fascination of sensible objects, and the grandeur of wealth, are all losing their hold on us—and nothing is left to man but the shroud, the coffin, and the grave — at that very time the Christian faith opens up a scene of grandeur which no words can adequately describe; and yet the dying man, who feels his departing spirit embracing these revelations as sublime realities, is told by the cold-hearted sceptic that all is a delusion, and he is self-deceived. But he heeds not such random assertions. He moves forward, repeating the soul-inspiring words, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me' (Psal. xxiii. 4)."

"But this case of poor Old Rachel," said the Rev. Mr. Roscoe, "does something more than exhibit the efficacy of the Christian faith, in sustaining the human soul when the *dread hour comes*—it supplies a proof of the immateriality, and, by a fair inference, of the immortality of the soul itself. We are told, by some sagacious sceptics, that the mind of man, like his body, is material, only that it has passed through a more refined process, and is endowed *by nature* with certain faculties analogous to the senses; and as they came into existence together at the time of his birth, and live together through life, so they will go out of existence together when they pay the debt of nature, and, at last, perish together. And I must confess that humanity has, in some instances, seemed to give a confirmation to this opinion, as the body and the mind have appeared to wither and decay together, as age and infirmities have come upon them. Hence there has been

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a loss of memory with the loss of animal vivacity—a loss of intellectual vigour with the loss of physical strength—a loss of imaginative power with the loss of sensitive acuteness—the mind and the body undergoing this reciprocal decay before the change comes which, according to the sceptic's theory, is to end in their extinction. But, then, I have met with another class of cases bearing some analogy to this reciprocal decay, but, at the same time, putting forth indications in confirmation of a reversed issue, as in the history of Old Rachel. In her we see the memory losing the impression of earthly objects, but retaining the impression of heavenly ones. Her intellect lies prostrate and powerless in the presence of sensuous and secular inquiries, but it springs into vigorous activity when spiritual ones are addressed to her. The affections of her heart have died off from the relationships of life; but they are concentrated on the perfection of moral beauty, and cleave to Jesus Christ with an intensity and ardour surpassing that of a youthful passion. Here we have a living exponent, and a confirmation of the truthfulness of the apostolic expression, 'Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' (See John xi. 25, 26)."

"And there is another practical lesson," Mr. Ingleby remarked, "which this case of Old Rachel teaches us, and it is this:—When a man is enlightened by the Spirit, and is brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ, and has felt the power of the world to come, he never outlives his knowledge of these wondrous realities which stand out in bold relief when his remembrance of all other things is blotted out. He may forget the wife of his bosom, and the children who revered and loved him—he may forget his mother tongue, and not recognize the hand which feeds and clothes him—and he may live till almost every sense has become extinct, and the avenues of communication between the imprisoned spirit and the living world are blocked up—but he will never forget by whose blood he has been redeemed—he will never become insensible to the charm of His name or the preciousness of His love—nor will he ever lose sight of the bright and unfading inheritance of which he has received the earnest. Old Rachel was living at ease, conscious of her possessions, even when, in the estimation of others, she was unconscious of her own existence; and indulging the sublimest anticipations of faith and hope, while in the dark cell of her confinement."

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"Without giving any opinion," said the Rev. Mr. Roscoe, "as to which of the cases reported this evening is the most remarkable, or presuming to decide, whether they are to be referred to some mysterious action of the imagination, or to a real, yet marvellous manifestation of the Divine presence—leaving each case to stand for your decision on the ground of its own merits—I think we may make a good practical use of the whole of them, as, when we see lights burning, though of varying degrees of brightness, we may avail ourselves of their radiance even if we cannot tell by whom they are enkindled. We believe that the evidence which the Bible supplies, in confirmation of the existence of another world, is sufficiently ample and decisive to satisfy us of its reality; but still it is not so ample and decisive as to preclude the desirableness of some additional evidence. This is often given in the death-chamber of the Christian believer; and not only to him, when dying, but to those who are eye-witnesses of the mode of his departure. When, for example, we see a man of intelligence, of taste, of great sobriety of thinking, and of courteous speech, quite calm on his death-bed, and alternately strongly excited—when we hear him speak of the hope he entertains of a glorious immortality—when we see him rising above hope into full assurance, eager to depart, though surrounded by many of the attractions of earth—when every look, and aspiration, and utterance, beats in harmony with his long-settled expectation of a grand issue to his faith—we may very naturally take his experience, not only as a safe guide, but as a valid testimony to the certainty of what we believe in common. But now suppose, if, in addition to this tranquil state of mind, we should see a bright radiance beaming on the countenance of our dying friend, previously pallid and careworn by disease—and suppose we should see him raise himself up in bed, looking intently, as if seeing some beautiful object concealed from us, and, after a profound silence and stillness of some minutes, we should hear him speak of actually seeing, while in the body, what we believe he will see the moment he is out of the body—would not this tend to strengthen our faith, even though we are unable to decide whether he actually saw, or merely thought he saw, the scenes he described? I think it would; and that even the most dubious on the question of illusion or reality would retire from such a hallowed spectacle, filled with emotions of deep solemnity and joyous delight, similar to what a primitive believer must have felt when looking on the face of Stephen, shining with angelic brilliancy, a visible attestation of the reality of his miraculous vision."

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"I think so too," said the Rev. Mr. Guion. "I should like to witness such a sight and hear such an exclamation; and though I will admit that such things may be nothing more than the illusive action of the imagination, yet how comes the imagination, when performing its very last operations, to act with so much power, as to imprint such a visible radiance on a death-struck countenance? I cannot resist the impression that such cases as Old Rachel's and Dr. Gordon's, belonging certainly to a diverse order of spiritual phenomena, are real manifestations of the glory and love of God, and are intended by him, like the translation of Enoch and Elijah, as supplementary evidence to confirm the faith, and animate the hope of his redeemed and beloved children. At any rate, such is the effect they have on me."

"They have the same effect on my mind," said Mr. Ingleby; "especially this case of poor Old Rachel, which will retain its power of impression as long as I exist. I shall never forget the last interview I had with her, nor her death-like appearance when I left her; but when I see her again—and I trust to see her ere long—she will appear in a beauteous form, arrayed in the spotless robe of celestial glory. We know that our latter end is coming, but we know not *when* it will come, or who of the living will be with us when it does come; nor do we know whether we shall pass away, like Dr. Gordon, while beams of glory are radiating our countenance, or steal out of life like

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poor Old Rachel, as from under a pile of material ruins; but, for our consolation, we know that our dear Redeemer has promised that *He* will come to receive us to himself when we depart hence, and that where he is we shall be also, and for ever: 'Wherefore, comfort one another with these words' (1 Thess. iv. 18)."

## DIVERSITY OF OPINION VERY NATURAL.



One morning, while Mrs. Stevens was conversing with Mrs. John Roscoe, a girl who had been attending Mrs. Stevens' Sabbath-school, and who was going into service, called at Fairmount for a Bible which had been awarded to her for her diligence and propriety of behaviour. After expressing her thanks on receiving it, she added, in a very modest tone, "I shall value it for your sake, Ma'am, and I hope I shall love it for its own sake."

"I was very much pleased," said Mrs. John Roscoe, "with the appearance and manners of your young protégé. The reason she gave for loving the Bible is a proof of superior intelligence, and, I should hope, of decided piety."

"Yes, she is an amiable girl, and I hope she is pious. She is a *rescue* from a godless family. Her parents are very profane persons, and their other children are following their example. I have no doubt of her attachment to the Bible, for she has made herself very conversant with it."

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In the evening, when a few friends were assembled, Mrs. John Roscoe mentioned how much pleased she had been with the Sabbath-school girl, and repeated the remark she made on receiving the Bible from Mrs. Stevens.

"FOR ITS OWN SAKE," said the Rev. Mr. Guion; "that is a substantially good reason for loving the Bible. It is a somewhat singular fact that no book, on any subject or in any language, has so completely divided public belief and sympathy, both on the question of its origin and its practical utility."

"It certainly," Mr. Roscoe replied, "is a very singular, and a very wonderful book: wonderful, if true; more so, if false. If true, we can account for its origin; but how can its origin be accounted for if it be false? If false, it is an invention; and not the invention of one man, but of an organized conspiracy, and a conspiracy of good men, for the Bible is too good a book for bad men to write."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"I admit that a bad man may write a good book; but to suppose that a number of bad men would conspire to write such a good book as the Bible, is to admit as great a moral impossibility as to imagine that a number of good men would form a confederacy in fraud and duplicity, and then palm off their lying inventions as positive realities. Now, let us look at the case fairly, and I think we may make some logical progress in settling the question of its origin. Here is a Bible, and it consists of two parts—the Old and the New Testament; and we must recollect that the Old Testament would be incomplete without the New, and the New Testament would be incomplete without the Old. Each of these parts consists of different books, or distinct writings, variously designated, occupying the space of nearly 2000 years in the composition of them. If the Bible had been written by any one man in any one age, or if it had been written by contemporary writers living in the same city or country, its integrity might be open to very strong suspicion. But the writers of the Bible lived in different ages and in different countries, spoke different languages, belonged to very different ranks in social life, and most of them were unknown to each other; and yet there is, on all the facts and doctrines, and institutes of these records, an exact concurrence<sup>[4]</sup> of testimony running through the whole of their writings. Amongst the writers we find legislators, kings, poets, herdsmen, fishermen; one was a publican, and another a tent-maker, who, at one period of his life, denounced as false some of the facts of its record, which, on investigation, he found to be true, and attested the integrity of his new-formed belief by yielding to a martyr's death. And it will be at once perceived by the intelligent reader, that these men were no common-place writers; they moved in no beaten pathway of general knowledge; they are no copyists—they are originals; what they tell us no other men had ever thought of, or, if they had, their thoughts died with them, as they never gave publicity to them. The writers of the Bible appear amongst us as scribes coming from another world, well instructed in the mysteries of a unique faith, admirably adapted to the peculiar exigencies of disordered and perplexed humanity. In addition to the origin of the world and of evil—the mediatorial work and government of the Son of God, the moral character and condition, and responsibilities, and final destiny of the soul of man—and a future economy of existence to last for ever—are the momentous truths which they make known to us, through the media of their multifarious and diversified compositions; of history, prophecy, parable, poetic songs, and plain didactic prose."

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*Rev. Mr. Roscoe.*—"And what is especially deserving of our attention, is the perfect ease and harmony with which they write on these new and sublime discoveries of moral truth, while they all write independently of each other. They admit that they are subordinates, unworthy of the honour of their appointment; yet each one speaks and writes, and without any appearance of dogmatism or ostentation, in the same dignified tone of absolute authority; the voice which speaks and the hand which writes, is human, but what is said or written, comes from some other source."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Yes, Sir, I think the correctness of your remark can be demonstrated; at

least, it comes as much within the range of demonstration, as any moral or historic truth, or fact, can be brought. The Old Testament is incomplete, and comparatively valueless, without the New; and yet it is written under the obvious impression and belief, that it would be completed; but on what data could its writers base their calculation, that they should have successors who would carry on and perfect what they had begun and advanced through several stages of its progress. Now, I readily believe, that a person of a very acute and comprehensive mind, who has carefully watched and studied the facts and philosophy of history, may, on some special occasions, give some general outline of what will be the state of things within a very *near* futurity, if he cautiously avoid going into specific and minute details. But the writers of the Old Testament have opened up the roll of a *very remote* futurity,<sup>[5]</sup> and have recorded extraordinary events, with their dates and localities, long before their actual occurrence, portraying the likeness of MESSIAH the PRINCE, ages before his appearance on earth, and doing it with so much exactness, that it is a perfect resemblance of the wonderful original. How could they have done this, unless they had been guided by a prescient Spirit, to whose eye all the future is as visible as all the past?"

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"Foretelling at the same time," said Mrs. John Roscoe, "his tragical death; which no one would have expected as the termination of his benevolent career."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"It is, I believe, a law in the republic of letters, which no one has attempted to repeal, that all writers shall have the right of giving, if they please, their authorities for what they say; and of letting us know from what source they derive the information which they supply to us. Hence, no one can reasonably object to let the writers of the Bible have the protection of this law, which is of universal application. And what do they say on the question relating to the source of their knowledge? We will take their answer, and then form our own judgment of its integrity from the facts and evidences of the case. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God:<sup>[6]</sup> holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."<sup>[7]</sup> This is a concise statement of their testimony on this great question; and its integrity is fairly sustained by positive and incidental evidence. We see that they have given proofs of foreknowledge which far surpasses the capabilities of the most acute and comprehensive human mind; while, at the same time, they have made known to us a connected series of moral and spiritual truths, to which no other writers make any allusion, and of which they could have formed no conception, unless they had been under superhuman tuition. What they have done, is its own defence against the imputation of fraud and dishonesty—standing as an imperishable memorial of the love of God to man; and of the fidelity of his servants, in disclaiming the honour of inventing a theory of faith and morals which justly claims a Divine origin. This view of the case, which is their own explanation, settles the question, without requiring us to believe physical impossibilities, or compelling us to reject the unrepealable law of moral evidence."

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*Mr. Roscoe.*—"And we may, I think, very properly regard the great *moral power* of the Bible as a very telling collateral argument in favour of its Divine origin. You may take any other book, on any other subject, and put it into circulation amongst a mass of people, either semi-barbarians or highly-polished citizens, but it will work no beneficial changes in the general aspect of their moral character. It will leave them, as it finds them. If it finds them, as in India, bowing down and doing homage to stocks and stones, it leaves them worshipping the workmanship of their own hands—still revelling in their cruel and obscene abominations. If it finds them, as in Rome, kissing the crucifix—offering up their adorations and orisons to the Virgin Mary—or visiting the tomb of a real or legendary saint, in expectation of some miraculous healing, it leaves them practising these puerile and senseless exercises. If it finds them, as in Russia, crouching in terror before the great Tyrant, doing his biddings like beasts of burden, it leaves them in this prostrate state of degradation and misery. But put the Bible into circulation amongst the same class of people, and, after a while, you will perceive that it is taking effect upon them. One reads it, and feels its moral power on his conscience and his heart; another reads it, and he is subdued by its authority; others read it and the same result follows: they are drawn together by the attractive power which emanates from it, and become the nucleus of a new order of human beings springing up in the midst of the unchanged natives of the place. They are of the same ancestral origin, and follow the same civil and social avocations and professions; but they are a peculiar people, resembling the primitive believers of the New Testament in intelligence and daring courage. They are new creatures in Christ Jesus; and, in process of time, as they increase in number and consequent activity, they give a new tone and energy to the moral, the political, and the religious sentiments and feelings of an entire community. It is to the Bible that Scotland is indebted for her moral greatness; and England never would have risen to her present eminence had it not been for the old Puritans, who were animated and sustained by the examples, and principles, and spirit of the Bible, in their passive sufferings and active exertions in resisting the encroachments and the cruelties of tyranny and oppression."

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*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Your argument, Sir, is a legitimate one, and it is as logical, as it is historically true. The book which effects the changes which are essential to the happiness and well-being of men as individuals, or men living in a community, but which cannot be effected by the wit or eloquence of man, may fairly put in a claim to a higher and a purer origin than mere humanity."

*Mr. Stevens.*—"Unbelievers, in general, do not trouble themselves to account for the origin of the Bible; they take for granted that it is a book of mysticism and fraud, and at once direct their virulence against it, and hold it up to scorn and contempt."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"And yet, notwithstanding all these attacks on the Bible, it still lives and commands attention. In the estimation of wise and good men, it takes precedence of all other books: they not only admire, but revere and love it. I have in my parish a good old man who has a

large library, and has been a great reader for upwards of twenty years, but now he very rarely reads any book except his Bible. On referring, one day, to his devoted attachment to the Bible, he said—"I feel, when reading it, in the presence of God, and what I read comes with authority and power. The more I read it the more is my attention fixed on another world, and the more intensely do I desire to depart hence. This is a mean and comfortless place of residence when compared with the mansion our Lord is preparing for us in his Father's house."

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*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Pious people are very fond of the Bible, and their attachment to it increases as they advance in years; their passion for it is often very strong in death."

*Mr. Stevens.*—"Your remark, Sir, recalls to my remembrance what passed, the other day, in a casual conversation between an intelligent, yet very candid sceptic, and myself. 'There is,' he said, 'one phenomenon connected with the Bible which has long puzzled me to account for; if you can solve it, I shall feel obliged. I have noticed wherever I have been—and I have travelled through Europe and America—I have visited India and some of the islands of the South Seas, and resided for awhile amongst the black population of the West Indies—and whenever I have met with any persons who believe in the truth of the Bible, whether they were refined and intelligent or the reverse, they uniformly evinced for it the same profound reverence and supreme attachment.' 'The solution,' I replied, 'is easily given. They revere it as their statute-book, containing the code of laws which their Divine Legislator has issued to test their obedience to his authority; and they love it, as bringing life and immortality to light; making known to them a Saviour who is able and willing to save them from the wrath to come, and to give them peace of soul as an earnest and a pledge of future and eternal happiness; and they value it for its exceeding great and precious promises, which have a soothing and sustaining influence over their hearts in the times of their sorrows and afflictions.' 'But how is it,' he added, 'that while they cherish such a profound reverence for the Bible, they differ so widely in the interpretation they put on its meaning? How will you account for this rather puzzling fact?' The sudden entrance of several strangers into the room prevented me from making a reply."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"This difference of interpretation, which sceptics often bring forward as a plausible argument against the Divine origin of the Bible, very frequently perplexes conscientious believers. I recently received a letter from a gentleman who says—"When I think of the sentiments which are held by different bodies of Christians—sentiments which are directly opposed to each other, and which appear to me to admit of no adjustment; and when I recollect that they all profess to derive them from the same source, and are in the habit of appealing to the same authority in support of them—I feel myself approaching a difficulty which I know not how to solve. Is the Bible really such a mysterious book that it is incapable of being understood? Is it an oracle which utters truth and falsehood? If so, it cannot be a safe guide; and if it be not so, how do you account for the very different interpretations which it receives?"

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*Mr. Stevens.*—"How did you meet the difficulties of the case?"

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"I did not go fully into the question, because I knew, from the cast of his mind, that he would work himself right. I merely stated that conflicting opinions do not, of themselves, possess sufficient weight to set aside any law, or destroy the truth of any proposition which comes attested by its own proper evidence. And to give force to this very obvious truism, I reminded him of our judges, who sometimes give different interpretations of a statute law, without impairing its authority; and of our philosophers, whose different opinions on the primary cause of motion, do not disturb popular belief in the diurnal revolution of our earth. But, after all, we do not differ in our interpretations of the Bible so much as many imagine. It is true there are separate and distinct denominations of Christians, who are regarded by the ignorant and bigoted as the disciples and abettors of very opposite religious creeds; yet if we inquire into the actual state of the case, we shall find that most of them agree in all that is essential and vitally important in the Christian scheme, and that they differ only on what is subordinate, and comparatively unimportant."

*Rev. Mr. Roscoe.*—"It is supposed by many that this diversity of interpretation which is given to some parts of the Bible would have been prevented if a logical or systematic order had been scrupulously observed. If, for example, the sacred writers had arranged the facts, the doctrines, the precepts, the institutions, the sanctions, the evidences, and the final recompense of the Christian faith, systematically—presenting the whole in a compendious form—there would be, in that case, so much compactness, such symmetrical order—one part of the theory would hang so naturally on another—that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for any division of opinion to spring up amongst us on the question of its import or design. We should then think and believe alike. This is what I have heard some speculatists say; but I have no confidence in the integrity of their opinion."<sup>[8]</sup>

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*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"The objections against an inspired compendium of Christian doctrine and practice, are, in my judgment, more powerful than the arguments in favour of it. If we had it, we should revere it, and learn it; it would perpetually recur to our recollection in our reflective moments, and by rendering a studious examination of the other parts of the Scripture unnecessary, we should be liable to sink into 'a *contented apathy*' of spirit, under this conviction, that as we can repeat all, we know all that is necessary for us to know."

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*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"Archbishop Whately, when alluding to this subject, says, 'that if we had this compendium, both it and the other parts of the Scriptures would be regarded as of Divine authority; but the compendium itself would be looked upon by most as the fused and purified metal; the other, as the mine containing the crude ore. And the compendium itself, being, not like the existing Scriptures, that *from which* the faith is to be learned, but *the very thing to be*

*learned*, would come to be regarded by most with an indolent, unthinking veneration, which would exercise little or no influence over them."

*Mr. Roscoe.*—"Universal experience proves, that facility in obtaining a supply to our physical necessities, is not so beneficial to the energy and vigour of the human constitution, as difficulty, which stimulates to labour and invention. Compare, for example, the natives of the South Sea Islands, whose bread-fruit ripens of itself, with the hardy Highlanders of Scotland, who have to toil for their living through frost and snow, as well as sunshine—what a difference in their muscular and masculine conformation and appearance. And the same remark is equally applicable to the mind of man, whose knowledge on any subject, in any department of science, and especially the science of Biblical theology, is accurate and profound, in proportion to the efforts he is obliged to make in its acquisition. A compendium would be the bread-fruit, within reach, and easily plucked. We should, if we had it, become dwarfs in Biblical theology. It is only when our energies are roused by a love of the truth, and stimulated by the difficulties connected with its attainment, that our knowledge in the mystery of Christianity gets perfected, and becomes practically powerful in its influence over the heart and the character."

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*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"And in addition to the relaxing influence which a compendium would exert over the mind—indisposing it to any labour in searching the Scriptures, except the labour of the memory, and that to a very superficial extent—I have another objection to such a projected scheme, which is this:—I do not think it possible for the Christian faith to be reduced to such a compact, or what you term compendious form, as shall secure amongst its advocates and defenders a perfect unity of belief on all points, without the perpetual exercise of a supernatural agency in the illumination and guidance of the mind, which would amount to something like a plenary inspiration to every believer. Now what can be more logically explicit than the articles of our church; and yet what a very different construction do different men put upon them!"

*Mrs. John Roscoe.*—"That is true. If I were in a church on a Sabbath morning listening to a Tractarian; if I returned in the afternoon, and heard a Moderate; and if, in the evening, I occupied the same pew, while an Evangelical was doing duty in the pulpit, I should find myself in a modern Babel, witnessing, on a small scale, a new specimen of the confusion of tongues."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"But this difference of opinion and diversity of interpretation on the same theory of belief, prevails amongst others as well as amongst us. Even amongst unbelievers, who almost deify reason—asserting and maintaining, that it is fully equal to all the exigencies of humanity, without being under any obligation to a Divine inspiration—there is almost an endless diversity of belief and opinion on all questions relating to God, to human responsibility, and the final destiny of man. They are obliged to pass a toleration act to live in peace."

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*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"I like a toleration act; it is essential to our peace. The period is coming when we shall '*see eye to eye*;' but that will be under a dispensation very different to the present; we must now agree to differ, and while contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, we must live together as brethren."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"Jesus Christ said to his disciples—"These things I command you, that ye love one another" (John xv. 17); and he says the same things to us. And if we love one another, we shall never vote for a repeal of our toleration act, which admits of some shades of difference in our religious belief and opinions."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"It was doubted, a few years since, whether even the spiritual members of our various denominations cherished any fraternal esteem and affection for each other—they often acted more like gladiators than brethren; but now they are cultivating a spirit of union and peace."

*Mr. Roscoe.*—"This change in their spirit and conduct is a very gratifying and auspicious event; but some good men maintain that the entire abolition of the distinctive denominations and their union in one undivided body, would be more conducive to the honour of Christianity, and more favourable to its progressive triumphs."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"This I conceive to be impracticable during the partial obscurity of the present dispensation; and I must confess that I do not think it advisable. I have no objection to those divisions of opinion which separate us into different denominations, though I deplore the spirit which they sometimes engender. I think that a variation in belief, on some of the minor questions of religion, by keeping our attention awake and active, tends to preserve the more important truths in a purer state; and the action and re-action of one Christian denomination on another, prevents that stagnation of feeling, and that inertness of principle, which an unbroken and undisturbed uniformity admits of."

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*Mr. Roscoe.*—"But, would not the church assume a more imposing aspect, and put forth a more powerful energy, if she could unite all her members in one undivided body, under the immediate authority of one Head, than she does now, broken as she is, into so many subdivisions?"

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Yes, Sir, if she could preserve her purity uncontaminated; but we ought never to forget, that while the religion we profess is Divine in its origin, and indestructible in its nature, it is human in its forms and administrations. Hence it alternately displays resistless power and exhausted weakness—the sanctity and grandeur of its Author, along with the infirmities and imperfections of the agents to whom it is intrusted—sometimes exciting the profound veneration of the multitude, and at other times their contempt or indifference. And it is this admixture of what is human with what is Divine, that renders it expedient that there should be some exposure to the influence of that re-action of distinctive opinions, and of social attachments, which, by keeping us alive to *the purity and extension of our separate communions*,

tends to promote the purity and extension of the faith which we hold in common."

*Mr. Stevens.*—"Your opinion exactly accords with my own. Hence, instead of regarding the Established Church, and the various denominations of orthodox Dissenters, as hostile foes, aiming at each other's humiliation and destruction, we should look on them as subjects of the same monarch, each bearing the distinctive insignia of his own order; yet mutually supporting each other without the formality of a visible contact, and, as his sovereign will directs, advancing, each in his own way, the work of reclaiming to a state of allegiance the people who have revolted from his authority."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Or, to vary the figure, we may view them as so many servants belonging to the same master, who are employed in cultivating the great moral vineyard, whose reward at last will be in proportion to their fidelity to him, and their affection for each other. If this comparison be just, then, if we cherish a complacent feeling exclusively for those who belong to our own class, and attempt to lord it over our fellow-servants who may belong to another, or treat them discourteously, we dishonour ourselves, and offend against the law of our Lord, who has commanded us to love each other as brethren." [32]

*Mr. Roscoe.*—"When I consider the fallibility of the human mind—the prejudices of education—the influence of accidental reading and associations—and the extensive prevalence of erroneous opinions, instead of being astonished by the shades of difference which prevail amongst us, I am surprised that we think so nearly alike. We agree on the substantial facts, and doctrines, and institutes, and precepts of revelation, while we differ on some of its forms and ceremonial enactments. But these trifling differences, which do not endanger the safety, nor add to the stability of our faith, ought not to excite jealousy and suspicion, and cause alienation of affection, as though we were avowed enemies. No. When this is the case we give a decisive proof that we do not possess the spirit of the gospel; or, if we possess it, we do not display it, which aggravates rather than extenuates our sin."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"In the last prayer our Saviour uttered, just before he presented himself the expiatory sacrifice for human guilt, he earnestly entreated that all his disciples, in every future age, might be one, even as he and his Father are one; and he assigns the reason—*That the world may know that thou hast sent me*. For some ages, the object of that prayer was realized in the harmony which prevailed amongst Christians whose religion was a bond of union more strict and tender than the ties of consanguinity; and with the appellation of brethren they associated all the sentiments of endearment that relation implied. To see men of the most contrary characters and habits—the learned and the rude—the most polished, and the most uncultivated—the inhabitants of countries alienated from each other by institutions the most repugnant, and by contests the most violent—forgetting their ancient animosity, and blending into one mass, at the command of a person whom they had never seen, and who had ceased to be an inhabitant of this world, must have been an astonishing spectacle. Such a sudden assimilation of the most discordant materials; such love issuing from hearts the most selfish, and giving birth to a new race and progeny, could be ascribed to nothing but a Divine interposition; it was an experimental proof of the commencement of that kingdom of God—that celestial economy, by which the powers of the future world are imparted to the present." [33]

*Mr. Stevens.*—"It must have been a spectacle no less delightful to the eye of the Christian than astonishing to the unbeliever; and had the visible church always exhibited such a spectacle of union and affection, her history would have been the records of her spiritual triumphs, rather than of her persecutions and her miseries. But her bonds of union have been broken asunder, and her love of the brethren has been quenched in the bitter waters of strife. We are the descendants of the holy men who first caught, and first displayed the spirit of the Prince of Peace, but how little do we resemble them! We imbibe the same faith, plead the same promises, claim the same privileges, participate in the same spiritual enjoyments, bear the same distinctive and relative character, and anticipate the same high destiny; but we too often act as though we were released from the obligations which they admitted and discharged; and instead of attempting to convince sceptics and unbelievers of the divinity of our Lord's mission, and the moral efficacy of his death, by our union and our reciprocal affection, we strengthen them in their infidelity by our anti-Christian spirit. Can no remedy be devised to correct this noxious evil, which, like a withering blight, tarnishes the moral lustre of all our distinctive denominations, and does more to embitter the spirit, and extend the triumphs of infidelity, than the most virulent works which issue from her corrupt and hostile press?" [34]

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Why, Sir, I hope the evil is in some small degree abated by the influence of our public institutions. Those who, a few years since, were envious and jealous of each other, now associate together on the most friendly terms. If the Bible Society has not terminated the contest, it has been the means of concluding a truce between them; and I flatter myself that there will be no renewal of hostilities, even though some of the more bigoted belonging to the different denominations should feel disposed to revive them."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"I fear, Sir, you are rather too sanguine in your expectations. In the little circle in which we move, in this isolated spot of the religious world, the spirit of fraternal love and union is cherished; but what commotion and strife prevail just now between both the clerical and lay members of our own church!"

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Yes, Sir, I know it and deplore it. It is the spirit of dry formalism setting itself in array against the spirit of vital Christianity; and the contest will be severe, but the issue is certain—the Word of the Lord will prove more powerful than the traditions of man."

*Mr. Stevens.*—"I must confess that I am rather sanguine in my calculations of the moral

influence of the Bible Society on the best and most active men of our age. Dr. Mason, of New York, says, in the preface to a work which he has published—"Within a few years there has been a manifest relaxation of sectarian rigour among the different denominations in America, so that the spirit of the gospel, in the culture of fraternal charity, has gained a visible and growing ascendancy. This happy alteration,' he adds, 'may be attributed, in a great degree, to the influence of missionary and Bible societies.'"

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"And it is so amongst us to some extent. Till the Bible Society arose, and gained a settlement in our land, we had not an inch of neutral ground on which we could assemble, and unite with each other in any religious enterprise; but now we have the province of Goshen assigned us; and the air of that place is so salubrious, the light so clear and brilliant, the atmosphere so temperate and serene, and the harmony of its inhabitants so profound, that we venerate it as the mystic inclosure in which we have an emblematical representation of the celestial inheritance—in which the spirits of the just live in closest union and sweetest concord. May the catholicism of grace and truth wax stronger and stronger, till Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim; the strife of sect being overcome and banished by the all-subduing love of God our Saviour!"

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*Mr. Roscoe.*—"And what is it but prejudice, arising from ignorance and misconception, which prevents this cordial union and fraternal attachment? No one, I am conscious, who understands the genius of Christianity, or who has ever felt his bosom glow with supreme love to the Redeemer, can for a single moment presume to recommend disunion amongst the members of the household of faith, though they may occupy different compartments, and commune at separate tables. It is prejudice that kept me aloof from Dissenters, and made me unwilling to associate with them; because I understood that the generality of them rejected the essential doctrines of Christianity; but now my error is corrected, I esteem them as my brethren in Christ; and as I hope to meet them in heaven, and unite with them in the sublime exercises of that holy place, I feel a pleasure in mingling with them on earth."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"I have lived on terms of intimacy with many who do not belong to the church of which I am a minister, and some of the happiest moments of my life have been spent in social and spiritual intercourse with them. Our conversation, when we have been together, has not turned on the questions on which we differ, but on those on which we agree; and I have often retired from these interviews with my mind relieved from its cares, and both animated and enriched by the interchange of devout sentiment and feeling. And in looking forward to the final consummation, I indulge a hope of partaking of much holy delight in associating with Luther and Calvin, with Fenelon and Claude, with Whitfield and Wesley, with Hall, Foster and Chalmers, and other illustrious men, of the same and other denominations, who have entered into rest. I have lived in stormy times, but I have never increased the fury of the tempest. I have seen the spirit of party raging with desolating violence, and have known some of those, who have borne the image of the heavenly, stand in opposing columns to each other in the field of fierce and angry debate; but I have been enabled, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to hold on my way unconnected with their unhappy hostilities; and now it is with no common feelings of gratitude and delight that I indulge the hope of leaving the church and the world at a period when, if the temple of war is not actually closed, yet our denominations are forming a more correct estimate of each other's relative strength and importance, in the conflict which we have to sustain against the combined powers of superstition and infidelity; and this will necessarily tend to increase our reciprocal esteem and confidence."

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*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"If, in our intercourse with each other, we always acted on your prudential maxim, of conversing on questions of general agreement, rather than on controversial ones, the spirit of discord would be exorcised from amongst us, and then we might, I think, justly calculate on a more copious measure of the influences of the Spirit poured down from on high, when we should intuitively feel, by a force of evidence too powerful to be withstood, that *God is love*, and that we never please him more than when we embrace, with cordiality and esteem, all who bear his image, without distinction of sect or party."

*Rev. Mr. Roscoe.*—"In these sentiments of Christian liberality and charity I now concur most heartily."

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## UNION WITHOUT COMPROMISE

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he Rev. Mr. Ingleby, on resuming the discussion of the question of union amongst the various denominations of believers in the Divine origin of the faith of Christianity, made the following very pertinent remarks:—"If it were the will of God that the various denominations of Christians should all think and act alike, as the tribes of Israel were required to do under the Levitical dispensation, we should have laws laid down for our guidance with the same minuteness and explicitness as was done for them. But such is not the case. We have certain general principles laid down, and the motives by which all our actions should be governed set before us with clearness and precision, but we have no particular directions as to the external form of church government. We are therefore left free to adopt that ecclesiastical system which, after careful examination, we find most in conformity with the spirit of the New Testament."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"You mean, Sir, I presume, that we are left free to choose either the

Episcopal, or Presbyterian, or Congregational form of church government?"

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Yes, Sir; and though I do not profess to be deeply read in casuistry, yet I believe that very much may be collected from the facts and incidents recorded in Scripture, and from the casual expressions of the sacred writers in favour of each of these forms of church government."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"And so I think. We are not living under a law laid down with minute exactness, like the ancient tribes of Israel, but have the right of exercising our choice on these matters of church polity, and our choice is determined by preference or expediency, or both. That is, I may deem it expedient to be an Episcopalian in one country, or a Presbyterian in another, or a Congregationalist in a third; and I may, at the same time, most decidedly prefer one of these modes of church government to either of the other, as being, in my opinion, the nearest approach to the teachings of the New Testament. To adopt such a principle as this is, appears to me more in harmony with the spirit of the New Testament dispensation, than putting in a claim for the Divine right of Episcopacy, or Presbyterianism, or Congregationalism; it is an equitable concession to others of the liberty we claim for ourselves; and hence, without being guilty of any degree of inconsistency, we can cultivate Christian fellowship with our brethren of other denominations, without compromising our own principles."

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*Rev. Mr. Roscoe.*—"You will still leave, I presume, as a question open for discussion, the relative conformity of each mode of church government to the New Testament model?"

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"Most certainly; and when discussions go on, untainted by the dogmatism and acrimony of party predilections and antipathies, and are conducted in a liberal and loving spirit, they tend to give solidity to the foundation on which our relative union is based; and show, at the same time, that it can be cemented and perpetuated without any dishonourable compromise."

*Mr. Lewellin.*—"I was present in a company some time since, when an ingenious Scotchman made out, as he thought, a very strong claim for the superiority of Presbyterianism to the other forms of church government. Episcopacy, he remarked, has the monarchical element too dominant in her constitution—*the clergy are everything*; in Congregationalism, the democratic element is too dominant—*the people are everything*; but Presbyterianism unites the two elements, and in about equal proportions *the clergy and the people act together*—they are a combined power."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Ingenious, if not just. However, without pausing to discuss this question, I think it is very plain that the writers of the New Testament evince a much stronger predilection for the facts and doctrines of the gospel than they do for its rites and ceremonies—deeming the one essential to the integrity of the faith, while the other is subordinate and non-essential; and I think we cannot do better than imitate them; for after all, the forms and ceremonies of church government are but as the chaff to the wheat—the mere attire of a living personage, not the person himself. I prefer Episcopacy to either of the other forms, though I will not take upon myself the task of defending every appendage which has been affixed to it; yet, with all my predilections in its favour, if the pure faith of Christianity were ejected from an Episcopal pulpit, *as it often is*, I would go and worship in a Congregational chapel; and I have no doubt but a spiritually-enlightened Presbyterian would rather listen to the glad tidings of salvation in one of our churches, than to a merely moral sermon in one of his own. In my opinion, the three distinct orders of churches may be planted on the same soil, may grow in harmony side by side; and without any compromise of principle, may co-operate with each other, in combined movements, against either their Papal or sceptical opponents, and feel also a high degree of joyous satisfaction in witnessing each other's prosperity and honour."

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*Mr. Roscoe.*—"Yet I still prefer fellowship with our own church, while cherishing fraternal esteem and fellowship with our Christian brethren of other churches."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Certainly. When we say that the members of our church, and the various orders of Dissenters who have seceded from it, ought, in obedience to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, to cherish reciprocal esteem, and live in peaceful harmony, we do not mean that they are to separate themselves from their own communions, or cease to give them a decided preference."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"In that view of the case I heartily concur; for if the spirit of a comprehensive brotherly love and fellowship were to lead to alienation from our distinctive denominations, it would want one of the evidences of being a peace-maker—healing the breaches which party spirit has unhappily made amongst us. As a member of a family ought to feel a stronger regard, and take a deeper interest in its prosperity and happiness, than he is expected to cultivate towards the community at large, so I think the member of any individual Christian church, may and ought to cherish a greater affection for his brethren with whom he lives on more intimate terms of fellowship than he does for his fellow-disciples in general."

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*Mr. Roscoe.*—"You have, Sir, very clearly expressed the view I now entertain of our relative obligations. We are to do good to all when we have an opportunity, but more especially to those of the household of faith with whom we are united in church fellowship—uniformly endeavouring, by our prayers, our influence, our wealth, and our sympathy, to promote their individual and collective prosperity and happiness."

*Rev. Mr. Roscoe.*—"You are now leading us from the sentimental and ceremonial to the practical department of Christian obligation, in which I think, from motives of gratitude to our Divine Master, we ought all to be increasingly active, provoking one another unto love and good works. This will be acting more in harmony with our faith, and prove more beneficial to ourselves



and others than a rigid adherence to any sectarian form. When returning home the other day from one of my pastoral visitations, I met a very poor man, who had a severe affliction in his family, and he said rather abruptly, 'I wish, Sir, you would give us a sermon from the words of the apostle John, 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' (1 John iii. 17).' I was not surprised at this application, when I found that he had just been to the Hall, the residence of a very wealthy professor of religion, to ask some assistance for his distressed family, but had received only a few words of vague sympathy and regret for his misfortunes."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Well may the apostle say—how dwelleth the love of God in such a heart! But, alas, wealth too often proves a curse to its possessor. How kindly and tenderly does the apostle address us: 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.'"

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"Our Divine Master exhibits himself as the model for our imitation; making, at the same time, our love for each other the test of the genuineness of our Christian character: 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another' (John xiii. 34, 35)."

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*Mrs. John Roscoe.*—"As I have loved you!—emphatic words, expressive of the spirit we ought to cultivate towards all our Christian brethren, especially the afflicted, and prescribing the rule for our conduct towards them. If we imbibe this spirit and act upon it, we shall then endeavour to cheer them with our sympathy in the hours of their grief and mourning, and cheerfully draw from our worldly resources to afford them relief when in want. I remember now an anecdote told by the Rev. Mr. Jay:—A pious, but poor member of his church being visited by one of the deacons, and presented with five shillings as a church gift, with the remark, 'Here is a trifle for your necessities,' replied, 'What you call a trifle, I call an estate.'"

*Miss Roscoe.*—"I believe, dear uncle, that you now have in your congregation an organized society, labouring to promote the physical as well as the spiritual good of the needy and destitute."

*Mrs. John Roscoe.*—"O yes, we are working the principle of practical benevolence, and on the basis of a comprehensive union; and I am happy to say it works well in spite of the grumblers who would rather sleep on and take their rest than be roused to action. The gentlemen take the management of the domiciliary society, going from house to house with tracts, &c., &c., and the ladies manage the Dorcas society, which is in a very flourishing condition. In addition to a pretty large number of subscribers, we have twenty working members who meet once a fortnight for the purpose of making clothes for the poor. Some of these are persons of wealth, others are in moderate circumstances; and, as in the gentlemen's society, some are church people, and some are Dissenters, you may there see sitting in peaceful harmony, members of the various denominations, all busily engaged in the same sort of labour, and heartily prosecuting the same work."

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*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"Then you have grumblers amongst you!"

*Mrs. Roscoe.*—"Indeed, we have. They are a very prolific family—they may be found everywhere, and the whole fraternity is distinguished by a strong family likeness."

*Miss Roscoe.*—"Do you give the clothes to the poor, or do you sell them?"

*Mrs. John Roscoe.*—"In general we sell what we make, yet very much below the cost price; but in extreme cases we give clothing, and, in addition to this, when any of those who require relief are ill, we visit them, and we often find that a kind visit is esteemed as much, if not more than our gratuities."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"I can easily believe that, because there is great power in sympathy to alleviate the sorrows of the heart. We cannot explain the action of moral power, nor conceive the mode of its operation, however sensible we may be of its effects. What power, for example, in a frown to depress! and in a smile to elevate and tranquillize! What power in words both to cheer and sadden the heart! *As I have loved you*—these expressive words should guide our fraternal intercourse with our Christian brethren, who, when they feel our sympathy to be real, will often attach a much greater value to it than to any amount of pecuniary assistance."

*Mr. Roscoe.*—"We are too apt to forget that our Christian brethren, in common with ourselves, are children of one Father, and that we are all now passing through a preparatory discipline to fit us for a higher and purer condition of existence in another world. If these great facts were more powerfully impressed on our hearts, there would be more sympathy and more charity; the rich would cheerfully administer to the wants of their poor brethren, and those who have but little worldly substance to bestow, would more often soothe and enliven them by their sympathy and good wishes. Christian fellowship would then be more than a mere term—it would be a reality."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Your remarks, Sir, are quite correct. And here we see the wisdom as well as the love of our Redeemer in grafting our obligations to the most intimate Christian fellowship on the very constitution of our nature, which inclines us to live in social intercourse; guarding us at the same time from the danger of contracting a sectarian spirit by enjoining on us the duty of doing good *unto all men*, as well as to those who belong to the *household of faith*."

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*Mr. Lewellin.*—"It is to be lamented, Sir, that there are many who do not keep pace in liberality of sentiment and feeling, and generosity of disposition, with the denomination or church to which they belong—they will not labour in the field of practical benevolence, and they do not like to see

others exerting themselves; in fact, they will do nothing but find fault with the active labourers, either impeaching the purity of their motives, or predicting the failure, if not the pernicious results of their efforts. And when these morbid grumblers happen to be imbued, as is often the case, with a sectarian spirit, and take rank with high churchmen or with bigoted Dissenters, the moment they see a conjunction of the different orders, they tremble for the safety of the ark of *their* covenant, and raise a hue and cry against the union of the sects—become bitter in their spirit and censorious in their speech—and appear in a light very unbecoming the genuine disciples of our Lord."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Such professors do essential injury, not only to the honour of the church and denomination to which they belong, but to the cause of religion in general. The evil which results from the anti-Christian temper and spirit of these arrogant and censorious professors, who usually contrive to attract more notice than the rest of their fellow-members, is incalculable. It supplies infidels with their most plausible topics of invective; it hardens the conscience of the irreligious, weakens the hands of the good, and is probably the principal obstruction to that ample effusion of the Holy Spirit which is essential to the renovation of the world. If, then, we wish to make any deep and permanent impression on the sceptical and irreligious—to silence their objections and convince them of the Divine origin of the faith which we profess—we must correct our tempers—we must live in peace amongst ourselves, discover no disposition to injure or annoy each other, and give unequivocal proof that the questions on which we differ are the subordinate tenets of revelation, which may be received or rejected without affecting its truth, or impairing its strength; and, by a union of affection and concentration of our talents, we must advance in the beautiful development of our Christian life, remembering that the wisdom which is from above is 'first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.' When the pious members of the Establishment and the various denominations of evangelical Dissenters are brought to merge their speculative and ceremonial differences in the cultivation and display of this Christian temper, the eulogium pronounced on the primitive disciples may then with truth be applied to us—'See how these Christians love one another!'"

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*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"The novelty of the sight would certainly command attention; and though I am fully persuaded that nothing but a supernatural power can renovate the human heart, yet such a display of united affection might have a wondrous effect, almost approaching that of a miracle, in the conversion of the world."

*Mr. Roscoe.*—"If it be true that our personal happiness bears a proportion to our conformity to the spirit and temper of Jesus Christ, it is evident that a liberal-minded Christian must partake of a much larger share of enjoyment than one who lives under the influence of that sectarian bigotry which keeps him in a state of alienation from his brethren of other communions."

*Mr. Stevens.*—"Most certainly, Sir; and by your permission I will now read you a paragraph with which I was very forcibly struck when I first lighted upon it. The author is speaking of bigotry, and he says, 'This sectarian and intolerant spirit can view no excellence out of its own pale, and deems every opinion heresy that does not bow to its authority. Its plans of doing good always betray the selfishness of their origin; and unable from its very nature to form designs commensurate with the grandeur of religion and the necessities of the world, it not only refuses to co-operate with Christians of another party in promoting the well-being of society and the advancement of religion, but contemplates with jealousy and often with abhorrence, the noblest efforts of benevolence, when not performed under its exclusive auspices. Persons governed by such a spirit cannot view with complacency the separate divisions of the universal church, though there is nothing in their constitution that necessarily militates against *the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace*. This unlovely bigotry narrows the range of the intellect—perverts and contracts the best affections—and, under its influence, even good men forget the charities of their renewed nature, and sometimes prostitute their talents to bear false witness against each other. To this bigotry, that religion, whose very essence is love, is directly opposed. Christians who imbibe the spirit of the New Testament, and who suffer that holy book to operate with full force upon their minds, are distinguished by a noble freedom from sectarian antipathies. They can say from the heart, 'Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' Without verging to the extreme of latitudinarian indifference, they can rejoice in the success of parties different from their own, and they do not complain because 'devils are cast out by those who follow not with them.' Every man is a friend and a brother who consecrates his being to the glory of the Saviour, and every society a church in whose temple Jesus evidently records his name.'"

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*Rev. Mr. Roscoe.*—"Yes, Sir, I am conscious that a pious man, who possesses the pure spirit of his religion, is at once the most useful and the most happy man. As his happiness arises from sources more refined than those to which the men of the world have access, his usefulness is of a more important and more durable nature. I remember an observation which was once made on a friend of my own, when he withdrew from a select company to which he had been communicating some benevolent scheme—"When he visits us he always leaves something behind that is worth thinking of and worth talking about."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Yes, Sir; as the spirit of the gospel is a liberal so it is an active spirit. It does not wish to monopolize the immunities of religion, but to diffuse them; and such is the intensity and ardour of its benevolence that the meanest, the most abject child of sorrow, the poor outcast from the common sympathies of humanity, the forlorn object of woe whom few men would pity, whom no man could save, are the partakers of its bounties."

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*Mr. Roscoe.*—"As the general well-being of society is essentially benefited by the active benevolence of Christianity, may we not, Sir, indulge a hope that the prosperity of vital religion in

our different communions, would be promoted by the cultivation of a reciprocal affection?"

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"There may be, I grant, external prosperity in our churches, even while the vital spirit of religion is languishing in the hearts of the people; as the oak may send forth its spreading branches and luxuriant foliage, when at the heart the tree is hollow and rotten. And perhaps the vital spirit of religion is exposed to more danger in the season of external prosperity than in the season of external adversity. When the congregation is large, and the spirit of unanimity and liberality is generally displayed—when a cordial attachment subsists between the pastors and their people; and the lookers-on are heard to exclaim, *they are of one heart and of one soul*, some may be tempted to forget from whom these invaluable blessings proceed, and cherish a self-complacent, if not an independent spirit. But I never knew vital religion flourish amongst any people *who were not united*. The Spirit of the Holy One never comes to breathe on the dry bones of the slain when the valley echoes with the neighing of the horses, and the rattling of the chariots of war. Wars must be made to cease, the bow must be broken, and the spear cut in sunder—the chariots must be burned in the fire, and the tranquillity of unruffled peace must reign over the whole scene, ere he descends to unite the disjointed parts, and animate the lifeless body. It is to the influence of the Holy Spirit over the mind that we are to ascribe that portion of vital religion which we enjoy. He still dwells amongst us, yet not in the plenitude of his power. *Occasionally* he descends in the ministry of reconciliation, and effects a moral transformation on the character of a large proportion of the people, as in the islands of the Pacific Ocean; but in general, the exercise of his power is restricted to a small number in our congregations, who are, at distinct and distant intervals, made alive from the dead. But as this is emphatically termed the dispensation of the Spirit, and as the honour of glorifying Christ, in giving efficacy to the truth which he has revealed and attested, is reserved for *Him*, to what secondary cause shall we attribute his very partial communications, except to the offence which our discords and alienation of attachment have given him? If He require peace and affection in an individual church, as the precursors of his gracious visitations, does He not require the same amongst the separate divisions of his universal church?"

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*Mr. Lewellin.*—"Most unquestionably, Sir, though the fact has not produced that deep impression on the popular mind which its importance demands. But the day of peace, I hope, is dawning upon us, and the union of Christians of various denominations will, I trust, be drawn closer as time moves on in its course. The voice of prayer is more frequently and more generally heard for the outpouring of Divine influence on the external means of grace, and already we see here and there some verdant spots of spiritual beauty and of life, amidst the surrounding desolations of evil and of death; thus exhibiting to us, as in miniature, the future state of the whole moral world, 'when judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field; and when the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.'"

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"The miraculous gifts with which the apostles were endowed, while they had to contend 'against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the high places' of pagan idolatry, and social profligacy, have long since ceased, with the exigency which called them forth; but the renewing and sanctifying agency of the Spirit remains, and will continue to the end of time—the express declaration of our Saviour not admitting of a doubt of its perpetuity:—'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.' And if, as we have reason to believe, his extraordinary outpouring on our churches will not take place till we are united in the bonds of peace, it behoves each individual Christian to cultivate the spirit of concord, with the utmost degree of vigilance and caution. To our prayers for his concurring testimony with the word of life, we must add a watchfulness over our own tempers, lest we should be involved in the charge of preventing the bestowal of the blessing which we solicit, by grieving the Agent on whose will it depends."

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*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Your remarks, Sir, are just, and I wish they were deeply engraven on the heart of every Christian, by the Spirit of the living God; and then the ministration of righteousness, intrusted to us, would display a glory surpassing the brightest emanation of the Divine presence which the annals of the church record. Then we should see the prejudices of the people, which now obstruct the progress of pure evangelical religion, giving way; and the result would bear a spiritual resemblance to the blessed effects produced by the descent of the angel of Bethesda."

*Mr. Lewellin.*—"May we not suppose, Sir, that the general impression which is produced amongst the pious of all denominations of the absolute necessity of the outpouring of the Spirit on the labours of ministers at home, and of missionaries in foreign parts, viewed in connection with the growing liberality and esteem we cherish towards each other, is one of the spiritual signs which indicate the bestowal of the blessing so earnestly implored?"

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"I think we may. It is the beginning of that great work which the Divine Spirit will complete when the fulness of the time comes, and the effects of which being of a moral and spiritual nature, will continue to bless the world after the subordinate agents of its production have entered into rest. 'Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.'"

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*Mr. Lewellin.*—"And as this union and affection will form one of the most powerful evidences of the divinity of our Lord's mission, it will, at the same time, be a practical refutation of some of the charges which have been brought against Christianity, as though it had an anti-social and repulsive tendency; and it will also exhibit the finest representation of the internal economy of the heavenly world which can be given. *There* is diversity of rank but unity of thought; and

though the various orders of beings may occupy superior and subordinate stations under the government of the Eternal King, yet no one is envious of another's elevation, or jealous of another's influence."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"There is one circumstance connected with our entrance into heaven, which I think ought not to be overlooked. It is this. When we enter, or when we are anticipating that great event, we shall place no dependence on our distinctive peculiarities; nor advert to them, except to express our regret on account of the evil effects which they too often produce. At that period in the history of our being, the mind will be too deeply absorbed in the contemplation of its specific character and condition—will be too solemnly affected by the anticipation of its final destiny, and will feel too deeply abased, under a consciousness of its utter unworthiness of the Divine favour, to dwell even for a moment on any other subject than its redemption from all evil and from all misery by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In comparison with this, every other subject that has engrossed our attention, or interested our feelings, will vanish away, as a thing of nought; and after having thus disengaged ourselves from all association with the minor questions, which now agitate, and divide, and dishonour us, we shall be free to enter the joy of our Lord, as sinners redeemed by his blood, rather than as saints belonging to any one denomination of Christians."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"I have just had, Sir, a practical illustration of the truthfulness of your observations. I was sent for early, a few mornings ago, to visit a pious member of my own church, and in the evening of the same day, at the request of a friend, I went to see a member of a Dissenting church, a very godly man; and, to the rejoicing of my heart, I found them breathing the same spirit—avowing the same belief—deriving consolation from the same source—and giving utterance to the joyful anticipations of mingling their grateful feelings together in the same heavenly temple, where they hope to serve the Lord day and night in harmony and peace."

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*Mr. Lewellin.*—"And, as we shall mingle together in heaven, I presume, Sir, we shall *know* each other *there*. Some pious Christians entertain doubts on this subject, but as it is one which has such a tendency to reconcile our minds to the departure of our friends, I cannot avoid cherishing it with fond attachment."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"Yes, Sir, some good people have their doubts on the subject; but I wonder how they can entertain them. Even though on such a subject we receive no light from the testimony of Scripture, still it is so congenial with the dictates of enlightened reason, and the warm attachments of pure friendship, that I am at a loss to conceive how any one can disbelieve it."

'Deep, deep the love we bear unto the dead!  
Th' adoring reverence that we humbly pay  
To one who is a spirit, still partakes  
Of that affectionate tenderness we own'd  
Towards a being, once, perhaps, as frail  
And human as ourselves.'"

*Mr. Roscoe.*—"Nothing, in my opinion, is more calculated to dispel the fear of death, than a firm belief that we are going home to dwell in our Father's house along with our departed brethren in Christ, whom we shall meet and recognize. This thought, which is so gratifying to our feelings, is supported, I think, by the language of the New Testament."

*Rev. Mr. Ingleby.*—"I think so too. The apostle, when writing to the Colossians, says, 'That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;' by which, says Dr. Paley, I understand St. Paul to express his hope and prayer, that at the general judgment of the world, he might present the fruits of his ministry perfect in every good work; and if this be rightly interpreted, then it affords a manifest and necessary inference that the saints in a future life will meet and be known again to one another; for how, without knowing again his converts in their new and glorified state, could St. Paul desire or expect to present them at the last day? The celebrated Baxter says, and I think there is much force in the statement, 'I must confess as the experience of my own soul, that the expectation of loving my friends in heaven, principally kindles my love to them on earth. If I thought I should never know them, and consequently never love them after this life is ended, I should in reason number them with temporal things, and love them as such; but I now delightfully converse with my pious friends, in a firm persuasion that I shall converse with them for ever; and I take comfort in those of them that are dead, or absent, as believing I shall shortly meet them in heaven, and love them with a heavenly love that shall there be perfected.'"

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"Then," said Miss Roscoe, "death will merely suspend our intercourse with our friends for a little while—it will not break it off for ever. This is a thrilling subject of thought and meditation. We part, but shall meet again in a purer and happier world, and in a more glorious form, and then we part no more. We may then hail Death as a herald of mercy, instead of shrinking from his approach as the King of Terrors."

*Rev. Mr. Guion.*—"Then, when mingling together, if we ever advert to the scenes of our earthly existence, as we probably shall often do, we shall rejoice that our union is now complete, unbroken by any discordant opinion; and, while exulting amidst the unfading glories of the celestial world, we shall gratefully ascribe our salvation to the free and discriminating grace of God, our Father and Redeemer."



he time had now come for my departure from Fairmount, which I quitted with much regret, Mr. Lewellin accompanying me as far as London, where it was arranged that I should stay a few days with him previous to returning home. Our kind friends were very urgent in pressing us to remain a little longer; but business required Mr. Lewellin's immediate attention, and I was getting anxious to resume my pastoral duties. We left Fairmount in the carriage early in the morning, and reached the turnpike gate about a quarter of an hour before the mail came up. There was one outside passenger, and two inside. Having bidden adieu to Mr. Stevens, who had accompanied us thus far, we stepped in, heard the well-known signal from the guard, *All's right!* and felt ourselves moving towards the imperial city at a rapid pace. Though I have not, like Lavater, studied physiognomy, and have often experienced the fallacy of its conclusions, yet on this occasion, as on most others, I began to examine and note carefully the features of the two strangers who sat opposite me. The one was a Friend, who had long since passed the meridian of life. He was dressed in the neat garb of his order, had a fine Roman nose, keen blue eyes rather deeply set, and a countenance whose expression of intelligence and benignity strongly prepossessed me in his favour. But had his general appearance been less attractive, I should have felt a profound respect, as I once had a mother who spoke the plain language, and taught me to speak it in my younger days; and though in riper years, I left the denomination of my youth, yet I still revere that interesting Society of professing Christians. The other was a lusty gentleman, about the age of fifty, but there was no feature in his face that gave me any pleasure.

We rode on in silence, till we came to D—s, where we changed horses; and while we were waiting for the guard, who was detained at the post office, we amused ourselves in looking at a group of boys who were playing at trap-ball, in the market-place. The stout gentleman (whom I shall call Mr. Sykes) said, pointing to the boys, "There is perfect happiness." As no one offered to make any reply to this remark, Mr. Lewellin observed, "Perhaps, Sir, their happiness is not perfect. In the midst of their gambols, and while feeling elated with the high honour of winning the game, the sudden recollection of a lesson yet unlearned, that must be said to-morrow, may perchance give them a pang." This natural remark, expressed in the most good-natured manner, gave offence to Mr. Sykes, who, assuming that demeanour of defiance which appeared most natural to him, said, "And pray, Sir, do you not suppose that the happiness of childhood is the most perfect happiness which mortals ever enjoy!" "It ought not to be, Sir," replied my friend in a very modest tone. "Ought not to be, Sir!" Mr. Sykes returned, with some degree of sarcastic warmth; "then, Sir, how must you have spent those days of innocent mirth, not to be able to look back on them with envy!" This sarcasm roused the spirit of my friend Lewellin, who, though mild, was not disposed to be run down by unprovoked insolence; and he said, in a tone somewhat elevated, "Then I presume, Sir, you look back to the days of your childhood, and sigh over joys departed, never to return; but permit me to ask, how have you spent the years of manhood, not to have yet attained the possession of a much more rational and exalted happiness than you enjoyed when you were flying a kite or spinning a top? If you think, Sir, that I misimproved my boyish days, by not acquiring that perfection of happiness which they generally bring, you force me to conclude that you have misimproved the years of manhood, if in the decline of life you are compelled to look back to your childish days, as the happiest you have ever known."

Mr. Sykes, perceiving, from the smartness of this reply, that he stood no chance of carrying his point, without assistance, turned round, and appealed to the Friend, who did not appear to have taken any interest in the question. "Why, truly," said the Friend, "I think with my neighbour opposite, that if thou wert more happy when a boy, than thou art now, thou canst not have improved thy time as thou oughtest to have done." "Well," said Mr. Sykes, "as this is the first company in which I have ever heard the sentiment called in question, I suppose I am along with a class of human beings of a new order." "Perhaps thou art," rejoined the Friend, "and at any rate thou must confess, that this new order of human beings, as thou art pleased to term us, excel all thy former associates in one very important point." "In what point, Sir?" inquired Mr. Sykes, in his native tone. "Why in this: while thou and thy friends have outlived your happiest days, we are now enjoying ours. Hence, while it is to our advantage to live in a state of manhood, it would have been to yours, to have continued in a state of childhood."

This remark re-established the reign of silence, which continued undisturbed, till some children ran out from a few miserable-looking huts, which stood near the roadside, and followed the coach for a considerable distance, attempting to excite our generosity, by their piteous moans, and antic gestures. "There, Sir," said Mr. Sykes, "If you look out, you will see the picture of perfect happiness." Our sagacious Friend, who appeared to have high purposes revolving in his breast when not engaged in conversation, was rather startled by this observation, as he had not seen the group of juvenile beggars, by which we were annoyed; but on looking out, as requested, he shrewdly replied, "I was not aware that perfect happiness was reduced so low in life, as to become a common beggar." "Poverty, Sir," said Mr. Sykes, "is no disgrace, and poor people are happy as well as rich." "Very true," replied the Friend; "but it is a disgrace to any parents, to train up their children to the practice of begging. These children certainly look healthy and sprightly, but if thou wert to be present when they return from an unsuccessful race, thou wouldst see a picture of perfect sorrow." "Well," said Mr. Sykes, "they shall have one happy day," and immediately tossed out a few halfpence. "Now," said the Friend, "if thou wilt look back, probably thou wilt see a violent contention between them; some crying because unable to get the prize, and some fighting over the division of the spoil." "I suppose, Sir," Mr. Sykes remarked sarcastically, "no one ever fought over any of your scattered gifts." "I never saw any," the Friend

replied, "as I am not in the habit of scattering my gifts with an indiscriminate hand; nor do I approve of those acts, misnamed charitable, which have an evil tendency." "But, Sir," said Mr. Sykes, "what evil can result from giving a few pence to some poor miserable-looking boys and girls?" "Why," replied the Friend, "thou hast seen one evil in the contention which immediately followed, but this is not the greatest; these children who are initiated into the begging system at such an early period of life, are taught the art of deception; they are thrown off from the resources of industry and frugality, on the precarious supplies of charity; and if from the influence of vagrancy, they are not led to thieving, they will never feel any reluctance to receive support from the parish rate. Charity is a virtue which we all admire, and which we ought to cultivate; but I have long thought, that where its bounties are not administered with discretion, society sustains more injury, than it derives advantage." "Discretion! O yes, discretion!" said Mr. Sykes, "is a great virtue; with Sir John Falstaff it is the better part of valour, with you of charity; but in my opinion it is more frequently an apology for cowardice, or for covetousness."



JAMES GODWIN. W. L. THOMAS.  
MISTAKEN CHARITY.—MR. SYKES' THEORY REFUTED.

Vol. ii. p. 55.

We soon after parted with Mr. Sykes, when our sage Friend addressing himself to Mr. Lewellin, said, "I have no doubt but the passenger who has just left us has some excellencies, but he does not excel in the art of rendering himself agreeable, an art which few learn, and fewer practise; but it is one of great importance to personal dignity and relative comfort."

His place in the coach was soon occupied by a young man in a red coat, who was going to a fox-hunt near M—. He was very loquacious, but his conversation turned principally on horses, and dogs, and game, and the various qualifications of a good shot. Mr. Lewellin made several efforts to introduce other topics, but he could not succeed, as no pointer ever stood truer to his bird, than he did to his favourite theme. He told us of his hair-breadth escapes, of the fatigues which he had endured, and the feats which he had achieved, with as much glee as the huntsman throws off at a chase; and dwelt with peculiar delight on his good fortune the preceding day, when out of twenty-five who started, he was the only one *in at the death*, and exhibited the *brush* as the proud memorial of his honour. After he had told and re-told his tales, which gave no one pleasure but himself, he fell into a dead silence, hummed "Old Towler," and commenced beating a sort of tattoo with his fingers on the coach window. At length, turning himself to the Friend who sat by his side, and whose patriarchal simplicity appeared to amuse him, he said, with an air of low satire, "I believe, Sir, your sect are not much given to such sports?" "Why, no," replied the Friend, "we have too much humanity, to attempt to extract pleasure from the sports which inflict torture on dumb animals." "I have read," said the sportsman, "all your objections; but, Sir, they have no point—they don't hit the mark—nature points to game, and we are to follow. I love the sound of the horn, more than the silence of meditation." "I have no doubt," said the Friend, "that thou dost, but thou shouldst remember, that some prefer silence, to noise." "I take you, Sir; you intend to say, that you would rather have silence, than my conversation." "I have no objection," the Friend replied, "to conversation, when it is interesting or profitable, but thou must be aware, that the present company take no interest in the detail of thy field achievements." "Well, Sir," said the sportsman, "I have no objection to turn the conversation to a graver subject; and as I am a young man, just beginning to turn my attention to religion, you will permit me to ask you one question, which puzzles me. It is this, Sir: As we have so many religions in this kingdom, which is the best?" "Why," said the Friend, "that which makes the simple wise, and teaches young men to cultivate the grace of modesty." "Very smart, Sir: then you think such a religion would do me good?" "I think it would."

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When the sportsman left us, his place was immediately occupied by a gentleman who, as I afterwards learned, had lately returned to England, after an absence of many years. He was an interesting and intelligent looking man; and I flattered myself from his general appearance, that

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we should have agreeable society during the rest of our journey. Nor was I disappointed. He was rather reserved at first, but after Mr. Lewellin and I had engaged for some time in a desultory conversation, he fell in with us, and willingly contributed his share. There is a strong propensity in some minds to sacrifice truth, in narration and description, especially when relating their own adventures. They will not utter direct and palpable falsehood, but they are so accustomed to exaggeration and high colouring, that a man who respects his own reputation will never venture to repeat their statements. Their design is to produce *effect*, and hence they often leave the beaten path of sober truth to amuse or astonish their hearers with the fanciful or the extravagant. But nothing of this kind was visible in our companion; as he gave us no description of persons, of places, or of things, which staggered our belief. He had sailed on the boisterous sea, without having just escaped the horrors of shipwreck; he had passed through woods and mountains, without encountering brigands or assassins; he had resided in crowded cities, and had traversed lonely wastes, where he met with no flattering attentions from the great, or rude insults from the vulgar. He had travelled through the greater part of Europe, had visited the East and West Indies, and had spent the last two years in America: but intended now to fix his abode in his native country, where he said he hoped to rest in the same grave with his fathers.

"You have seen, Sir," I remarked, "a great part of the world; but as you intend to fix your final residence in Old England, I take for granted that you have not discovered any country which rivals her in your estimation."

"No, Sir," he replied, "I have not. I love England—I love her changing seasons, and her fruitful soil—her fine national character—her political constitution, and that spirit of liberty, both civil and religious, which she cherishes and which she diffuses—I love everything that is English; and I disown the Briton who is not enthusiastic in the praise of his country."

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"The love of liberty," I remarked, "is a passion which gives a peculiar and powerful energy to our national character; but you must confess, Sir, that this passion is not exclusively ours. America cherishes it with an equal degree of ardour."

"Yes, Sir," he replied, "she does, but her love of liberty is a selfish passion. She has fought for her own freedom, and she has won the laurels, but she continues to enslave others. When the foot of a poor captive touches the soil of Britain, his chains burst from around him; his life is taken under the protection of the law; no one can insult him with impunity; he is as safe in his hut, as the lordly baron is within the walls of his castle. But in the United States of America, there are upwards of three millions of human beings, now living in a state of slavery, bought and sold like cattle—subjected to the cruelty of men, in whose bosoms every atom of humanity has long since been annihilated. What, Sir, is freedom, where all are not free—where the greatest of God's blessings is limited with impious caprice to the colour of the skin? Having bled at every pore, rather than submit to wear the yoke of a foreign authority, why does she not, amid all her prosperity and improvement, act a just and generous part towards her black population? She is worse than the chief butler of Pharaoh, who, when he had gained his freedom, merely forgot his fellow-prisoner: but she remembers those who were once in bondage with her, and rivets the chains of slavery still closer upon them. She may vaunt herself on the love of liberty, and on her rising greatness in the scale of nations; but as long as the groans of three millions of human beings resound through her land without obtaining redress, she will have a badge of infamy affixed to her national character, from which no virtues will ever redeem her. We did a noble deed when we abolished the slave-trade, but we did a still nobler deed when we abolished slavery. We have thus set America a good example, which, in spite of all opposition, she will some day follow."

We were very much pleased with the polite manners and the interesting conversation of this gentleman, who formed a striking contrast to our other coach companions. On taking leave of him at the Swan with two Necks, we exchanged cards, when we found that the stranger's name was Wilcox, and he exacted a promise from me that I would call and see him before I left London.

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A few days after this, as I sat in Mr. Lewellin's front parlour listening to the strange cries of London, and observing the countenances of the numerous pedestrians, who, with hurried steps, passed to and fro, as though each was intent on some great purpose, I saw the postman at the door, who brought me a letter, which on opening I found to be from our interesting fellow-traveller, requesting that we would dine with him on the following day. We accepted the invitation, and spent a very pleasant evening together.

On this occasion Mr. Wilcox informed us that he had been pressed to sign a petition for the repeal of the Maynooth grant; but had declined doing so, because he knew nothing about its origin, or the reasons which induced the government to make it; adding that, as a general rule, he thought America acted more wisely than we do on all such questions; she repudiates a *state religion*, and therefore leaves every religious sect to act and provide for itself. I then gave him a brief history of the matter as follows:—On the 14th of January, 1794, the Roman Catholics of Ireland presented a memorial to the government, praying for permission to erect a college for the education of their priests, who, up to this time, had been compelled to get their education in foreign countries; stating in their memorial, that they were both able and willing to build the college, and defray its current expenditure at their own expense. Their prayer was granted: and to their astonishment the Irish Parliament voted a grant of £8000 per annum towards its support, which in the year 1807 was increased to £13,000. No pledge was given that it should be a permanent grant, and as a proof of this, in the year 1799 it was withheld altogether, and during that year they were compelled to do what they said, when they declared that they were able and willing to defray its expenses by their own voluntary contributions.<sup>[9]</sup>

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"It seems somewhat strange," said Mr. Wilcox, "that the government should vote a large sum of money, when they are told that it is neither expected nor needed. To account for such an act of profligate expenditure, we must suppose there was a strong undercurrent of political influence forcing them to do so."

"Why, Sir, the fact is, that Ireland was at this time, and for a long time after, in a strongly excited state; one outburst of popular tumult succeeded another, with so much rapidity and violence, that our leading statesmen, both Whigs and Tories, became alarmed, and they hit upon the expedient of attempting to conciliate the priests, by proposing to take their church into union with the state, and thus render them independent of the voluntary contributions of their people; and this munificent generosity in behalf of the Maynooth College, was the gilded bait of allurements. However, that projected union is now abandoned as a Utopian vagary; for the Roman Catholics disdain to come into ecclesiastical fellowship with Protestants, and therefore common sense requires, that as they are resolved to stand by themselves, they should be left to do what they said they were able and willing to do—educate and support their clergy by their own contributions."

"I think the principle is bad," said Mr. Wilcox, "both politically and morally, which compels one sect to educate and support the clergy of another sect. There is an outrage committed on the conscience of an enlightened Protestant, if he be compelled to contribute to the education and support of the Roman Catholic clergy, not simply because they are the ministers of another church, but because they are ministers who, in his estimation, reject the essential doctrines of Christianity, and substitute in their place, dangerous and fatal heresies; and not only so, but he believes, and their past history confirms him in the belief, that they constitute the vital, the most active, and the most unscrupulous part of an organized conspiracy, whose object is to extinguish both civil and religious liberty throughout the world."

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"Toleration," said Mr. Lewellin, "is all that such a dangerous set of men ought to receive under a Protestant government, and to that I should not object; but it is an act of legalized injustice to compel me to pay for the training and comfortable support of Roman Catholic priests."

Mr. Wilcox remarked, "We don't punish the footpad till he has committed his crime; but we should deem the wealthy traveller a maniac at large, who would voluntarily contribute towards the training of such desperadoes. I will certainly, now that I understand the matter, sign for the repeal of the grant, and do all in my power to hasten it. Indeed, I would not give my vote to any parliamentary candidate, unless he pledged himself against the continuance of this very obnoxious grant."

"My attachment to Christianity," said Mr. Lewellin, "makes me revolt against this offensive grant, as my loyalty to our queen would make me abhor a proposition to contribute to the training of traitors, to subvert her throne and bring her to the block."<sup>[10]</sup>

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## A SABBATH IN LONDON.

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In the institution of the Christian ministry, we have one of the most salutary provisions ever made to promote the improvement and happiness of man. If we suppose, with the enemies of Christianity, that it is of human origin, and that its functions are discharged by human agents, who are actuated and governed by selfish or ambitious motives, still it will occupy, in the estimation of every wise man, a high station, as a powerful ally to the cause of patriotism and of virtue. It enjoins on the various ranks and orders of society submission to the powers that be, and reverence for God; and it explains and enforces, with the utmost precision, our relative duties towards each other; while the veneration in which it is generally held in this kingdom is favourable to its influence. To say that every one is strictly virtuous who listens to its maxims of wisdom, would be to advance an assertion which facts would contradict; but if we judge from the present state of society, we shall be compelled to admit that there is a larger portion of virtue amongst those who attend upon a stated ministry, than among those who treat it with neglect and scorn. Hence its abolition would be a national evil, as disastrous to our moral improvement and happiness, as the triumphs of political anarchy would be to the well-balanced constitution of the British Empire.

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But even this institution, with all its advantages, would prove comparatively useless were it not for the appointment of the Christian Sabbath; for such is the ascendancy which the cares, the pleasures, the fascinations, and the commerce of the world have acquired over the public mind, that very few would have an opportunity to benefit by it, unless some specific portion of time was set apart for this express purpose. If the husbandman were compelled to toil in the field, and the mechanic to labour in the shop—if the tradesman, the merchant, and the other members of the community had to devote themselves to their respective avocations without any intermission, except what caprice or indolence might dictate, the minister of the gospel might faithfully proclaim all the words which relate to the life to come, but he would not be surrounded by a large and an attentive audience. The temple would be forsaken, and the powers of *this* world would so engross the attention of men, that those of the next would be generally, if not universally disregarded. To prevent this fatal evil, one day in seven is set apart, by the immediate authority of God, which we are commanded to devote to the exercises of private and public worship; but alas! how many treat this sacred injunction with contempt. Some in the higher ranks of life, who disdain to be thought religious, employ it as a day for travelling or for feasting; and



multitudes of the lower orders, regard it as a day either for pleasure or for dissipation.

On the Sabbath after my arrival in London, as I was walking down Bridge Street on my way to Surrey Chapel, I saw a party of young people whose gaiety of manner ill accorded with the sanctity of the day, and just as I was passing them I heard one say, "Indeed I think we shall do wrong; my conscience condemns me; I must return." "There can be no harm," replied another, "in taking an excursion on the water, especially as we intend to go to chapel in the evening." "I must return," rejoined a female voice; "my conscience condemns me. What will father say if he hears of it?" By this time they had reached the bridge, and the foremost of the party was busily engaged with a waterman, while the rest stood in close debate for some minutes, when they all moved forward towards the water.

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I watched the party as they went down the stairs to the river. Two of the gentlemen stepped into the boat, two more stood at the water's edge, and the females were handed in one after another; but I could perceive great reluctance on the part of the one who had previously objected, till at length she yielded to the importunities of her companions, and the boat was pushed off. It was a fine morning, though rather cold. Many, like myself, were gazing on them, when a naval officer called to them through the balustrades and said, "A pleasant voyage to you." One of the gentlemen arose to return the compliment, but, from some cause which I could not perceive, he missed his footing and fell into the water. This disaster threw the whole party into the utmost consternation; and each one, instead of retaining his seat, rushed to the side of the boat over which their companion had fallen, by which the boat was upset, and all were instantaneously plunged into the river. The scene which followed, when the spectators beheld this calamity, exceeded any I had ever witnessed. Some females screamed, the passers-by crowded together to the parapet of the bridge, and everything was bustle and excitement; boats immediately put off; and in a few minutes I had the satisfaction of seeing the watermen rescue one, and another, and another from a premature grave. Having picked up every one they could find, the different boats were rowed to shore, where some medical gentlemen were in waiting. But when the party met together, no language can describe the horror depicted on every countenance when they found that two were still missing.

"Where's my sister?" said the voice which had said, only a few minutes before, "There can be no harm in taking an excursion on the water, especially as we intend to go to chapel in the evening."

"Where's Charles?" said a female, who had appeared the most gay and sprightly when I first saw them.

At length two boats, which had gone a considerable distance up the river, were seen returning; and on being asked if they had picked up any one, they replied, "Yes; two." This reply electrified the whole party, and some wept for joy.

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**SABBATH PLEASURE SEEKERS.**

**Vol. ii. page 64.**

"Here's a gentleman," said a waterman as he was coming up to the foot of the stairs, "but I suspect he's dead."

"Where's the lady?" said her brother, "Is she safe?"

"She is in the other boat, Sir."

"Is she alive?—Has she spoken?"

"No, Sir, she has not spoken, I believe."

"Is she dead; O tell me!"

"I fear she is, Sir."

The bodies were immediately removed from the boats to a house in the vicinity, and every

effort was employed to restore animation. In little more than ten minutes it was announced that the gentleman began to breathe, but there was no allusion made to the lady. Her brother sat motionless, absorbed in the deepest melancholy, till the actual decease of his sister was announced, when he started up and became almost frantic with grief; and though his companions tried to comfort him, yet he refused to hear the words of consolation.

"O my sister! my sister! Would to God I had died for her!"

They were all overwhelmed in trouble, and knew not what to do. "Who will bear the heavy tidings to our father?" said the brother, who paced the room backwards and forwards. "O! who will bear the heavy tidings to our father?" He paused; a death-like silence pervaded the whole apartment. He again burst forth in the agonies of despair—"I forced her to go against the dictates of her conscience; I am her murderer; I ought to have perished, and not my sister. Who will bear the heavy tidings to our father?"

"I will," said a gentleman, who had been unremitting in his attentions to the sufferers.

"Do you know him, Sir?"

"Yes, I know him."

"O! how can I ever appear in his presence! I enticed my only sister to an act of disobedience, which has destroyed her!"

How the father received the intelligence, or what moral effect resulted from the disaster, I never heard, but it suggests a few reflections which I wish to press upon the attention of my readers. As the Sabbath is instituted for the purpose of promoting your moral improvement and happiness, never devote its sacred hours to pleasure and recreations. He who has commanded you to keep it holy, will not suffer you to profane it with impunity. He may not bring down upon you the awful expressions of his displeasure while you are in the act of setting his authority at open defiance, but there is a day approaching when you must stand before him as your judge. And can you anticipate the solemnities of that day, while continuing in a course of sin, with any other than the most fearful apprehensions? You may, like many, suppose that that day is very far off; but you may be undeceived by a sudden visitation of Providence; and in a moment may be removed from amongst your gay companions, to appear in his presence. And should this be the case, with what terror-struck amazement will you look on the awful scene around you; with what fearful and agonizing emotions will you listen to the final sentence—*Depart!*

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Resist the *first* temptation to evil, or your ruin may be the inevitable consequence. "Indeed I think we shall do wrong; my conscience condemns me; I must return," said the unfortunate girl, when she got near the river; but having yielded to the first temptation, she was induced to overcome her scruples, and within less than half an hour from that time she was hurried into the eternal world. Had she refused when her brother solicited her to leave home, she might have lived to comfort her father in his old age; but by complying, she first lost her strength to withstand temptation, and then her life. What a warning! And is this the only one which the history of crime has given you? Alas, no! Have not many, who have ended their days on the scaffold, traced their ruin to the profanation of the Sabbath? This is the day in which the spirits of evil are abroad, enticing the young and the thoughtless to vice and impiety; and if you wish to avoid the misery and degradation in which others have been involved, devote its sacred hours to the purpose for which they were appointed. Attend some place of worship, where the truths of the Bible are preached with earnestness and power, and attend regularly; and though some of your associates may ridicule you for your habits of devotion, yet will you suffer yourself to be conquered by such weapons? The youth who regularly attends a place of worship on the Sabbath, and receives the truth under a deep conviction of its excellence and importance, often enjoys a high mental feast, and becomes imperceptibly fortified to resist the fascinations of the world; but he who spends the sacred hours in the society of the thoughtless, amidst scenes of gaiety and dissipation, becomes an easy prey to the worst of temptations, often retires to rest reproaching himself for his folly and impiety, and is gradually led from one crime to another till iniquity proves his ruin.

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As I wished to hear a celebrated preacher in the evening, I asked Mr. Lewellin to accompany me, but he declined, for reasons which raised him in my estimation as a young man of prudence and consistency. "I am, Sir," he observed, "decidedly of opinion that London offers many temptations to professors of religion which require, on their part, constant vigilance to withstand; and one of the most specious is, the celebrity of popular preachers."

"But," I replied, "do you think it wrong to go and hear these ministers?"

"I would be cautious how I censured any one; but I certainly think that the love of novelty in religion often proves pernicious, not only to those who are enslaved by it, but to their families. Let me suppose a case. Here is a religious family who professedly attend the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Watkins, but the father is in the habit of hearing every celebrated preacher. Will not this roving disposition prevent his forming that attachment towards a pastor and his flock in which the essence of Christian fellowship consists? And will not the influence of his example have an injurious effect on his children? If he take them with him, he imperceptibly teaches them to believe that he is not so much delighted with the truth as with the agent who conveys it. And what is this but sinking the importance and value of the truth in the estimation of those whose hearts are naturally averse to it. If he refuse to take them with him, and compel them to go, while

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they are young, to their regular place of worship, yet, as he does not go with them, they are left without the controlling influence of his presence, and are exposed to the temptation of absenting themselves for some scene of amusement. If he leave his more stated minister to go after these popular preachers, unless he has a greater measure of prudence than such roving professors generally possess, he will institute comparisons in the presence of his children between them and the settled pastor. And will not this excite prejudice in their minds against the clergyman whose ministry they are *forced* to attend? Will not this prove injurious to them? Will not this tend to alienate their minds from the love of the truth, and to make them regard its accidental associations as the main thing; and by teaching them disrespect for their stated minister, they may, in time, turn away contemptuously from the message he delivers. And these are not the only evils which result from the indulgence of this roving disposition; it is invariably found no less injurious to the private reputation of a Christian, than to his domestic piety."

"But how so?" I replied. "What injury can it do the private reputation of a Christian?"

"Why, he will be regarded as an unstable man; and though he may have many virtues, yet if this imperfection be associated with them it will materially injure him. For what influence can an unstable man ever acquire, unless it be the power of doing evil? Who can respect him? Who can place any dependence on him?"

"But," I asked, "may not a Christian leave the ministry of one preacher, to attend that of another, without sustaining or producing any moral injury?"

"Most certainly," said Mr. Lewellin; "we are at perfect liberty to go where we please, and to hear whom we please; but we should avoid that fickleness of disposition, which is ever moving from one place to another. Some admire the last preacher they have heard more than any preceding one, and have the censor always ready to throw the incense of flattery around the *next* who may make his appearance. Instead of examining themselves, to see what progress they make in knowledge and in grace, and attending to the religious instruction of their children and their servants on the Sabbath, they are ever asking, Who is in town? or, Who is expected? But though I condemn most decidedly such a volatile spirit amongst professors, yet I think we *ought* to attend that ministry which we find the most profitable. *The truth which we hear is Divine, but the agent who preaches it is human*; and though the tone and the manner of proclaiming it will not add to its importance, yet it may tend to give it a more commanding power of impression; and hence, it is both our duty and our privilege to attend the ministry of that man, whose style of preaching is the most calculated to profit us. The poet in speaking of government, has said,

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'Whate'er is best administered is best.'

The same may be nearly said with regard to sermons. There is not such a great difference between the thoughts and arrangements of one preacher and another as some imagine. But who has not been struck with the difference of the impression and effect? One man shall speak, and how dry, and sapless, and uninteresting is he! Let another deliver the very same things, and there is a savour that gives them freshness—the things seem perfectly new. One preacher, by his monotonous tones and manner, soon lulls us to sleep; while another, by his earnestness, his pathos, and his impassioned appeals—by the aptness of his illustrations, the chasteness of his style, and the unction of his spirit—not only fixes our attention, but penetrates the inner man of the heart; we feel ourselves subdued, enlightened, and powerfully excited by the Word of God. When a man of this attractive order appears in the pulpit, by the mysterious action of the sympathetic faculty, his presence is felt by the people, even before his voice is heard; and in the lines of Cowper we see a great moral fact, clothed in the vestments of poetic beauty:—

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'When one that holds communion with the skies  
Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,  
And once more mingles with us meaner things,  
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings—  
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,  
That tells us whence *his* treasures are supplied.  
So when a ship well freighted with the stores  
The sun matures on India's spicy shores,  
Has dropp'd her anchor and her canvas furl'd  
In some safe haven of our western world,  
'Twere vain inquiring to what port she *went*—  
The *gale* informs us, laden with the scent.'

"But, Sir," I remarked, "if we do not derive improvement and consolation from the ministry on which we generally attend, we ought to attribute it to some fault in ourselves. I remember being very much struck with a remark which I heard a venerable clergyman make when addressing his congregation—'If, my brethren,' he said, 'you come to hear *me preach*, instead of hearing *the truth* which I deliver, be not surprised if you are permitted to go away without having felt its purifying and consoling influence. I can do no more than give utterance to the sublime doctrines and promises of the gospel; it is the province of my Master to make them effectual to your salvation; and if you neglect by strong and ardent prayer to implore his blessing, he will withhold it.'"

"A very just and important remark," replied Mr. Lewellin, "and one which I hope we shall never forget. We ought at all times to go into the temple in a devotional spirit, and to remember that as every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, we should, in the most humble manner,

invoke his presence; and then we shall feel less disposed to rove and less occasion to complain of the want of spiritual enjoyment."

We were now interrupted in our conversation, by the servant, who informed Mr. Lewellin that there were two gentlemen below who wished to see him. "Desire them to walk up. I am not aware," said Mr. Lewellin, "who they are; and I regret their call, as I am not in the habit of receiving company on the Sabbath." They entered the room, and after offering an apology for this act of intrusion, one said, "I know, Sir, you will excuse it, as I have made up my mind to go with you to chapel this evening, along with our friend Mr. Newton."

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I did not immediately recollect this gentleman, though his manners and voice seemed familiar to me; but on hearing his name, I instantaneously recognized Mr. Gordon, whom I once met in the country<sup>[11]</sup> when enjoying an evening's ramble. "I am happy to see you, Sir" (addressing him), "as it gives me an opportunity of reminding you of a promise which you have not yet redeemed."

"Indeed, Sir! You have the advantage of me. Did I ever make you a promise, which I have not redeemed?"

"Yes, Sir, indeed you have done so."

"Where, and when, Sir, may I ask?"

"Were you never in a thunder-storm?"

"I beg your pardon. I hope you are well. I am happy to see you in London. I hope you will do me the honour of a call.—Why, no. I have not been able to inform you of the result of my inquiry; for, to be very candid, I have been too much engaged to turn my attention to it; but I have not forgotten it.—What a storm! How did you escape it? I took shelter in a cow-shed."

"I ran to a cottage, where I was kindly received, and in which I witnessed a deeply interesting sight. I regretted you were not with me, as I there saw an evidence in favour of the truth and the excellence of the gospel, which I think you would have admired."

"Indeed! what visible evidence do you refer to? A miracle?"

"If we define a miracle to be something above the production of human power, I should not hesitate to call what I saw a moral miracle." I then gave an account of the decease of the woodman's child, which he called a very interesting tale; but said he was not sufficiently enlightened to perceive how such a fact tended in any way to establish the truth or display the excellence of Christianity. "We may," he remarked, "have an opportunity to debate over it before you leave our great city; but, as we propose going to chapel this evening, perhaps we had better not begin, lest we should be obliged to break off the thread of our argument at an unfavourable point. But, though I have not investigated the important question which we discussed when we accidentally met, yet I will do it. You see the company which I keep (pointing to Mr. Lewellin and Mr. Newton) is a proof that I am *religiously inclined*; and, if a few doubts should still darken my powers of mental vision, yet the light which emanates from their chaste reasoning may ultimately disperse them, and we all *may* become believers together."

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"A consummation I should hail with delight."

"I believe you, Sir; and I honour the motive which prompts such a devout exclamation."

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On passing along Cheapside on our way to the chapel which Mr. Lewellin usually attended, we were astonished at seeing a placard, announcing that the Rev. Mr. Guion was to preach that evening at Bow Church, in behalf of the Church Missionary Society; and at my earnest entreaty, we decided on hearing him. By a statement he made at the commencement of his discourse, we found his appearance in the pulpit was in consequence of the sudden illness of a brother clergyman who stood engaged to preach on the occasion; and this accounted for our not hearing of this London visit when we were with him at Fairmount. Having my note-book in my pocket, and my pencils in good working order, I took down his sermon, and will transcribe from my manuscript a few passages, which, when delivered, made a deep impression on the whole congregation. His text was taken from 1 Tim. iii. 16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." His arguments in confirmation of the divinity of Jesus Christ were few, but popular and conclusive, yet not common-place.

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"HE WAS SEEN OF ANGELS."—"Our knowledge," said the eloquent preacher, "of angels is very superficial; yet we know, they are beings of a superior order—holy, intelligent, powerful, and benevolent. Jesus Christ was seen of them, at his birth, during his temptation in the wilderness, when enduring the agonizing conflict in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the morning of his resurrection; and they came to witness, and to take a ministering part in his ascension, when he went to resume the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. This SEEING him, denotes the intense interest they felt in his personal honour, and in the design of his mission to earth. 'Which things,' says the apostle Peter—that is the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow—'the angels desire to look into.' They pry into and labour to comprehend the grand theory of human redemption; and watch with intense solicitude its practical working in the soul of man. Hence, our Lord says, 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' Yes, brethren, these pure and exalted spirits become comparatively insensible to

the glories of the celestial world, when in the act of seeing a sinner who is ready to perish, rescued from the fearful peril of his condition, as we should become comparatively, if not absolutely insensible to the grandest and most picturesque scenery of nature, if we stood on some eminence, gazing on the heroine coming out of her father's cottage, hastening to the frothy beach, springing into the fishing-boat, braving the fury of the tempest and the wild uproar of the storm, to rescue the shipwrecked mariners from a vessel sinking in the deep waters. For it is a law of their nature, no less than of ours, that gratification shall yield to sympathy, and that the sight of deliverance from fatal danger, shall have a more gratifying effect on a sensitive and benevolent heart, than the most brilliant and exciting scenes which can be presented to the imagination, or to the senses;—thus demonstrating by a process as certain as any undeviating law of the material economy, that every order of being, except infernal spirits, have an instinctive abhorrence of the disastrous crisis in the progress of suffering; and that they feel an ecstasy of emotion which no sights of grandeur or of beauty, and which no sounds of melody can excite, when they behold an unanticipated deliverance from some horrifying and fatal termination. There stands the poor criminal on the fatal platform, and the minister of death is near him, making the necessary arrangements for his execution; deep sympathy is expressed in every countenance, many sighs are heaved, and many weep; the silent prayer is offered up, and all are breathless, expecting the drop to fall which is to hurl him with convulsive agonies into the other world. But there is a momentary pause, as an act of homage to a stranger, who very unexpectedly makes his appearance. This stranger, to whom all the officials and the doomed man pay marked attention, is also an official armed with power, not the power of death, but of life; he is the herald of mercy; and with a loud voice proclaims his pardon. The multitude, long absorbed in sympathetic grief, now raise the shout of gladsome triumph, as they gaze on the once doomed man, as he passes from the death of agony and infamy, to newness of life; they revel in the excess of ecstatic bliss; and feel more joyful in spirit over this one criminal saved from the horrors of an ignominious death, than over a whole community of righteous persons who were never involved in a sentence of condemnation.

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"HE WAS BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD."—"The testimony of the Bible, and the records of ecclesiastical history, attest this fact, Rev. vii. 9, 10; *and he is still believed on in the world.* I know, brethren, that many persons of refined taste, and exquisite delicacy of feeling, greatly admire the character of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph and of Mary; and they feel a deep interest in the perusal of his history. Their imagination expands in reflecting on that magnificent scene beheld by the shepherds of Bethlehem, when his birth was announced by the angel of the Lord. His healing the sick in the temple—his opening the eyes of blind Bartimeus—and his raising the only son of the widow as the procession was moving to the grave, has a fine effect on their sensibilities. The Transfiguration of Tabor sheds a halo of glory around his Divine form, which attracts and gratifies their love of the marvellous. They catch the inspiration of a powerful sympathy on seeing him bathed in tears, as he stands beholding in the distant vision the desolations coming on the city of Jerusalem. And when they gather around his cross, they feel intense regret, intermingled with no slight degree of astonishment, that one so kind, so humane, and withal such a friend to suffering humanity, should be so rudely and so cruelly treated, and the falling tear bespeaks the sorrow of their heart. Now go amongst these refined, these poetic, these sentimental believers in the Divine origin of the Christian faith, with the blood of atonement, and what consternation will you produce! They will soon evince a strange revulsion of feeling; the term itself is harsh and unintelligible; it is the jargon of the uncouth and the vulgar; the crucifix charms their sentimentalism—they abhor the cross. Go and talk to them about the necessity of believing in the Son of God to save them from perishing; go and talk to them about joy and peace in believing, and about the good hope through grace, and you will soon lose caste, and be sent adrift amongst the wild fanatics of the age. They will bow down and do homage to the Divine origin of Christianity—that ideal Christianity, which takes its nature, shape, and hue from the creations of their fancy; but let the Christianity of the New Testament come before them in her simple form—pure and spiritual, breathing her own spirit, speaking her own language, delivering her own precepts and her own promises, advancing her own claims, and offering her own celestial gifts, on her own humiliating and changeless conditions, and they will treat her, as the Jews did her illustrious Author, with contemptuous scorn; and would rather have her driven from the face of the earth, than be enrolled as her devotees, or retained as her advocates. Be it so. But this you regret, on *their account*, as you know that they who believe not, will die in their sins and perish for ever, even though superior intelligence be blended with the fascination of the most distinguished accomplishments. And you also regret this terrible calamity on your *own account*, as the pardoned criminal necessarily feels an abatement of his joy when set free, by knowing that others are left for execution. But you, Christian brethren, believe on Him, and have the witness within. You believe on Him, and love Him; and to you he is precious. You believe on Him, and know that all is safe for time, safe in death, and safe for eternity."

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"Really," said Mr. Gordon, as we were walking away, "I am almost tempted to believe in the truth of the Christian theory, on two accounts—it brings us into such close contact with beings of a superior order, so that in passing into the invisible world, we shall find that we are known there; and then it gives such security to the mind against the horrors of death." A sudden storm of heavy rain prevented any reply to these half-serious, half-ironical remarks; but on taking leave, as we were getting into our separate hackney coaches, he added, "I will call to-morrow evening, after business hours, and chat over those grave questions; and perhaps I can prevail on Newton to accompany me. Have patience; I may become a believer in the course of time."

## THE SCEPTIC'S VISIT.



Just after Mr. Lewellin had left home, to meet a friend on a matter of business, Mr. Gordon called, agreeably to his promise on the previous day, and we spent the evening together.

"I had a lucky escape yesterday," said Mr. Gordon, "but I did not know of it till I took up the *Times* this morning."

"From what did you escape, Sir?"

"I had an engagement, for yesterday morning, to go with a pleasure party on an excursion up the river, but I over-slept myself; and it was well for me that I did so, for the boat upset, and I regret to say that a very excellent and accomplished lady, whom I much admired, was drowned." [77]

"As I was passing Blackfriars' Bridge, in going to Surrey Chapel, I witnessed an accident such as that to which you refer."

"Indeed! It no doubt was the same, for it was just as they were setting out from Blackfriars' stairs that the disaster happened; it must have been an appalling sight!"

"It was, indeed, a harrowing sight; and I trust I shall never witness the like again. I heard that the lady who was drowned was a very interesting creature, and the only daughter of a pious father. The tidings of her loss must have been a sad blow to him."

"Yes, Sir, her father is one of your way of thinking, and I believe him to be a very worthy man."

"Have you seen him since the fatal accident?"

"No, no! I have no heart to visit such a house of mourning. The fact is, I shall never be able to see him again, for I planned the excursion, and induced his son and daughter to join it. This I now regret; but regrets are useless things."

"Regrets do sometimes produce happy results, and I should think that yours, just now, must be very keen."

"Indeed, they are intensely keen. It will be a long time before I get over the impression this fatal accident has made on me."

"You should take it as a warning."

"Well, I don't know how it is, but I never feel quite myself when taking a Sunday excursion; I feel a little qualm of conscience, even though I do not hold the Sunday in such reverence as you do. I thought some time<sup>[12]</sup> ago that I had got over these qualms, but they will come back at times in spite of me."

"I am glad to hear you say that your conscience does reprove you when you profane the Sabbath, and I hope its reproofs will be more severe than they ever have been. They may be your protection against some fatal danger."

"Then, Sir, if I do not mistake your meaning, you wish me to be frightened into the adoption of religious habits. Is this a fair specimen of your Christian charity?" [78]

"The storm sometimes saves the vessel which might become a wreck in the calm, as we heard in the sermon last evening; and I assure you I should be highly gratified to see you agitated by a salutary feeling of dread and perplexity regarding the state of your soul, as I then should indulge a hope that you would 'flee from the wrath to come,' and take refuge in the promises of the gospel."

"Well, I must confess that Mr. Guion is one of the most eloquent preachers I ever heard. The conclusion of his sermon was truly sublime; the congregation appeared to quail under its terror—a feeling which by no means surprised me. There is, indeed, a fearful terror in the words the *wrath to come*; and there was almost an irresistible impressiveness in the look and tones of the preacher when urging his audience to flee from it. I felt, just before he finished, that I must take refuge in the promises of the gospel; but the internal commotion soon subsided when I found myself beyond the reach of his voice, though still I cannot forget it."

"Now, Sir, to be candid; is not the terror you felt, when listening to the sermon we heard, and the abiding recollection of it, something like an unconscious homage instinctively paid to the positive reality of the Christian faith? for we can hardly suppose that you would invest a mere fiction with such power of impression."

"Why, no; I can scarcely admit that. My idea is, that my present feelings are merely the lingering influences of early religious training, with its accompanying associations; and we all know that such influences may subsist long after we have been led to form different opinions in our maturer years."

"They live to admonish and to warn, as well as to chastise. There *may* be a *wrath to come*. This you must admit, simply because you do not know there is not; nor can you know, unless God is pleased to tell you so. *Hence your scepticism needs a Divine revelation to sustain it*—mere disbelief goes for nothing in settling such a question."

"Well, I know there is great difficulty, and sometimes an impossibility, in proving a negative; but one thing is absolutely certain—I cannot compel myself to believe what you believe, any more than you can compel yourself to disbelieve what I disbelieve." [79]

"My belief has evidence to sustain it; but your disbelief has none. And while your disbelief is

accompanied by a feeling of uneasiness and perplexity, my faith exerts a soothing influence, which keeps my mind in perfect peace."

"Well, I admit that your faith does more for you than my disbelief does for me; but I cannot believe what you do without impeaching both the wisdom and the beneficence of the Deity. In other words, the Deity must sink in my admiration before I can admit the Divine origin of Christianity."

"But how so?"

"The eloquent preacher whom we heard last evening, when discoursing on the expression in his text, *he was believed on in the world*, advanced two distinct propositions, which he endeavoured to sustain by arguments taken from your Scriptures. The first was, that *there is salvation for the chief of sinners if they believe in Christ and trust in him*. You believe and are safe, and are happy because you expect to be saved. Now, I have no objection to advance against this; because I know that faith, or trust in Him, does produce these moral effects on true believers. But my nature revolts against his second proposition, which was, *that none can be saved who do not believe in Christ, and trust in him for salvation*."

"In sustaining those propositions the preacher said—and there is great force in the remark—that we can have no assurance that any will be saved but by a Divine testimony in proof of it; and that if it please God to limit the exercise of his saving power to one prescribed method, our objections against it will be altogether unavailing."

"Yes, Sir, you quote correctly. Now, in my opinion, it would be a reflection on the wisdom and beneficence of the Deity to suppose that he has bound himself under such a forced law of restriction as compels him to exclude all from a state of future happiness but the few who do believe and do trust in Christ. Why, have we not amongst us many men of unsullied honour, of princely generosity, and of the most amiable dispositions—men who take the lead in benevolent enterprises and social improvements—poets, philosophers, historians, and statesmen, who are applauded in public, and admired and esteemed in private life, but who cannot bow down and do homage to Jesus Christ, by reposing an absolute dependence on him for a hope of future blessedness, even though they unwillingly pay an external homage to the regulations and institutions of Christianity? Are men of such a high order of mind—of such brilliant virtues—men who are the very life and soul of society—to be cast off and left to perish along with the dissipated and the worthless? It cannot be."

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"Your objection, then, does not lie so much against the salvation of the great sinners, who repent and believe in Christ, as it does against the law of restriction, which excludes all who do not repent and believe from the hope of salvation."

"I can admit your first proposition, without much difficulty, even though I do not say that I actually believe it; but I cannot entertain a belief that the Deity has enacted a law which restricts the exercise of his beneficence to a select few, some of whom, on your own admission, are more distinguished for their vices than for their virtues."

"But is not the law of restriction, even now, a fundamental law of God's administrative government? For example, are superior intelligence, genius, or wealth, made common property—to be possessed by men share and share alike? Do we not see that the few surpass the many—that some are brilliant stars while others are mere glowworms; and while some occupy stations of affluence and grandeur, others are left without a settled home, or any of the comforts of life?"

"Why, if we really do believe that we are living under the administrative government of the Deity, then there is no denying the existence of this restrictive law. Facts are stubborn things; those you mention are strongly corroborative of your views. But it does not necessarily follow that this law of restriction applies to our final destiny, even though it may be applicable to our present condition of existence."

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"But this admission deprives you of the basis on which you rest your argument, that a law of restriction would be a direct impeachment of the wisdom and the beneficence of the Deity."

"Well, perhaps it does."

"If, then, facts compel us to admit that this law of restriction is in full operation *now*, while we are on earth, surely we must admit the possibility of its continuance in a future state of existence, without impugning the wisdom or justice of the Deity?"

"I never enter on a discussion on the questions at issue between us, without feeling compelled to do one of two things; and yet I cannot bring my mind to do either. I must admit the truth of revelation and its explanations, and this I cannot do; or I must abandon myself to *universal* scepticism, and this I feel unwilling to do. But I do confess that I feel it more easy to disbelieve than to believe. However, waiving further reference to this difficulty, allow me to call your attention to another point, which, if not more difficult than the one we have just been discussing, assumes, at least in my estimation, an aspect of great perplexity. Assuming then, for the sake of the argument, that the Deity does restrict the bestowal of future happiness to those who do believe and trust in Christ, could he not have devised some other scheme for this purpose, and one equally perfect and effective—one, in fact, less open to objections?"

"I will reply to your question by asking another. Could not God have made a world different to the one in which we live—one more congenial to our taste, and less exposed to those privations and hardships to which we are often subjected, and which we sometimes so much dread?—A world, for example, in which every convenience and necessary should be placed within reach; the earth producing spontaneously the supplies of corn and fruits necessary for our subsistence—a

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sufficient supply of dew as a substitute for rain with its discomforts—the purification of the air effected by gentle breezes instead of by tempests and hurricanes—no diseases to rack the body nor cares to harass the mind; a world, in fine, in which universal happiness should prevail, and sorrow and toil be unknown?"

"Yes, there is no denying that the Deity could have done this."

"But God has not done it; and therefore to object to what he has done, because we can imagine he could have done something better, is as useless, as it would be childish. Now, suppose for a moment some other plan of salvation had been devised, it would have been to accomplish what is effected by the present scheme—namely, the final happiness of man. The present scheme, then, answers the beneficent purpose of its Author—another plan could do no more than this; but it would be romantic to suppose that it could be so arranged, in its various parts and modes of application, as to preclude the possibility of any objections to it, when we well know it is next to impossible to find any twenty men who all think alike even on the most obvious facts. Christianity places before us two great practical facts, in which our present safety and final happiness are involved: first, there is a way to heaven or to a state of future blessedness—this should excite our gratitude; there is only one way—this should make us cautious, lest, through ignorance, prejudice, or carelessness, we come short of so glorious a consummation."

"Your explanations, Sir, may be satisfactory to yourself, but they are not so to me. Indeed, the more I think of it, the more I feel disinclined to bow down and do homage to the Christian faith. Now, for example, it is an indisputable historic fact that many ages elapsed before Christianity was promulgated; and, during this long period, what countless millions of human beings must, on your hypothesis, have perished, without ever having had a chance of being saved! Would the Deity have remained silent so long if he had bound himself to your law of restriction—to save none but the few who believe and trust in Christ for salvation?"

"If Christianity, which is the completion of the original scheme of salvation, was not promulgated till a comparatively late period in the history of our world, yet the essential substance of it was known from the earliest period of time. The apostle says, that Abel, the first man who tasted the bitterness of death, offered his prefigurative sacrifice in faith, which is a proof that he knew the way of salvation, to be perfected by the death of the promised Saviour; and we may fairly presume that what he knew, would be made known to his descendants, from one generation to another. And the same apostle says, when speaking of his Jewish ancestors—'For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it' (Heb. iv. 2). And Jesus Christ himself says—'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad' (John viii. 56). From the time of Abraham to the actual coming of Christ, the clearest and fullest revelations of this scheme of salvation were limited to Abraham's descendants; but we can collect from the records of ancient history, scanty as its materials are, sufficient evidence to prove, that amongst the people of other nations it descended by traditional report and testimony, from one generation to another, so as to leave them without excuse, if they perished in their disbelief, or from their own neglect of giving it due attention. At length they became so corrupt and debased that they were left, as a judicial visitation from God, to suffer the consequences of their depravity and impenitence (Rom. i. 21-25)."

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"But what immense numbers of human beings must, on your hypothesis, have perished during this long reign of ignorance and moral corruption; and I do not see that the state of things is much improved at the present time. Now, let us look at the case just as it is. Christianity has been in existence and in active operation, so you say, for nearly two thousand years; and yet how small is the space on the surface of our globe which is illumined by what you call her celestial light, in comparison with the vast regions which are enveloped in moral darkness!"

"I admit it," I replied.

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"But how will you reconcile such a tremendous state of things, with the acknowledged wisdom and beneficence of the Deity?"

"You are aware, Sir, that we are often compelled to admit as indisputable facts, what we cannot reconcile with the wisdom and benevolence of God—as the slave-trade, for example, slavery as it now exists in America, and the perpetration of murders, and other social crimes."

"Very true, Sir; these are confounding facts. They often stagger me."

"Permit me to say, that the arguments you adduce to disprove, if possible, the truth of the Christian faith, and its practical utility, are precisely those I would employ in proof of its Divine origin and beneficial tendency. Going back to an early period of time, let us consider some of the indisputable facts of history. The tribes of Israel, we know, had been held for centuries as slaves in the land of Egypt; and after their emancipation they went to reside in Palestine. In most of those qualities which command the respect and admiration of mankind, the Jewish nation was remarkably deficient. With the exception of their sacred writings, their literature appears to have been meagre in the extreme; no eminent philosophers, historians, or orators adorn their annals, and the fine arts seem scarcely to have had any existence among them. Compared with the Greeks and Romans, and other nations of antiquity, they were barbarians; and were spoken of in the language of scorn and contempt by their more accomplished and renowned contemporaries. In ONE department of knowledge, however, the despised Jewish people far surpassed the haughty statesmen and polished sages of Greece and Rome. They knew the only true God, and spoke of him in a style corresponding with his greatness, his condescension, and his paternal love. While the inhabitants of all other countries were abandoned to the grossest and most abject



superstition and idolatry, the Hebrews alone adored one God, and alone appear to have possessed any suitable ideas of the dignity and holiness of the Supreme Being; and while the worship of the pagan divinities was licentious and cruel, that of the God of the Jews was distinguished by its mildness and purity. Here is a contrast which must be traced to some adequate cause."

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"The Jews most certainly, in this department of knowledge, claim a just superiority over other ancient nations; but this may have been owing to their isolation and their training."

"That I grant; but their isolation was a Divine arrangement, and their training a Divine dispensation. They were separated from all other people by the express command of the Lord their God; and their teachers who trained them in this department of knowledge—the knowledge of the only true God, and of the way of salvation, proclaimed that God had made himself known to them by special revelation."

"Yes, they said so, and I will admit that they believed it was so; but as they were not infallible, they may have been mistaken."

"Why, Sir, any person of common sense can easily distinguish between a discovery, and a communication as to matters of fact. However, to account for their superior knowledge on these sublime and recondite subjects, without admitting the correctness of their own testimony, 'that God spake to *their fathers*,' is absolutely impossible, unless we believe—what would be an outrage on common sense to imagine—that there is more acuteness in mental dulness than in superior intelligence; and that an untutored people, while devoting themselves chiefly to agriculture and the rearing of cattle, could eclipse, by the grandeur and sublimity of their discoveries, a people who has long enjoyed the highest degree of intellectual culture."

"But, Sir, your Scriptures prove that the Jews had amongst them men of genius and of great mental power. Isaiah, for example, in sublimity and lofty grandeur of conception and description, has no superior in any age or country; and the pastoral odes of David equal, if they do not surpass, anything we meet with in Pope or Addison. As a legislator, Moses stands at the head of his order, and, if my memory serves me, the great critic Longinus says he was no ordinary man; and, therefore, it is not a matter of such wonderment that they made discoveries of the Deity which no other philosophers ever made."

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"But you forget that what you call their discoveries were inspirations, which came upon them from the Source of all knowledge; and to these inspirations they uniformly attribute their knowledge of the only true God, and that scheme of salvation which he had devised on behalf of man. And this belief was entertained by all the tribes of Israel, not simply because their teachers said so, but because, they confirmed the truthfulness of their testimony by signs, and wonders, and divers miracles."

"And yet after all their novel and sublime discoveries in regard to these all-important subjects, and after all the miraculous attestations which you say were supplied in confirmation of their truthfulness, we find that they apostatized from the worship of their Deity, and relapsed again and again into idolatrous worship and practices, and became corrupt and debased like the people of other nations."

"That is very true, Sir; and the consequences resulting from their apostasy supplies a very cogent argument in favour of my hypothesis. While they adhered to the worship of the true God, and observed the statutes and ordinances which he gave them, they were a united, virtuous, and prosperous people; and, though few in number, they were great in power. No invading force could subdue them, nor could any adjoining country into which they carried their arms withstand the shock of their assaults. But when they renounced their allegiance to Him, and relapsed into idolatry, practising at the same time the cruel and obscene rites of heathenism, they became debased and corrupt like other pagan nations; and then, when the protecting arm of the Lord their God was withdrawn, they fell an easy prey to their enemies, who reduced them to a state of slavery more galling to their national pride than that of Egypt. And, in further confirmation of my argument, just let us look at the present moral state of those countries which have not yet received and submitted to the authority of Christianity. There we find most triumphant evidence in favour of the moral superiority of the Christian system over every other at present existing in the world, in regard to promoting the dignity and happiness of mankind. Without descending to the gross idolatries of Fetichism, and other abject forms of superstition, what is the social condition of nations where Mahometanism or Buddhism is professed? and what, on the other hand, is that of those countries, where Christianity has been established?"

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"To you, Sir, who believe that the Deity restricts the bestowal of a state of future blessedness to that comparatively small number who believe in Jesus Christ, the condition of those nations where Christianity is not established must appear truly appalling; but to myself it presents no such painful aspect, because, as the Deity has permitted this state of things to descend from one generation to another, for such a series of ages, I believe he looks with an *equal eye* of compassion and beneficence on all his offspring; and that, *if there be a future state of blessedness in reserve*, he will discard your law of restriction, and confer everlasting happiness on all, without respect to their faith, or their religious rites and customs. Hence I see no absolute necessity why you should embark in that crusade of missionary enterprise and labour, which we heard recommended and enforced with so much eloquence last evening; for we are not sure that if such a transfer of homage, and change in the mode of worship, could be effected, it would augment the happiness of the people who are the subjects of it, or improve their social habits and dispositions."

"I am rather surprised to hear you make these remarks; however, without noticing all of them, I think I can convince you that on some points you are labouring under a species of delusion, and that I shall endeavour to point out. I proceed, then, at once, to real or very probable matters of fact. A vessel, richly laden and scantily manned, may sail up the Thames or the Clyde in perfect safety, even if there are no weapons of defence on board; but if she were to venture near the coast of some parts of the Indian seas, her passengers and crew would run the risk of a contest for their lives and liberty with the savages on shore. If a vessel should be wrecked on the shores of the once savage, but now Christian islands of Tahiti or Raratonga, its crew and passengers would be sure of a kind reception from the natives; while, if a similar disaster should happen on the shores of the Feejees or of Sumatra, they would run the risk of being seized and devoured; or, if spared this fate, would be compelled to live in degradation and misery. Here are striking contrasts, amongst human beings who are endowed with the same powers of intelligence and sympathy as ourselves; but to what singular cause are these to be referred, unless it be to the influence of the Christian faith, which, you doubt, will work no beneficial change in the character and condition of man?"

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"You strike home now, and I feel I must surrender. But still, while the diffusion of Christianity may tend to tame the wild savage, and make him more like a human being, I do not see any necessity for your missionary labours amongst the Chinese or the Hindoos, who are highly civilized, and, upon the whole, intelligent. Why should any efforts be made to dispossess them of their religion, with its rites and ceremonies, which they inherit from their forefathers?"

"I think that no compulsory efforts should be made to achieve this end; but I presume you would not think it wrong that our government should introduce the humane laws of Britain into all her foreign dependencies?"

"Why, no; such a measure, I think, would be very advisable."

"I thank you for this admission in favour of the necessity of Christian missions, especially to India, where cruelties are still practised in broad day, such as we should be apt to regard as monstrous inventions, fitted only to gratify a morbid appetite for the horrible, were they not attested by faithful eye-witnesses. What think you of this specimen? At the annual festival in honour of Muha Div (the great god), many persons are suspended in the air by large hooks, thrust through the integuments of their backs,<sup>[13]</sup> and swung round for a quarter of an hour, in honour of this deity; and often over a slow fire. Others have their sides pierced, and cords are introduced between the skin and ribs, and drawn backwards and forwards, while these victims of superstition dance through the streets. Others cast themselves from a stage upon open knives, inserted in packs of cotton. Sometimes one of these knives enters the body, and the poor wretch is carried off to expire. If an infant refuses his mother's milk, it is often hung up in a basket on a tree, to be devoured by the vultures. This is no criminal offence, as it would be amongst us, but a ceremonial regulation of their faith. And in India, the mother often sacrifices her first-born, to conciliate her guardian deity in behalf of her unborn progeny. When the child is two or three years old, she takes it to the river, encourages it to enter, as though about to bathe it, but suffers it to pass into the current of water, when she abandons it, and stands an inactive spectator, beholding the struggles and listening to the screams of her perishing infant."

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"I would have all these cruel rites and ceremonies put down by the force of law; which, of course, would supersede the necessity of your missionary enterprise."

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"As experience is a safe guide in the settlement of doubtful questions, a reference to it, on the present occasion, will supply palpable evidence that the labours of our missionaries in India have been of great importance and value, both to the natives themselves, and also to the government, by facilitating the introduction and peaceable establishment of a humane policy. The history of their labours proves that they were not visionary speculatists, but sober-thinking men, who knew and realized the fact, that wherever Christianity prevails it uniformly conduces to the progress of mankind;—that it communicates that just manner of thinking upon the most important subjects, which, extending its influence thence to every department of speculative and moral truth, inspires a freedom of inquiry, and an elevation of sentiment, that raises its disciples immeasurably above the level of unassisted nature. This great historic truth gave them confidence in the prosecution of their herculean labours. Let me now notice what they have already accomplished, and that without creating any popular disturbances amongst the natives, thus falsifying the predictions of their opponents, who, from the press and in both houses of parliament, were accustomed to say, that the safety of our Indian possessions was endangered by the presence of our missionaries there; and that our Indian empire would be irrecoverably lost if any legislative measure were introduced to suppress or control the superstitious customs and rites of the natives. In the first place, the missionaries have given us correct information on all matters relating to the Hindoos—their worship, and its various ceremonies—their character, and social habits; and thus, by an accumulation of authentic facts, they have disproved the statements of our popular writers, that the Hindoos are not only an intelligent, but a very virtuous people; and that their religious rites and services, though novel and repulsive to Europeans, are both chaste and humane. Since the missionaries exposed this deception, which had been so long practised upon us, no one has ventured to eulogize the virtues, or defend the religious practices of the Hindoos. In the second place, they established schools for the education of the youth of India, both male and female; and thus they have succeeded, to a very considerable extent, in diffusing both scientific and biblical knowledge, which is noiselessly but effectively rescuing them from the dominion of the debasing ignorance and superstition under which their forefathers had been living from time immemorial. And no one doubts, who is at all conversant with the present state of things in India, but the rising generation will far surpass any preceding one, in mental

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acuteness, in knowledge, and in moral character. In the third place, by their writings, their preaching, and their intercourse with the natives, they have proved useful pioneers in clearing the way for the peaceable introduction of the laws promulgated by the British government for the suppression of many of those cruel practices to which I have already alluded. In the fourth place, without employing any undue modes of attack and exposure, they have succeeded, to a very considerable extent, in shaking the confidence of the Hindoos in the truth of their national faith; and a powerful conviction is impressed on the Indian mind—an impression which is becoming deeper and deeper every day—that the days of their mythology are numbered, and that ere long its humiliation and subversion will be achieved. And, in addition to these proofs and indications of their success, I have to report another of their triumphs, and that refers *to your own fraternity*—the conversion of many of our own countrymen, who, on their settlement in India, became first speculative, and then practical unbelievers—rejecting, as visionary or fabulous, the faith of their early training, and often distinguishing themselves by their virulent hostility to the Christian missionary and his labours; but who now zealously co-operate with him in his exertions to spread the knowledge of the way of salvation."

"To you, these doings of your missionaries are splendid triumphs in confirmation of the Divine origin of that faith, which restricts the bestowal of a state of future blessedness to the comparatively few who believe in Jesus Christ; but to me they appear nothing more than the natural consequences of a well-concerted attack on a long-established and nearly worn-out order of things, which we know invariably results in dividing popular opinion. On all such occasions *Divide and conquer* is the motto, and when this is done, then the pruning off from the old stock of belief and opinion, and the engrafting on the new one, is an operation as natural as it is easy. Human nature is given to change; the love of it is an essential element in our mental constitution, and nothing is more common than going from one extreme to another, or more likely than the change from Brahminism or Buddhism to the faith of Christianity."

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"And from Deism to Christianity also, as I have shown you. Hence, to quote your own words, I indulge the hope that you will become a believer, if we have patience."

"A possible event, on the assumed correctness of your hypothesis, as then I may be operated on by some Divine influence, which I shall have no power to withstand; but on my own supposition, as remote from possibility as the junction of the antipodes."

"We shall see. You have already advanced some way in the right direction. But to return to India. Here is a fact, which was not publicly known amongst us, till it was reported by our missionaries—that one whole tribe in India has uniformly destroyed every female child born amongst them, so that they have been obliged to take their wives from the tribe next in rank to them. On one occasion a father's heart recoiled when the emissaries of murder demanded his daughter; and he repelled them from his presence. Her life was spared, and she grew up tenderly beloved by her parents; but the sight of a girl rising to maturity in the house of a Rajpoot, was so novel, and so contrary to the customs of the tribe, that no parent sought her in marriage for his son. The grief-worn father, suffering under the frowns of his own tribe, and trembling for the chastity of his daughter, and the honour of his family, bore her off to a pathless desert, where, with his own hand, he slew her, leaving her body to be devoured by wild beasts."

"Horrid! horrid! Such transactions as these, if true and believed, are enough to rouse popular indignation against our government for not adopting some prompt and severe measures to prevent their repetition. I would annihilate the whole tribe, rather than suffer such inhuman monsters to live on earth."

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"You then would recommend a wholesale massacre to save a few lives; while I would advocate the introduction amongst them of a pure and humane faith, which teaches and enforces the relative obligations of parents and children as they prevail amongst ourselves. This sense of relative obligation, and the social improvement which necessarily follows it, Christianity, by its mild and persuasive influence, has already succeeded in establishing in the cannibal islands of the South Sea, and also, to some extent, amongst the natives of civilized India. Christianity can do, and I have no doubt will do, for India what she has done for Britain—subvert her idolatry, with its cruel and obscene rites, and raise up an enlightened and renovated native population, who, with gladsome voices, will sing the song of Bethlehem, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men' (Luke ii. 14)."

Mr. Gordon, on rising to take his leave, said, "Well, there is no denying the fact, that the world is in a sad disordered state; and if you think you can improve it by your missionary labours, I will not impeach the benevolence of your motives, though, without hesitation, I may predict the failure of your sacrifices and exertions."

"But, Sir, you must acknowledge that it is more honourable to fail in the cause of philanthropy than to make no effort."

"This honour, I believe, is in reserve for you, though I must say you merit one more brilliant. Go on, my dear Sir; but don't be too sanguine. Utopia I know is very rich in splendid scenery, but unfortunately it partakes much of the nature of the mirage. Good night; with many thanks for all your good wishes."



he night before I left London, Mr. Gordon again called, and, after some desultory conversation, our attention happened to be directed to the book entitled *No Fiction*, which was lying on the table. This led to a somewhat sharp and lengthened encounter.

"I dipped into that book," said Mr. Gordon, "the other day, and it gave me some amusement, as the tale is made to appear a very natural one. Its author narrates and sketches extremely well, for a divine, and it is highly creditable to his talents, which must certainly be of a superior order."

"Yes, Sir, he is quite a superior man. There is one paragraph of his tale to which I should like to direct your attention, and which, by your permission, I will read to you."

"Read on, Sir, and I'll give all due attention."

I then read as follows:—

"I have often been delighted," said Douglas, "in reading the accounts of the power of religion on the minds of children; but this is the *first* instance which has fallen beneath my own eye. What a religion is ours! How great—and yet how plain! It is so sublime, that it rises beyond the conception of the most enlarged mind! and so simple, that it brings home its lessons to the bosom of a little child! The elements of the gospel, like the elements of our nourishment, are adapted to the endless varieties of age, and character, and circumstance, throughout all the human race."

"And this appears," said Lefevre, "to be a feature in our religion which distinguishes it from all false religions. As far as I am acquainted with the subject, no one of the pagan systems *could* have been rendered universal. They all received their character from national prejudice, national policy, and predominant national vices."

"Yes," rejoined Douglas, "and as, in their own nature, they were not adapted for the benefit of mankind as such, so their great teachers discovered an indifference to the bulk of the human race, incompatible with everything which deserves the name either of religion or morality. With haughty pride they exulted in their own wisdom, and looked down with scorn or ridicule on the folly of those who were not initiated into their false philosophy. Man scarcely deserved their notice, but as he claimed the proud titles of rich, or wise, or noble; and women and children were utterly abandoned to ignorance and wretchedness. Jesus, our blessed Saviour, was the first Master in religion who opened the door of knowledge *to all*—who carried his instructions and his tears to the cottage of *the poor*! This appears to me to involve a powerful evidence of the truth of Christianity, that may well perplex and confound the hosts of infidelity. I have more than once thought that the psalmist must have referred to this use of the subject, when he said, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength, because of thine enemies: that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.'"

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"This passage, if I remember rightly," Mr. Gordon remarked, "refers to a tale very similar to your story of *The Woodman's Daughter*; but I must confess, with all due deference, that I see nothing very remarkable in it; and how you can think of adducing it as an argument in favour of the Divine origin of Christianity, rather surprises me. Children, we know, are imitative. They take the manners, the habits, and the tones of their parents and teachers; and if they should adopt their sentiments, feelings, and expressions, it certainly ought not to be considered remarkable. But yet I should like to hear how you contrive to connect such a fact and the divinity of the gospel together."

"Such a fact, Sir, proves that the Christian religion is adapted (as we may fairly presume it would be, if of Divine origin), to the moral condition of man, irrespective of his age—of the strength or weakness of his intellect—or the peculiar shades of his moral character. To suppose that this adaptation is by accident, would be no less objectionable than to conclude, with the sceptics of the French school, that it is by chance we see, hear, and speak. If you are prepared to admit that the marks of contrivance, which we can easily discover in the construction and organization of our senses, supply us with a legitimate argument in favour of the existence of a God, by whose power and wisdom this organization has been arranged, I cannot conceive how you can avoid admitting the marks of contrivance which we can as easily trace in the Christian scheme of salvation, as conclusive evidence in favour of its Divine origin."

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"O Sir! it has been invented by a few crafty men, who wished to display their skill at the expense of our credulity, and they have done it most dexterously. They were certainly adepts in invention."

"I know that this is a favourite opinion with you Deists; but I do not think that you can support it. How came these men to devise a scheme of religion which is so admirably adapted to the moral state of man? From whence did they gain their information? They tell us that they wrote under the dictation of an infinitely wise Spirit, and, in common fairness, their testimony ought to be admitted; and, I think, a candid examination of what they have done, and the style in which they have done it, will satisfy us that they are truth-speaking men. I form my judgment on this point as I should on another somewhat analogous to it. If, for example, I saw an epic poem equal to that of Virgil or Milton, or a treatise on logic superior to that of Dr. Watt's, written by a boy of ten years of age; and, if on expressing my astonishment and admiration, he should say—'The writing, Sir, is mine, but nothing more—I wrote from the dictation of Wordsworth and Whately,' I should at once believe him, from a consciousness of his incompetency to produce such

compositions by his own unaided powers. So with the sacred writers. We know that, with very few exceptions, they were unlearned and ignorant men, and their contemporaries who knew them spoke of them as such; and yet they have surpassed all other men in the science of moral and spiritual truth. In confirmation, too, of this internal evidence of the truthfulness of their testimony, that they wrote under the dictation of an infallible Spirit, we find, on examination, that the various parts of their comprehensive, yet minute theory, are in perfect harmony with each other, while, at the same time, the theory itself is admirably adapted to the moral condition of humanity. The marks of contrivance are too obvious to allow us to refer the arrangements to chance, or the mere skill of man. For our guilt, it provides a propitiatory sacrifice, whose blood cleanses from all sin—for our depravity, it provides a renovating influence, by which, we are made partakers of the purity of the Divine nature; regarding us as oppressed with cares and sorrows, it animates us with exceeding great and precious promises, by which we are enabled to put our trust in God, and thus rise above the trials of this life; and, viewing us as panting for immortality, it unveils futurity, and delights us with the sublime vision of endless happiness."

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"To you, who are initiated into a firm belief of the Divine origin of Christianity, this apparent adaptation of it to our moral condition and necessities, and its revelations of a future state of happiness, must appear as the consummation of wisdom and benevolence. But I cannot resist the impression, that it is to the activity of your imagination you ought to attribute this correspondence, rather than to any actual fact; and that you are, at least so I think, unconsciously beguiling yourself with pleasing anticipations which will all prove visionary."

"The gospel, Sir, is a living reality, and it works moral wonders."

"I don't quite comprehend your meaning."

"I mean, that it answers the purpose for which it was intended, or, in other words, it does the moral work which is ascribed to it, and does it effectually; this I can prove by an appeal to living testimony. Hence, when it is received by faith, it *does* give peace to a wounded conscience; it *does* infuse a renovating power, by which man becomes a new creature, in his moral principles and social habits; it does administer the most soothing and strengthening consolation to the child of sorrow, and it animates the dying believer with the hopes of a blissful immortality. These are moral facts which the experience of myriads can attest."

"Yes, I see how it is; the imagination traces a correspondence between its own impulses, and aerial flights, and the component parts of your scriptural theory; and you very naturally think that you would be robbed of an inestimable treasure, and the world at large sustain an irreparable loss, if your theory of faith should be exploded as a worn-out relic of an antiquated superstition."

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"But, after all you say against the Christian faith, I do not think you would vote for its expulsion from the earth, even if you thought you could succeed in effecting it; and I will tell you why. Its expulsion would be as great a calamity to the moral world, as the total disappearance of the solar light would be to the physical—we should at once relapse into a state of profound ignorance on all the important questions which relate to God, to our origin, our immortality, and our destiny. We should then find ourselves groping about, like the ancient heathen, amidst vain and foolish speculations, striving to unravel the mysteries of our nature, and finding no resting-place for our troubled spirits. I have often thought, when musing on such a fearful occurrence, what an awful gloom would spread over the world if we knew that the fatal hour was coming, when, by some supernatural process, all our knowledge of Jesus Christ, and the design of his mission and death, would suddenly pass away from human recollection; and when every leaf in our Bible, and of all other books referring to him, should become as blank as they were before they were printed—leaving us, like the doomed spirits of the infernal world, without a Saviour, or any promise of mercy."

"*You* would anticipate such a strange event with sad and awful forebodings. The disappearance of Jesus Christ from your theory of belief would be to you, and to all of your way of thinking, an irreparable calamity; though I must confess, that I cannot account for the hold he keeps on your imaginations. To me, this is a mystery which deepens in profundity the more I try to fathom it. His very name appears to be a charm, and of more than magic power."

"Yes, Mr. Gordon, there is a charm in the name of Jesus, which at all times, but more especially under circumstances of great privation and danger, both soothes and elevates his disciples. They fear not to die in the tranquillity of their own homes or the raging of the tempest, on the scaffold or the battle-field."

"I will not attempt to deny a fact which general testimony confirms; but permit me to ask, if you can assign any rational cause for what appears to me so mysterious?"

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"I can; the fact admits of a fair explanation. Those who have faith in Christ believe that, though invisible, He is ever near them to succour and to comfort them. Hence, the sailor, when pacing the deck during the dark and stormy night, prays to HIM, who, when sailing with his disciples, rebuked the winds and the waves; and he feels that he is addressing one who hears him, and can save him. Yes! and in the dreary cell of tyranny—at the stake of martyrdom—in penury, suffering, and in death—the name of Jesus is uttered with thrilling accents, and awakens associations which have tenfold greater power over the soul than the kindest expressions of human sympathy and love. I was an eye-witness, not long since, to a display of Christian heroism in death:—A young man, of superior intelligence and station in life, who had been rather sceptically inclined, was taken ill, and during his continued illness his sceptical notions vanished, and he became a simple believer in Christ Jesus. After the lapse of some months, his physician told him he must die, as his

disease was beyond the reach of human skill. I was present when this announcement was made, and he received it without expressing either surprise or regret. When his medical attendant withdrew, he said to his mother and his sisters, who stood weeping by his bedside—"I am not surprised by your tears, for I know you love me; but weep not for me, for I am nearing the end of my course. My confidence of a glorious issue is placed on HIM, who is mighty to save; he is with me, though I see him not. Death's dark vale is illumined with the light of life, and I shall soon pass through it, and then I shall be safe and happy for ever."

"Most marvellous! and yet I believe it. Such incidents as these are most impressive. We are mysterious beings, alternately terrified by our own imaginary fears, and excited to ecstasy by the illusions of our own fancy."

"But the extinction of Christianity and its sacred records might prove a great disaster to you sceptics; especially at some of the turning points of your history."

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"To us! you now really take me by surprise; but, to be serious, how do you make this out?"

"Why, it is well known that sceptics, when in expectation of death, often call on Jesus Christ to save them."

"A drowning man will catch at a straw."

"He would prefer a life-boat."

"True."

"I ask you one plain question—If you lived on a dangerous coast, would you ever scuttle a life-boat which has rescued many from destruction, and which possibly you may live to need?"

"I see your drift, and admire your ingenuity. Of course, I would not."

"Well, I will venture on another supposition, and leave you to decide whether I am not right in my conjectures, that even you, with all your antipathies to Jesus Christ, may be surprised in circumstances which would render the sound of his name the most effectual solace that could be given. Suppose, for instance, we were walking together in some vast forest in the far northern part of America, and saw advancing toward us a band of apparently ferocious savages, should we not tremble with fear and apprehension? But suppose, while in this state of terror, we should hear them singing in chorus a verse of some familiar hymn, would you then recoil in terror? Would you experience additional consternation on perceiving that these barbarians had been instructed in the Christian faith?"

"I like your illustrations—they amuse me. Can't you favour me with another?"

"I will try. Suppose you were sailing among the islands of the South Seas, and, when nearing one of them, would you not rather see the natives on the beach clothed in European dresses, as at Tahiti and Raratonga, than in a state of savage nudity? and would you hesitate to drop anchor if you heard them singing in harmony—

'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does his successive journeys run:  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.'

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"In arguing," said Mr. Gordon, "there is nothing more desirable than a good illustration, which gives pleasure, even when it does not produce conviction. Well, then, I will admit that there is a strange fascinating power in a name, and in mental associations, for which our most sagacious philosophers are unable to account; but that's no reason why I should give it my sanction, if I believe, as I do in these cases, that it springs out of a superstitious belief; and, therefore, leaving the sailor in the storm, and the prisoner in the cell, with the rest of your illustrative examples, and not caring to conjecture how I should act or feel if I were placed in such circumstances as you describe, I certainly, according to my present views and impressions, would vote for the expulsion of Christianity, if my suffrage could bring about such an event; but I fear that it is too deeply fixed in the prejudices of the public mind ever to be rooted up—at least in our time."

"But would you not tremble in anticipation of the success of such an effort? Expel Christianity from the earth! Why, what evil has she done? You may trace her progress by the improved condition of the people whom she has visited and blessed. Where she finds a wilderness, she leaves a fruitful field for the sickle of the husbandman; she meets with briars and thorns, and converts them into the myrtle tree and the rose; she encounters all the base lusts and ferocious dispositions of our nature, and supplants them with the tranquillizing affections of purity and peace. She improves the intellect, refines the taste, and humanizes the character; and, by raising men to a state of spiritual communion with the Supreme Being, imprints on them the image of his benevolence, and animates them with his love of righteousness. She mitigates the violence of sorrow—binds up the wounds which adversity inflicts in the heart of man—reconciles the mourner to his bitter loss—disarms death of his terrors—and exhibits beyond the grave a scene of tranquillity and of joy which no hand can portray or tongue describe. Expel Christianity from the earth! Then, Sir, you would give perpetuity to those horrid systems of idolatry which maintain their dominion over the great majority of the human race, as no power will ever destroy them but that which the gospel of Christ displays. Nay, Sir; if you were to succeed, you would prove the greatest enemy to man that ever visited the earth since the author of all evil triumphed over our first parents: for how many thousands would you, by such a wanton act of cruelty, deprive of their sweetest sources of consolation, and their brightest prospects of happiness!"

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"You are eloquently severe; but, my dear Sir, you may spare your severity, as it is not likely that I shall ever make the attempt, and less likely that I should succeed, were I vain, or, to quote your own language, wanton and cruel enough to do it. I willingly admit that Christianity has done some good, but you must allow that she has done some evil; and it is but fair to balance the one against the other, to see which preponderates. If she has promoted peace in one country, she has planned massacres in others; if she has blessed one family, she has introduced discord and division into others; and if there are a few solitary individuals animated by her promises of mercy, there is a larger number who tremble under the awful denunciations of her vengeance."

"Her promises of mercy are addressed to all, and all are invited to receive the blessings which she is willing to bestow; but if they disdainfully reject them, and treat her message of grace with contempt, she turns away, and announces their approaching doom; and she does this in a tone, and with a lofty majesty of speech, which often makes the most daring quail before her. But why do they tremble, if they believe she has no power to punish? Your other charges against her I will meet by a quotation from a book<sup>[14]</sup> which I wish you would peruse, and which I shall be happy to present to you:—

"That men calling themselves Christians have persecuted others with unrelenting cruelty, and have shed rivers of innocent blood, is but too true. Did Christianity countenance this conduct, it would merit unqualified reprobation. But far from such a disposition, it forbids all violence and injury to be employed in its defence. Christianity never shed a drop of its enemies' blood since the day that Christ died on the cross; but it has been lavish of its own. It never forged a chain to bind a heretic or an adversary, nor erected a prison to immure him. Christianity never dipped her pen in tears of blood, to write a penal law denouncing vengeance on infidels. She never made her bitterest foe heave a groan, from any bodily suffering inflicted by her hands. Her only weapons of offence and defence are truth and prayer. She returns good for evil, and blessing for cursing.

"If men, wearing the garb of the disciples of Jesus, instigated by pride, and the lust of dominion, and a desire to gratify the worst passions of the human heart, injure any of the human race under a pretence of zeal for religion, they act in direct opposition to the gospel, and you cannot condemn them with too much severity. But surely Christianity should not be condemned for what it forbids men to perpetrate under pain of the Divine displeasure. Or if such as were truly Christians ever sought to put a stop to infidelity or error, and to propagate the gospel in the world by force (and it is to be deplored with tears of blood that such there have unhappily been), they will receive no more thanks from Christ than the three disciples when they wished him to bring down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans:—'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' Nor would he account the words, which he directed to Peter on a different occasion, too severe to be used to them here:—'Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things which be of God, but the things which be of men.' Both the principles and precepts of the gospel, and the conduct of Christ and his apostles, are as remote from persecution as the east is from the west."

"I admire the candid and amiable spirit of the writer, and will certainly read his book, if only from respect to the friendship which dictates the present; but I will not flatter you with any hope of bringing me over to your belief. However, waiving all personal remarks, allow me to ask you if you really believe that Christianity will ever become a universal religion? and, if so, how do you think it will be propagated through the earth?"

"That it is *adapted* to become a universal religion, no one can doubt who has ever inquired into its nature and design, or who has ever read the history of its progress. It is suited to man as a rebellious subject of the Divine government; and it has been embraced by men of every rank, of every clime, and of every description of character. Hence, if you could bring together, in one place, some natives of Europe, Africa, Asia, and America, or from any of the islands or cities which belong to either of these great divisions of the earth; and could, by some miraculous influence, impart to them the power of speaking the same language, you would find them all, if they had embraced the pure faith of Christ, giving utterance to the same sentiments—expressing the same feelings—exulting in the same prospects—and disclosing all the peculiarities of the same singular and extraordinary spiritual character."

"But, Sir, if this hypothetical statement be correct, how will you account for the endless divisions which prevail amongst those who are known to embrace the same Christian faith?"

"You ought, Sir, to distinguish between a real and a nominal Christian; and though I will not deny but there are diversities of opinion even amongst real Christians, yet they relate to minor and subordinate questions. Consider Christianity as coming from God—it is pure and unspeakably good; view it as received by men—it will be, as the schoolmen say, *secundum modum recipientis*. If the difference of capacity, and the prejudices and passions of mankind be duly weighed, we shall not account it strange if they do not all think alike, nor receive the truth in all its purity. But this is not peculiar to the Christian religion. There are divisions and dissensions in matters of religion among pagan idolaters, among Mahometans, and among Deists. You cannot deny it. But the Deist does not consider this as a reason for rejecting Deism. If so, neither is it a reason for rejecting Christianity. More particularly, some men are destitute of every noble principle—they are full of deceit, avarice, pride, and sensuality. We see them abuse the gifts of nature, and of Providence; is it wonderful, then, if they pervert Christianity too, and entertain different ideas of

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many of its doctrines from wise and godly men? It is no more an objection against Christianity being from God, because such persons come short of its purity, than against the gifts of nature and other temporal blessings being from God, because they are often abused. Weakness of intellect will produce peculiarities of sentiment on every subject, and, consequently, on religion. The prejudices of education and early habits will generate attachments to certain opinions and rites; hence, also, differences in religion will arise; but the fault is not in Christianity, it is in man. From similar causes we see a diversity of opinion among the learned regarding sciences of great utility—medicine, law, politics, philosophy; but, notwithstanding this, all allow them to be highly beneficial to mankind—none deny their usefulness, although people differ about some particular points. To reject the gospel, because bad men pervert it, and weak men deform it, and angry men quarrel about it, displays the same folly as if a person should cut down a useful tree because caterpillars disfigured its leaves, and spiders made their webs among its branches."

"I have no objection at present to offer to this fair explanation of the difficulty which has often perplexed me; but you will permit me to refer you to my former question—Do you think that Christianity will ever be universally established?"

"I do, Sir; and my belief is founded on the following basis. Christianity is adapted for a universal religion; it foretells the fact of its universal establishment; its disciples are commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ to seek its universal propagation; and it is now spreading itself with unexampled rapidity through the nations of the earth. You cannot, Sir, but be conscious that the aspect of the times indicates some approaching change in the destinies of man; and though you, on your principles, cannot hail any redeeming power by which the curse that inflicts such mighty evils on suffering humanity can be rolled away, yet we can on ours; and hence, while you are left to speculate on the charms of a philosophy which has never ameliorated the moral condition of man, we can speak with confidence of the intervention of *Him*, who will turn the curse into a blessing, and make this earth the abode of purity, of harmony, and of bliss."

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"But how do you expect this great and mysterious change to be brought about?"

"Not by force. That has been tried by short-sighted rulers in former times, and has utterly failed. Conversion to Christianity which is effected by such means produces no change in the human heart. The *man* remains the same, though his professed belief may vary. The circulation of the Scriptures, the distribution of religious treatises, and the preaching of the gospel, are the only means which we employ to accomplish this great design. But, even when these means are used in the most judicious manner, we do not calculate on accomplishing the purpose which we have in view without the influence of a supernatural co-operation; for it is not by the power of man that the demon of superstition, or the Moloch of idolatry is to be dethroned, and Christianity established, but by the Spirit of the Lord."

"I rather admire your dexterity in avoiding, *on principle*, the mortification attendant on any failure in your pious efforts in behalf of the perishing heathen."

"I don't quite understand you."

"Why, you say, your success is dependent on the concurrence of a supernatural power; and, consequently, if you fail in your pious undertaking, you lay the blame on the inactivity of this supposed preternatural influence, never for a moment doubting your own sagacity, or questioning the efficacy of the means which you employ."

"If you examine the theory of the Christian faith, you will find that, in every moral operation, this concurrence of supernatural power with human agency forms an essential part of it. 'Man sows the seed of truth, it is God who gives the increase.'"

"As such a theory must tend to limit exertion, and depress an ardent mind, it strikes me that it is an ingenious invention to provide a pleasant solace in the season of disappointment, which, I believe, has its periodical visitations in your ecclesiastic annals."

"It has analogy in its favour. We eat and drink to sustain life, but the efficacy of the nourishment to sustain life depends on God. The farmer casts the seed into the soil, but it is God who causes it to grow and yield its increase. His confidence in God gives a stimulus to his own exertions."

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"Well, I won't dispute this point with you; but, after all, does it not tend to discourage your pious exertions, when you believe that a successful issue is dependent on an influence which you cannot control, and over which you have no power?"

"No. It has a contrary effect, as in the case of the husbandman. We look upon ourselves as mere active instruments employed in accomplishing the Divine purpose of grace and mercy in behalf of the perishing heathen; and the established law of the economy of our faith and practice is embodied in the following record of inspiration:—'For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands' (Isa. lv. 10-12)."

"I bow before such an ingenious theory of faith; but still entertain my doubts. Patience must still hold on, or you will abandon me in despair."

"I will continue to hope, even against hope; because I know there is an unseen power which is capable of effecting such a transformation, as I devoutly trust may yet be accomplished in you."





ot long after I had returned home, and was again busily engaged in my pastoral duties, I received a letter, informing me of the last illness and death of an esteemed friend and occasional correspondent, Mrs. Hastings. Her history is an interesting one, and aptly illustrates the effect of a word spoken in season.

"You must often," says Dr. Chalmers, "have been sensible, in the course of your history, how big, and how important the consequences were, that emanated from one event, which in itself was insignificant—how on the slightest accidents the greatest interests were suspended—how, moving apparently at random, you met with people, or with occasions, that gave rise, perhaps, to far the most memorable passages in your life—how the very street in which you chanced to move, brought you into contact with invitations and appointments, or proposals of some sort, which brought results of magnitude along with them; insomuch that the colour and direction of your whole futurity have turned on what, apart from this mighty bearing, would have been the veriest trifle in the world. A word—a thought—an unforeseen emotion—an event of paltriest dimensions in itself—may be the germ of an influence wide as a continent, and lasting as a thousand years—may, in fact, change the current and complexion of a person's social history and character, and lead to consequences which shall be durable as eternity."

Many years ago, I was unexpectedly called to London, on a matter of great emergency. My travelling companion, for part of the way, was a lady, attired in deep mourning. I endeavoured to draw her into conversation, by referring to the beautiful scenery, and other common-place topics, but I could not succeed. At length, on seeing her drop a tear, which she endeavoured to conceal, I said, "This world is rightly denominated a valley of weeping."

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"Yes, Sir, it is," replied the stranger. "I hope you will excuse my weakness. I have sustained the greatest loss that can ever befall a woman. I am a widow. I had one of the best of husbands; but cruel fate tore him from me, even without permitting me to see him, till his corpse was rudely exposed before me."

She then told me that her husband left her early one morning to go out shooting, but, on passing through a hedge, it is supposed, the trigger of his gun got entangled in the briars, as he was found, an hour after the report had been heard, lying on his face, with his gun by his side, and his dogs crouching before and behind him, as though their master was asleep.

"Since that fatal hour, Sir, I have not had one pleasant feeling in my desolate heart; and now I have left a spot on which nature has lavished her beauties, to seek a tranquil death in some distant shade."

"But, Madam, do you never expect to see another happy day?"

"No, Sir, never! No, never! I have tried every expedient in my power, but they have all failed. I have been to Bath, to Cheltenham, to Brighton, and have travelled on the Continent. I have read the most popular novels of the English and the French schools; but all is useless—mine is a hopeless case."

"No, Madam, it may not be hopeless. I can direct you to a source of consolation which you have not yet thought of."

"Indeed, Sir; then I'll try it. I would freely part with wealth for mental ease; for wealth, without happiness, is but an aggravation of misery."

"I would recommend you, Madam, to read the Bible. That book was composed for the express purpose of promoting our happiness; and if you read it with attention, and pray for wisdom to understand it, and for a disposition to receive the truths which it reveals, you will find that it will do you more essential good than all the expedients which you have been trying."

"If, Sir, I had not received a favourable impression of your benevolent disposition, I really should imagine that you were disposed to turn my intense grief into ridicule. Read the Bible! Why, Sir, what is there in that obsolete book to interest me?"

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"No, Madam; the book is not obsolete, and never will be, as long as human misery abounds in the world. That book has healed wounds as deep as yours, and mitigated sorrows no less poignant; and, if you examine it, you may find it as a well-spring of life to your withered happiness."

"Your advice, Sir, is prompted, I have no doubt, by the kindest sympathy; but my heart instinctively recoils from adopting it."

"Why, Madam?"

"Because I cannot conceive how the reading of a book, which I have always regarded as a collection of legendary tales, can remove or assuage such sorrows as wring my spirit. I have neither faith nor taste for such reading."

"Have you ever read the Bible, Madam?"

"O no, Sir, never! I may have read some passages as a school lesson, but I don't remember any. My mother died when I was but a little girl. From what I have heard an old servant say, I believe that she was fond of the Bible; but my father abhorred it, and he trained me to abhor it. He used to call it the Grand Mogul of superstition. Its style of composition, I have heard him say, is as

offensive to correct taste, as its sentiments are revolting to a cultivated mind."

"If you will permit me, Madam (taking out my little pocket Bible while speaking), I will read you a few passages, and then you can judge how far your belief is supported by evidence."

She bowed assent, and I then read the twenty-third psalm. I saw, by the expression of her countenance, that the chaste imagery of the psalmist pleased her; but before we could interchange any remarks the horn blew, and the mail suddenly stopped. However, when she alighted to step into the carriage which was in waiting to receive her, she said, in a tone of subdued seriousness, "I will follow your advice, Sir, and read the Bible to form my own judgment of its character and tendencies; and if you will favour me with your card (which I gave her) I may, possibly, some day let you know the result, especially if it should be what, I do not doubt, you wish it may be." [111]

A long period had elapsed after this occurrence took place, and it had nearly passed from my recollection, when it was very unexpectedly revived by a letter from the lady. The letter was subscribed Susannah Hastings, and, after calling to remembrance the circumstances in which we had met, she proceeded to give me a general outline of her subsequent history, accompanied by an interesting account of her severe mental conflicts in her spiritual inquiries, and a pressing invitation to call and see her, should I ever pay a visit to London, where she then resided. I acknowledged the receipt of the letter, congratulated her on the great moral and spiritual change through which she had passed, and stated that she might expect to see me very soon. Not long after that I had occasion to be in London. Within a few days after my arrival, I called on her, and had from her own lips a more detailed account of the process of her conversion from darkness to light, than she had given me in her letter. My visits were repeated during my sojourn there, and since then we kept up an occasional correspondence. From these two sources of information—her letters and her verbal communications—I am able to give a finished sketch of her somewhat marvellous, if not romantic history.

Having entertained, from early childhood, a belief that the Bible was a very objectionable book, both in point of sentiment and style of composition, she says, in her first letter, "I was not only surprised but delighted, by your reading the twenty-third psalm. I saw the rural scene vividly depicted; the sheep feeding in the green meadows, while the shepherd was reclining on the bank of the gently flowing stream, watching the glad movements of the sportive lambs, as the evening sun glided in noiseless splendour through the sky. I at once resolved to purchase a Bible, thinking, *then*, that it was merely a work of the imagination—an antique relic of some early poetic age." But on her arrival in London, she was prevented from doing this so soon as she intended, in consequence of the assiduous attentions of her friends, who were ceaseless in their efforts to raise her drooping spirits; naturally thinking that, if they could succeed in doing so, she would get reconciled to her fate, and again enjoy life. Hence she was lured from one gay scene to another still more exciting, and every expedient was adopted which ingenuity could devise, to amuse and gratify her. But she soon found, that neither the opera, nor the theatre, nor the fascinations of private parties, could assuage the tumultuous agitations of her heart. "I moved amongst them," she said, "more like an automaton than a living being who felt any pleasure in existence." [112]

An incident now occurred, that led her into a new train of thought, which proved the beginning of an eventful issue in the history of her life. On passing her bookseller's, she looked in, to inquire about a new novel, which she had seen announced as just issued from the press. There she saw on the counter a small Bible, which brought our conversation in the stage coach to her remembrance, and she purchased it. In her first letter, she says, "I soon found the twenty-third psalm, and as I re-perused it, its poetic imagery appeared to my mind more beautiful than ever. I then turned to Psalm ciii., which I read with more solemnity of feeling. It made me think of myself, and it brought me imperceptibly into contact with God. I was delighted by his assumption of the paternal character. This was the first time in my life I felt any force, or perceived any intelligible meaning, in the petition in the Lord's Prayer—*Our Father, who art in heaven*; but yet my perceptions of its meaning were very vague and indefinite. They did not excite any emotions of love, or of gratitude, or filial trust; but they left a strong impression on my mind. It was a strange and startling impression, that, though an inhabitant of earth, I was moving towards another world. I am sure I had not thought so much about God or another world all my life, as I thought that night, and particularly when my head was on my pillow. My day-thoughts came up in my dreams, and in a more lucid form, and produced a more powerful effect. When I awoke in the morning, I felt a strange sensation of mental ease, which greatly astonished me, as I knew not by what cause it had been produced. The agitating forces of bitter grief and sullen discontent were in a state of quietude; and though not really happy, yet my spirits were buoyant, rising at times to cheerfulness." [113]

At this juncture she had to fulfil a long-standing engagement—to accompany a party of friends on a tour to the north; and though she endeavoured to excuse herself, yet she felt compelled to yield, as the excursion had been planned principally on her account. When alluding to this excursion, at my first interview with her, she said:—"At an earlier period of my life, I should have been delighted, when wandering through the Trosachs or sailing on Lochlomond, when gazing on the wonders of Staffa or surveying the magnificent scene from the top of Goatfell; but my mental susceptibilities were unstrung, and I felt no response to the scenes of beauty and grandeur which I beheld. But never shall I forget the little unobtrusive inn at Brodick, nor my neat little bed-room there, as I there saw a Bible, the first I had seen since I left home. I sat me down, and, in addition to the two psalms that had become favourites with me, I read Psalm cvii., which greatly excited me, as it revived the fearful emotions of the preceding day, when, on nearing Arran, we had to

encounter a terrific storm."

On her return home, she resumed her reading of the Scriptures, and passed from the Psalms to the Prophecies of Isaiah. The bold imagery of the prophet delighted her, but she could not trace its application, or its meaning; and, in reference to his sixth chapter, she was greatly perplexed to decide whether it was a poetical fiction, or a real description of heaven. "My first course of reading," she says in her letter, "left an impression on my mind that we have not, in any of the walks of literature, such a class of men as the writers of the Bible. These men possess some rare endowments; they appear to know more about God and another world than any other writers whose works I have ever read. There is a majestic simplicity, and sublime grandeur, in all their statements and descriptions of the unknown world, and its great spirits."

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Having no one to guide her in her study of the Scriptures, her reading was very desultory; she passed from one book to another in great mental perplexity, and could not discover any obvious connection between them, resembling the continuity preserved in other works with which she was familiar. At length she turned to Paul's Epistles, but they were dark and mystical, and rather repulsive to her taste, being so unlike the poetic and the prophetic books; to her mind they presented no sublimity or beauty; and yet she admitted, it was a strange repulsiveness—it gave her no offence, or even distaste to the Bible. "I now," she adds, "began reading the Gospels. They were more intelligible. The narratives pleased me. I was delighted with some of the scenes, particularly the Prodigal Son, and the Pharisee and Publican in the Temple. The tales interested me; they seemed to wear the air of truthfulness, and yet at times I thought them inventions. The history of Jesus Christ very soon took a strong hold of my imagination, and I soon began to admire the fine blending of majesty and meekness, of dignity and tenderness, of lofty bearing, which no insults could disturb, and sweet compassion, which his character so broadly exhibits. Yes, I often said, he is a real person, for no human genius could invent such a person, or draw such a character. I followed him through the dark period of his agonizing sufferings, from his prostration in the garden to Calvary, where he was crucified. I wept when I saw him on the cross."

In one of the interviews I had with her, she said, that two things both surprised and perplexed her. She was at a loss to conceive the reason why his countrymen treated Jesus Christ with so much unkindness and cruelty, when he was such an extraordinary benefactor, and so benevolent—going about doing them good, healing their sick, restoring their injured senses of sight and hearing, and even raising their dead. The other thing that surprised and perplexed her was, that he should continue to live amongst them, when they were so rude in their manners, and insolent in their speech, and when he knew they were often plotting to take away his life. Why did he not leave them, and go and live amongst some more humane and generous people, who would return such a style of treatment by courtesy and gratitude? The more she thought of these things, the more she was perplexed. She felt so bewildered, that she put her Bible in her book-case, under an impression she should never be able to understand it. And yet she could not let it remain there long. Her curiosity was too much excited, and her self-imposed prohibition tended to increase her eager solicitude to make out the meaning of what she read. Hence she resumed her reading exercise; and on going through the Gospel of John very carefully, a ray of light fell on *one fact* in the history of Jesus Christ, which, while it increased her perplexity, opened the way towards a discovery to be made in some future stages of her inquiry. The fact was this: she perceived that, when in conversation with his disciples, he occasionally made emphatic allusions to the *necessity* of his death. This she thought very strange, as it was a case without a parallel within the compass of her reading. However, it fixed her attention; and, on a more minute examination, she perceived that he professed to come from heaven, and avowed his intention of returning thither; and that he spoke of dying, as though he had a stronger interest in death than in life, foretelling to his disciples the agonizing death he was to die (Matt. xx. 17-19). His not recoiling from such a death, and doing everything in his power to escape it, led her to think that he was some incarnate being of a peculiar order, who had some special mission to fulfil, and yet she could not imagine what that mission could be—a mission, depending for its accomplishment on death, rather than on life, appeared to her a mystery too profound for human ingenuity to unravel. "At length," and I cannot do better than quote from her letter, she says, "a thought struck me and I acted on it, and the labour of doing so produced a momentary suspension of my oppressive anxiety. I arranged, as well as I could, some of the passages which appeared to assign the reasons for Christ's death, to which he often alluded, particularly the following:—'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Matt. xx. 28). 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.' 'As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.' 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.' 'No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father' (John x. 11, 15, 17, 18). I endeavoured to work out an intelligible meaning from these passages, but I could not. A mysticism enveloped them which I could not penetrate. I wanted a living expositor. I longed for an interview with you, and more than once half-resolved to come and see you, as, though you were a stranger, I felt you were a friend, and I knew no other whom I could consult. I had no book in my library which gave me any help, and I knew not what book to inquire for, if I applied to my bookseller. No language can depict the excited state of my heart. I felt intuitively assured there was some latent meaning in these mysterious sayings of Jesus Christ, or he would not have uttered them. He was too wise and too good to utter what was false or foolish. But I could not trace out the clue of discovery. This at times repulsed me, but, on cool reflection, it appeared like a silent proof that the Bible was not a book of human invention, as, in that case, I thought, by dint of application, I should be able to

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decipher its meaning. One thing now surprises me, and that is, that, while cherishing the idea that the Bible was a Divine book, rather than a human one, I never thought of lifting up my heart in prayer to God for wisdom and grace to understand it."

In this state of painful bewilderment, depressed by repeated failures in her efforts to acquire the knowledge which she deemed essential to her happiness, yet resolutely determined to prosecute her inquiries, she wrote to her uncle, a clergyman of the Church of England, stating her case, with its painful perplexities, and desiring his sympathy and advice. He replied, expressing some surprise at the receipt of such a letter, and intimating his apprehension that she had been hearing some methodistical or evangelical preaching, which he denounced as a fatal heresy, more calculated to drive people into a state of derangement, than to advance them in virtue or in happiness. He assured her that, as she had been, in baptism, made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, she need not cherish any anxieties about her spiritual safety or final salvation. He advised her to banish the absurd chimæras, which were disquieting her, and go and take the sacrament, which, he said, was the spiritual nourishment which Almighty God had provided to sustain the inner life of the soul; and, in addition, he recommended her to mingle rather more in the circles of gaiety, so as to drive away her melancholy ideas. This letter was both mystical and unsatisfactory. It contradicted her experience, and she felt astonished that a clergyman should advise her to go more frequently into the gay world. "I knew," she said, "that my own ideas were not fanciful, but the vague conceptions of some great truths of the Bible; and I felt as unable to banish them from my heart, as a person, when asleep, feels unable to banish the dreams which disquiet him." However, she decided on joining in the communion; and being then at Bath, away from all her gay friends, she went to church, and took the sacrament—a thing she had never done before. But it had no tranquillizing effect; indeed, it increased her perplexity, and for awhile made her think that her case was a hopeless one, and that it would be better for her to abandon all further solicitude and inquiries, than to cherish and prosecute them. But she could not bring herself to such a decision; and the more she laboured to do so, the more anxious she became to get the clue of discovery, which she thought was to be found *somewhere*. In this state of intense anxiety and great depression, she returned to her town residence. Her friends were more assiduous to please than ever; but some were mortified, and others were offended, because she would not again enter into the gay scenes and habits of former times; occasionally they hinted their apprehensions that she would soon turn an Evangelical, and become as scrupulous and devout as any of the sect. These sarcasms, in conjunction with her uncle's letter, suggested to her the idea of going to some church, where an evangelical minister did duty, thinking it possible that he might give her the explanation she so much desired; but she long hesitated about doing this, as she had not gone to any place of public worship for many years, with the exception of the time when she took the sacrament at Bath. Her desire at length became so strong, that one Sunday morning she left home, not knowing where to go; but, on passing along the street, she saw some respectable and sedate-looking people going into a church, whither she followed them. This church was a Dissenting chapel, which, she said, she should not have entered if she had known it, as she had been accustomed to hear Dissenters spoken of as an uneducated and uncouth people. She felt a strange sensation on seeing the clergyman ascend the pulpit in a plain black coat, instead of going into the reading-desk in a white surplice; but the soft melody of the singing, and the emphatic solemnity of his style of reading the Scriptures, calmed her momentary agitation, and she listened to his prayer with devout seriousness. This was the first extempore prayer she had ever heard; and when speaking of it, in one of our interviews, she remarked that, in one particular, it bore a resemblance to her Bible reading—parts were plain and intelligible, and parts were under a veil of mysteriousness. The minister seemed to know the desires and emotions that were stirring within her, and he expressed them with so much accuracy and force, that it greatly astonished her. "Had I confessed to him," she remarked, "he could not have had a more perfect knowledge of what was passing in my mind."

When God has any special design to accomplish, we may often trace the harmonious conjunction of the various agents and agencies which he employs in effecting it. The Ethiopian eunuch was sitting in his chariot, reading the prophet Esaias, when Philip, under a Divine impulse, went and seated himself by his side. The passage he was reading was veiled in darkness, and he asked for an explanation, which was immediately given, understood, and felt; the moral transformation took place by the concurring action of Divine power; he avowed his newly originated faith; was baptized, and went on his way rejoicing—the visible agent of the great transaction disappearing, that the tribute of adoring gratitude might be offered up exclusively to the God of all grace. We pass from this wondrous scene to another, stamped with the same moral insignia, though not quite so obviously conspicuous. Here is a person of superior intelligence, who has long been labouring, by her own unaided reason, to decipher the hidden mysteries of the truth as it is in Jesus, and labouring in vain. She leaves her own home on a Sabbath morning in quest of a living expositor, yet not knowing where to find one. An unseen hand guides her to a chapel, which she would have disdained to enter had she known its denominational character. Her latent prejudices spring up into powerful action when she observes a slight deviation in the order of the service from that with which her eye was once familiar; and yet they are overcome by a devotional exercise, which surprised her by its novelty, while it strongly interested her by its appropriateness. The question she left home to have solved is a simple, yet a very important one; and on its solution her happiness is dependent. The second hymn is sung. The minister rises in his pulpit; his Bible is open before him, and, after a short pause, he announces his text, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die" (John xii. 32, 33). The sketch he gives of the crucifixion is thrilling; and many weep while he presents to their view the chief actors who performed their parts on this tragical

occasion. Mrs. Hastings also weeps. The preacher now passes from description to explanation; from a detailed statement of facts, to an elucidation of the design for which the Son of God groaned, and bled, and died. She listens with breathless attention, as he unravels the thread of mystery which ran through all the passages of the Bible which she had arranged and studied, without perceiving their import. "I felt," she said, "intuitively assured, when he entered on this part of his subject, that the light of explanation was coming; and I was intensely eager to catch every utterance. I now perceived that the death of Jesus Christ was a voluntary ransom, to redeem and to save the lost and the guilty. The first part of his sermon awakened my sympathy; the latter part touched another chord of my heart. I wept again; but from a different cause. My sins made me weep; and the love of Christ in dying to expiate them, made me weep—and I now wept as I had never wept before. It was with some difficulty I could refrain weeping, even when the clergyman had finished his sermon, which lasted rather more than an hour. I could have listened to him much longer. I never knew time go so rapidly. I left the hallowed place with reluctance, thinking, as I paced back to my home, that I was now entering as into a new world of existence, abounding with mystic, yet intelligible wonders. I was in a tumult of emotion, yet it was a calm ecstasy of feeling. I clasped my Bible, and pressed it to my bosom. I thought of your words, which I never forgot, though, when I first heard them, they sounded in my ear as the mockery of grief:—"That book has healed wounds as deep as yours; and if you examine it, you will find it a well-spring of life to your withered happiness." I now can attest the truth of your declaration. I have tasted its sweet waters; they are indeed the waters of life. None other so sweet or powerful. I can now respond to the truthfulness of the following paraphrase of Dr. Watts, whom I now prefer to Byron or Wordsworth—he is the poet of the heart weighed down by sorrow and anxiety:—

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'Lord, I have made thy word my choice,  
My lasting heritage:  
There shall my noblest powers rejoice,  
My warmest thoughts engage.

'The best relief that mourners have,  
It makes our sorrows bless'd:  
Our fairest hopes beyond the grave,  
And our eternal rest."

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I was happy to find that she had withdrawn from the gay circles of fashion, and, while she kept up a partial intimacy with some of her former associates, her spirit and example bore a testimony against their vain and ensnaring pursuits. She had put on a religious profession, and felt it to be an honour to obtain membership with the church of which her spiritual counsellor and guide was the pastor. This gave great offence to her clerical uncle, and also to some of her other relatives who resided in London, but she was too independent in spirit to submit to the arbitrary control of those who were the secret enemies of the cross of Christ; and though she did not court reproach as a desirable test of principle, yet she gave proof, by her steadfastness in the faith, and the amiable placidity of her temper, that it possessed no power to warp her judgment or disturb her peace. She was too retiring in her habits to take an active part in any of the public institutions connected with the church and congregation of which she was a member, but she became a generous contributor to their funds, doing good and working righteousness, not desiring to be seen of men—a devout woman, who feared God above many. She might again and again have changed her widowed state, and with flattering prospect of distinction and happiness, but she had fully made up her mind, that she would never put off the weeds of widowhood till the set time came when she was to pass away from earth, to be arrayed in the vestments of the heavenly world. She cherished through every stage of life the memory of her dear departed husband with an intensity of feeling which appeared to increase as she advanced in years. To the poor of the household of faith she was a warm-hearted and liberal benefactor; in no exercise did she take more delight than in visiting the sick and afflicted; and though a Dissenter, she was free from bigotry and prejudice, and could say, with the apostle, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen" (Eph. vi. 24).

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Our correspondence was kept up for a number of years, and in one of her last letters she says:—"I am truly thankful to God that he gave me grace to withdraw from the gay world. It is altogether a gorgeous sham—a fascinating delusion; felt as such even by those who are spell-bound by its charms. I often look back, dear Sir, with astonishment and gratitude, to our casual meeting in the stage coach, which has proved to me the most eventful and the most important occurrence of my life. It has been the introduction of a new era in my history. The mystery of my irreparable loss is now explained. The husband of my devoted attachment was smitten, and died. He was taken from me without my being permitted to say farewell, and, even to this hour, I feel a bitter pang when I think of his melancholy end. Had he been spared to feel what I have felt of spiritual sorrow, and of spiritual consolation and hope, we should have lived in the sweet anticipations of eternal life. I pine, but I dare not murmur. The past is the fearful thunder-storm of desolation, from which, praise be to God, I have now emerged, and enjoy the brightness and calm of a serene and unclouded sky.

"When, my dear Sir, I contrast, as I often do, my present, with my former self—my present, with my former tastes—my present, with my former habits, and my present bright prospects of immortality with my former prospects, overshadowed by the deep gloom of ceaseless sorrow—I appear a wonder to myself. I am the same person I was when I repelled your advice to read the Bible, thinking it a piece of wild fanaticism; but how changed am I now in heart and feeling—

become, I trust, a new creature in Christ Jesus." Psalm ciii. 1-5.

My friend who announced to me the decease of Mrs. Hastings, informed me that her preceding illness was not of long duration, nor was it attended by any severe physical sufferings. During its continuance, her mind was kept in perfect peace; and at times, she felt a joy unspeakable in anticipation of beholding the Son of God, who was crucified on Calvary, seated on his celestial throne; and of mingling with the countless myriads, in offering their adorations and praises. Her last intelligible utterance was, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and, after a slight convulsive struggle, she cast one look on the friend standing by her side, and then expired.

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## THE FAMILY OF THE HOLMES.



In my return one afternoon from a round of pastoral visits, I was informed that a gentleman was waiting to see me; and I received a most agreeable surprise in finding that it was no other than Mr. Holmes, an old and much valued friend, and whose eldest daughter Louisa has already been casually mentioned as a friend and correspondent of Miss Roscoe.<sup>[15]</sup> He informed me that he had just left his family at Dawlish, their favourite summer resort, where they had been rustivating for nearly two months, and had come to transact some business in my neighbourhood. I pressed him to remain a few days with me, but he would consent to stay only one night, as he had already been occupied a longer time than he expected. Before leaving, he extorted a promise from me that, as soon as my avocations permitted it, I would pay him a visit at the Elms, his seat near London, whither he and his family expected to return in the end of the summer.

The history of Mr. Holmes' career in life is an interesting one, and furnishes a striking example of those gradual elevations from poverty and obscurity to affluence and an honoured position in the world, which are, perhaps, more frequently to be met with in the ranks of English society than in those of any other country. I will here give some account of it, as exhibiting an instructive example of persevering industry and upright conduct, crowned by honour and success.

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Mr. Holmes was the second son of a respectable farmer, who rented a small estate in the county of Warwick. When a little boy he was very inquisitive, fond of mixing with his seniors and superiors, from whom he gained much information; and though there was no good school in the neighbourhood, yet, by the assistance of the kind and amiable Vicar of the parish, he acquired the rudiments of a useful education. That leisure time which other children usually devote to play, he gave to reading and study, and before he was fourteen, he was a very good accountant. He happened, when about nine years old, to read the popular story of *Whittington and his Cat*, and such was the deep impression it made on his mind, that it became the perpetual subject of his conversation; and he would often amuse the other members of the family with visionary tales of his future eminence. He would say to his brothers, "I will leave *you* to feed cows, and pigs, and horses, and turn up the clods of the field; but when I grow up, I will go to London, and see if I cannot become as great a man as Whittington." So completely had this passion gained an ascendancy over him, that he would often walk miles to see the mail coach pass along the road towards the far-famed city; and after listening to the sound of the horn, with an ecstasy of delight which no other notes could inspire, he would return home to talk and to dream of his future adventures.

When about the age of fifteen, his father died, leaving a large family unprovided for; and as Henry could not think of remaining any longer at home, his mother gave him a guinea and a few shillings, and he set off to seek his fortune. His youthful ardour kindled into rapture when he first saw the distant dome of St. Paul's towering above the buildings and smoke of the wondrous metropolis. Though he occasionally shed a tear of affection at the remembrance of his beloved relatives in his native village, yet he was so absorbed in the visions of his own fancy, that he was rarely depressed. Several days were spent in fruitless efforts to obtain a situation—his few shillings were expended, and the shadows of another night were deepening into darkness, when he sat down on the stone steps in front of a gentleman's house to rest himself. While he sat there ruminating over the scenes of his boyhood, and pleasing himself with the hopes of brighter and better days, a gentleman in a gig drove up to the door; and as he was getting out, Henry rose and offered his assistance by holding the horse. The quickness of his movements, and the pleasing smile on his fine ruddy countenance, attracted the notice of Mr. Lucas, who asked him his name and place of residence. "My name, Sir, is Henry Holmes," he replied; "I was born in the county of Warwick; my father was a farmer, and he is just dead. I did not like to stay at home to be a burden to my mother, who has a large family to bring up, so I left home last Monday, to see if I could get a place of work in London; and if you will hire me, Sir, I will try to please you." This simple, artless tale made its way to the heart of Mr. Lucas, who said, "How long have you been in London?" "Three days, Sir, but I have not been able to get any work." "Have you any money?" "Yes, Sir, I have a guinea which mother gave me when I left home, but I am afraid to change it, for if I do, all my money may soon be gone." This circumstance gave Mr. Lucas such a high opinion of Henry's carefulness of disposition, that he at once resolved to take him into his service. Having obtained his mother's address, he wrote to her and also to the Vicar of the parish. In a few days he received an answer which confirmed the truth of the statement of the adventurous youth, and at the same time bore honourable testimony to his fidelity and industry.

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Mr. Lucas was a grocer, who lived in Fore Street, and had acquired a handsome fortune by his

trade. Like most wealthy citizens, he had his country-house, where he resided during the summer months, coming to business in the morning and returning in the evening. As his groom had just left him, the thought struck him that this country lad might very well supply his place; and Henry rejoiced to enter on his new employment. He had to clean the horse and gig, the knives and shoes, and look after some choice poultry; and such was the attention he paid to his work, and the amiability of his disposition, that he soon became a favourite with the whole family. On their return to town for the winter he accompanied them; and as he possessed talents which fitted him for a higher situation, his master took him into the shop, where he distinguished himself by his close attention to business. No one was cleaner in his person, or neater in his dress; no one was more obliging in his disposition; the rusticity of his appearance soon wore off; his punctuality and habit of despatch became proverbial; and though his temper was hasty and irritable, yet he kept it in a state of subjection, and uniformly displayed a union of excellencies, which is but rarely found in so young a person.

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Such is the precarious tenure on which men hold their reputation under the mysterious dispensations of Providence, that it is often endangered no less by their virtues than their vices; and those who at one period are esteemed and admired by the wise and the good, are at another plunged into the depth of misery by the malignant cruelty of the wicked. Thus it was with Henry. There were two persons belonging to the establishment, his seniors in age, and superiors in rank, who were jealous of him; and as they could not shake the stability of his character by any just accusations, they resolved to destroy it by artifice. One of them who had the care of the till-drawer complained for several succeeding evenings of having missed some money, and it was arranged that some marked money should be put into the drawer. This was done; at nine o'clock the money was counted, and the sum of five shillings and sixpence was missing. This fact was immediately communicated to Mr. Lucas, who called all the servants into the counting-house, and proposed that each one should have his person and his boxes searched, without being permitted to leave the room. To this proposal they all assented; and lots were drawn to determine the exact order in which the search should be made. The first name drawn was the head-shopman, who immediately gave up all his keys to Mr. Lucas, and underwent the strictest examination, but he was pronounced innocent; the second was the man who had the care of the till, and he also was pronounced innocent; the third was Henry Holmes, who, after being searched, said, "My box, Sir, is not locked." Mr. Lucas then quitted the room to search it, and on his return, looking steadfastly in Henry's face, said, "I certainly did not suspect you, Henry, but I have found the money in your box" (producing it), "and as you have given me such a proof of your ingratitude and perfidy, you shall leave my house to-morrow morning."

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"Sir," replied Henry in a firm tone, "I am innocent. Some one has placed the money in my box which might be very easily done, as I scarcely ever lock it."

"I have suspected you for a long time," said one of the shopmen; "for no one is so likely to be guilty of fraud, as he who overacts the part of virtue."

Mr. Lucas now withdrew into the parlour, when he related the whole circumstances, and as soon as Mrs. Lucas heard the accusation of the shopman, she said, "Henry is innocent. He is the victim of another's treachery, and some plan must be adopted to detect the culprit. In my opinion the accuser is the guilty party, or at least an accomplice. It is fair to presume that he who stole the last sum, stole the preceding sums that have been lost. How then will you account for finding only the five shillings and sixpence?"

"It is impossible," said Miss Lucas, "that Henry can be the thief. We never lost anything when he was with us in the country, and we know that he does not go out to places of amusement like the others, and therefore he is under less temptation to extravagance than they are. There is a plot to effect his ruin, which I hope and trust will be discovered."

While they were talking, the housemaid entered the parlour, and said, that she had just overheard the two young men talking together on the subject, and she distinctly heard one say, "It was well planned, and well executed, and now we shall get rid of him." She was requested to take no notice of what she had heard, but to act as though she really believed that Henry was guilty. As these two young men slept together, Mr. Lucas removed some tea chests which stood against a thin partition that separated their bedroom from an upper warehouse, and having placed himself near an aperture in one of the boards, he waited till they retired to rest. Having, from their conversation, received a full conviction of their guilt, he withdrew, and informed his wife and daughter that he was perfectly satisfied of Henry's innocence.

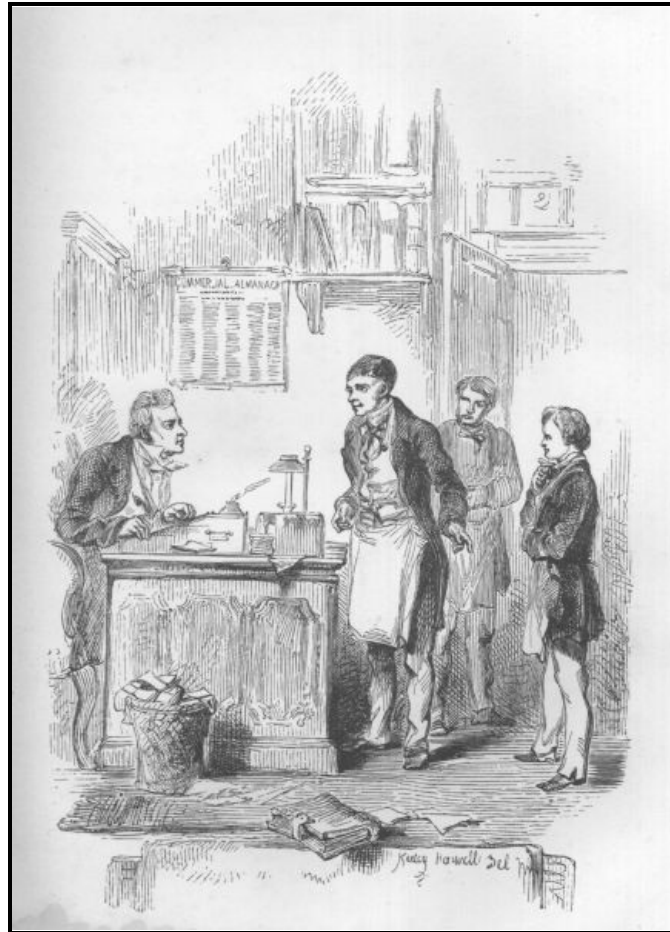
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The next morning he rose rather earlier than usual, and before the porter had opened the shop, he summoned all the shopmen into his presence, and charged these two men, first, with the crime of stealing the money, and then with the still baser crime of attempting to involve an innocent person in their guilt. This unexpected charge—the indignant firmness with which it was brought—the involuntary movement of Henry, who came forward to look his accusers in the face, confounded and abashed them; and though each made some faint efforts to deny it, yet when Mr. Lucas repeated the conversation which he had overheard the preceding night, and threatened that if they did not immediately acknowledge their guilt, and solicit Henry's forgiveness, he would send for the police, they made a full confession, and implored mercy in the most suppliant manner. Henry at once forgave them, and interceded for them; but Mr. Lucas would not consent that such men should remain in his service, and having paid them their arrears of wages, he discharged them.

This plot, which was laid to effect Henry's ruin, led to his advancement, and he now rose rapidly, step after step, till he became the manager of Mr. Lucas' establishment.

We often see tradesmen, when they have amassed a large fortune, affecting contempt for the rank of life in which they have moved, discovering at the same time a strong anxiety that their children, especially their daughters, should form alliances with those who move in the higher and more exalted circles of society. Hence they will often sacrifice a daughter at the shrine of their vanity, and give a large portion of the wealth which their industry has accumulated, to some titled pauper, whose extravagance first reduces her to beggary, and whose unkindness at length breaks her heart. But Mr. Lucas was a wise man. He never rose in feeling or in expectation above the level of his station. He had but one child, and he wished to see her happy; and when he perceived that a mutual regard subsisted between her and Henry, he expressed his entire approbation, and they were married. On this event taking place, Mr. Lucas retired from business, and at his decease, which happened about twelve months after that of his wife, he left the greater part of his property to Mr. Holmes.

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**THE CONSPIRACY DEFEATED.**

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Mr. Holmes, who had thus risen, by the Divine blessing on his industry, from a humble situation to a position of wealth and eminence, would often allude in conversation to his original condition, and exhibit his guinea as a proud memorial of his former poverty;—thus rebuking, by his example, the pride of many a modern Cræsus, who is no less anxious to conceal from others his origin, than to make an ostentatious display of his wealth. He had a large family, and as he took considerable pains with the education of his children, and set before them an example worthy of their imitation, he had the pleasure of seeing them growing up, esteemed and respected, bidding fair to be the ornaments of a future generation. His two eldest sons were in partnership with him, his youngest was studying medicine, one daughter was married to a country gentleman in Warwickshire, and three were still living with him. He had long resisted the importunity of his children to take some country residence, that they might enjoy an occasional retreat from the noise, and smoke, and bustle of the city; but when his wife urged the measure, it was at once adopted, as he was no less anxious to gratify her wishes than she was to avoid the indulgence of unsuitable gratifications.

After many unsuccessful efforts to obtain an eligible residence, he purchased a small estate about seven miles from London, where he erected a neat and commodious mansion; and as his two sons were now able to manage his business, he retired from the more active and laborious duties of it, to spend the evening of his days amidst rural scenes, with which his earliest and deepest impressions were associated. Having been accustomed, when a child, to attend his parish church on the Sabbath, he regularly observed the practice through life; and though for many years he had no clear perceptions of the nature or the design of the gospel, yet soon after the settlement of the Rev. Mr. Newton at St. Mary Woolnoth, he began to feel its enlightening and purifying influence. At first he disliked his style of preaching, and the pride of his heart rose up against that plan of salvation which requires the man of virtue to implore mercy in terms as humiliating as those which the chief of sinners employ; but as his knowledge increased, his prejudices gradually subsided, and though he could not remember any specific time when the

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great moral change was effected, by which he passed from death unto life, yet he uniformly spoke of it as the most important and blissful event of his history.

The renovation which the grace of God produces in the human character, often leaves the ruling passion to retain its ascendancy, while it gives it a new direction; and he who undergoes it, usually displays the same bold decision or hesitating precaution—the same spirit of active enterprise or prudent consideration, in his religious profession, that he has been accustomed to display in the avocations of everyday life. But on some occasions it is just the reverse; and we see the avowed infidel, when convinced of the truth of the gospel, halting between two opinions—the active tradesman, who keeps the machinery of a large and complicated concern in a brisk and constant motion, a lukewarm Christian—and the man who could face, without flinching, the most appalling dangers, discover a shrinking timidity when the obligations to a life of practical devotedness to God are pressed upon his attention. To account for such a moral phenomenon would be absolutely impossible, unless we advert to the powerful influence which sensible objects are known to possess over the mind, especially during that period in the religious experience of a Christian when his faith in the Divine testimony is weak and defective; but as that great moral principle increases in strength and animation, the natural dispositions recover their native tone and vigour—the mind no more vacillates—but rising to a full conviction of the superior value of the things which are unseen and eternal, gives to them its supreme attention and affection.

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Mr. Holmes felt the transforming power of the truth soon after his marriage, which led him to the adoption of religious habits and customs; but he was too deeply involved in the cares and perplexities of business to become a very zealous and public-spirited Christian. His moral character was unimpeachable, and he brought the great principles of religion to regulate his conduct in the ordinary affairs of life; but his heart was too much in the world—the fervour of his devotional spirit bore no just proportion to his diligence in business, and he was less anxious for the higher attainments of faith than for the acquisition of wealth. He regularly attended the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Newton on the Sabbath; but that ministry was more frequently the word of reproof than consolation; and though the hope of a blissful immortality would sometimes dawn upon him, yet it shone with too feeble a ray to afford him entire satisfaction; as it is wisely ordained that a full assurance of eternal life shall be imparted only to those who give *diligence* to make their calling and election sure.

Mrs. Holmes was certainly more devout than her husband, and devoted a larger proportion of her time to reading and meditation; but her associations were unfavourable to the growth of her piety, which, though sincere, was too much tinctured with superstition. She thought more of her duties than her privileges—of her defects than of Him who came to repair them—placed more dependence for consolation and hope on prayer and watchfulness than on the blood of sprinkling; and, while she did not doubt the truth of the promises, she uniformly gave a more implicit assent to the threatenings of the sacred volume. She was rather a disciple of the mortified Baptist than of the merciful Redeemer. Her devotions were sincere and fervent, but not elevating. They consisted much in contrition, but little in praise—much in sorrow for sin, but little in hope of its pardon. She did not sufficiently cast her confidence on the great Propitiation. She firmly believed all that the Saviour had done and suffered for sinners, but she could not claim for her own enjoyment the benefits resulting from his mission and death. While she was painfully working out her salvation with fear and trembling, she indulged the most unfounded apprehensions of the Divine displeasure, and lived more in dread of perishing than in expectation of being saved.

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No circumstance gave them so much uneasiness, on their removal to their country seat, as the loss of that ministry under which they had been brought to feel the power of the truth; especially as the Vicar of the parish was decidedly opposed to evangelical sentiments. The junior branches of the family were intelligent and accomplished, but they made no profession of religion; and now they were liberated from the restraints which a faithful and an enlightened ministry had thrown over the evil tendencies of their nature, they evinced a strong inclination to adopt the habits, and conform to the customs of fashionable life, which greatly perplexed and depressed their pious parents, especially their mother. An intimate friend (Mrs. Loader), who spent some weeks at the Elms, saw this manifest change in their predilections, and availing herself of a favourable opportunity, she alluded to it, when in conversation with Miss Holmes, and delicately, yet most earnestly, urged her to be on her guard, or the change in their place of residence would become a snare, if it did not break up all their religious habits, and prove fatal to their spiritual happiness and safety. This admonitory warning Louisa received with gratitude, as a fresh proof of the kind concern her friend felt for the best interests, both of herself and of the entire family. "Indeed," she remarked, "the world abounds with evil, but no temptation is so pernicious, or so much to be dreaded, as irreligious society; and this is the only society which we now have. I fear it will prove destructive of all the good impressions we have received under the ministry of the venerable Mr. Newton. His appeals operated as a check and as a restraint on the evil tendencies of our nature; but now we are allured into worldly habits, by being told from the pulpit that we ought to see life, and have free access to all its scenes and sources of pleasure and amusement. Mamma has been endeavouring to persuade papa to take an excursion to Dawlish, which will remove us from this scene of danger, and I hope on our return we shall be enabled to withstand every enticement injurious to our religious habits." On taking leave, Mrs. Loader presented her with a copy of Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, which Miss Holmes said she had read, but promised to peruse again, as a compliment to the kindness which had dictated the present.

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Miss Holmes' two sisters, Emma and Jane, were several years younger than herself. They bore some resemblance to each other in the general outlines of their character, but materially differed

in some of its more prominent features. As they had just finished their education in a school, where all the accomplishments could be acquired, except the one most essential to human happiness, they felt themselves in their native element when moving in the circles of gaiety and folly. Emma had the finest figure, but Jane possessed the most cultivated mind. The former excelled in gracefulness of manners, the latter in sweetness of disposition; and while Emma was rather fond of display, there was an unobtrusive modesty about Jane which inclined her to conceal her most attractive charms. Emma appeared to most advantage in a large party, where she moved, and spoke as though she were the presiding spirit of the scene; Jane, in a select circle, where the interchange of thought and sentiment could take place without being subjected to the interruptions and breaks which a promiscuous throng invariably occasions. Emma was rather of a satirical temper, with a keen sense of the ludicrous; but Jane surpassed most of her own age in that practical good sense which is more valuable than artificial polish. Though, however, they thus differed so materially in some of the more prominent features of their character, they were nevertheless passionately fond of each other, and much attached to their parents, their brothers, and sisters.

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As Mr. Holmes had applied himself to the toils of business with unremitting constancy for so many years, and had acquired a large fortune, he yielded without hesitation to the solicitations of Mrs. Holmes and his daughters, and took a tour with them through the west of England, visiting in their route all the localities either famed for their natural beauty, or interesting by their historical associations. Travelling by easy stages, they at last reached Dawlish in Devonshire, with which they were so much delighted that they remained there for several months. Here it was that Miss Holmes was introduced to Miss Roscoe, with whom she formed an acquaintance, which soon ripened to an ardent friendship, and proved in future years a source of much spiritual enjoyment.

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## A MISFORTUNE OFTEN A BLESSING IN DISGUISE.



Shortly after the return of the family to the Elms, from their Devonshire excursion, Miss Holmes sustained an accident, which, though apparently an untoward occurrence, she used afterwards to speak of as having exercised a most salutary influence on her character. As she was stepping out of the carriage one day, the horses suddenly moved forwards, by which her foot got entangled between the step and the wheel, and she was very much injured. A messenger was immediately despatched for a surgeon, who, on examining the bruised parts, reported that no bones were broken, but said that the ankle joint had been violently sprained. After the application of leeches, and giving orders to prepare a fomentation to reduce the swelling, he requested that she would immediately retire to rest; and if she felt any pain in the morning, not to attempt to walk, but<sup>[135]</sup> keep her foot in a horizontal position. These instructions were attended to; but she passed a very restless night, and in the morning was much worse than had been expected. This accident confined her a close prisoner for some months, so that she had no opportunity of renewing her former intimacies, which had been interrupted by the excursion to the west of England. Many called and left their cards, and some of her more intimate friends would come occasionally and sit with her; but a sick chamber possesses few attractions for the votaries of pleasure, who generally turn from it with careless indifference.

As she usually enjoyed a great flow of spirits, and was rather volatile in her disposition—more fond of the pleasures of society than the grave exercises of meditation—she was very depressed and irritable during the first few weeks of her confinement, often censuring in strong terms the inattention of the servant in leaving the horses; but she gradually became more reconciled to her state, and at length turned her attention to reading, to divert her mind and beguile the tedious hours. She would have preferred some of the popular tales and novels of the day to any of the volumes in her father's library; but she had too much regard for his authority and his feelings to send for works which she knew would be displeasing to him.

One afternoon, when her parents and sisters went to dine with her brothers in London, leaving her alone, she requested the servant to bring her a book; and one book after another was brought, and closed almost as soon as she had read the title-page. At length she thought of the book which her esteemed friend, Mrs. Loader, had given her, and of her promise to peruse it. She took it up from the table near which she was sitting, but after turning over a few leaves put it from her, saying, "I have read it." But as she had pledged herself to read it again, she took the book once more—reluctantly and carelessly read the running titles which are prefixed to its different chapters, till she came to the tenth, when her attention was imperceptibly arrested, and she perused it with a degree of interest which no other religious composition had ever excited.<sup>[16]</sup>

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"Thus far have I often known convictions and impressions to arise, which, after all, have worn off again. Some unhappy circumstance of external temptation, ever joined by the inward reluctance of an unsanctified heart to the scheme of redemption, has been the ruin of multitudes. And, 'through the deceitfulness of sin, they have been hardened,' till they seem to have been 'utterly destroyed, and that without remedy.' And therefore, O thou immortal creature, who art now reading these lines, I beseech thee, that, while affairs are in this critical situation, while there are these balancings of mind between accepting and rejecting that glorious gospel which I now lay before you, you will give me an attentive audience, while 'I pray you in Christ's stead that you would be reconciled to God.'

"One would indeed imagine there should be no need of importunity here. One would conclude, that as soon as perishing sinners are told that an offended God is ready to be reconciled—that he offers them a full pardon for all their aggravated sins—yea, that he is willing to adopt them into his family now, that he may at length admit them to his heavenly presence—all should, with the utmost readiness and pleasure, embrace so kind a message, and fall at his feet in speechless transports of astonishment, gratitude, and joy. But alas! we find it much otherwise. We see multitudes quite unmoved, and the impressions which are made on many more are feeble and transient. Lest it should be thus with you, O reader, let me urge the message with which I have the honour to be charged; let me entreat you to be reconciled to God, and to accept of pardon and salvation in the way in which it is so freely offered to you.

"I entreat you, 'by the majesty of that God in whose name I come,' whose voice fills all heaven with reverence and obedience. He speaks not in vain to legions of angels; but if there could be any contention among those blessed spirits, it would be, who should be first to execute his commands. Oh, let him not speak in vain to you! I entreat you, 'by the terrors of his wrath,' who could speak to you in thunder—who could, by one single act of his will, cut off this precarious life of yours, and send you down to hell. I beseech you by his tender mercies, which still yearn over you, as those of a parent over 'a dear son,' over a tender child, whom, notwithstanding his former ungrateful rebellion, 'he earnestly remembers still.' I entreat you, 'by all this paternal goodness,' that you do not compel him to lose the character of the gentle Parent in that of the righteous Judge.

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"I beseech you further, 'by the name and love of our dying Saviour.' I beseech you, by all the condescension of his incarnation, by that poverty to which he voluntarily submitted, 'that you might be enriched' with eternal treasures; by all the gracious invitations which he gave, which still sound in his Word, and still coming, as it were, warm from his heart, are 'sweeter than honey or the honey-comb.' I beseech you, by all his glorious works of power and of wonder, which were also works of love. I beseech you, by the memory of the most benevolent Person, and the most generous Friend. I beseech you, by the memory of what he suffered, as well as of what he said and did; by the agony which he endured in the garden, when his body was covered 'with a dew of blood.' I beseech you, by all that tender distress which he felt, when his dearest friends 'forsook him and fled,' and his blood-thirsty enemies dragged him away, like the meanest of slaves, and like the vilest of criminals. I beseech you, by the blows and bruises, by the stripes and lashes, which this injured Sovereign endured while in their rebellious hands; 'by the shame of spitting, from which he hid not that kind and venerable countenance.' I beseech you, 'by the purple robe, the sceptre of reed, and the crown of thorns which this King of glory wore, that he might set us among the princes of heaven.' I beseech you, by the heavy burden of 'the cross,' under which he panted, and toiled, and fainted in the painful way 'to Golgotha,' that he might free us from the burden of our sins. I beseech you, by the remembrance of those rude nails that tore the veins and arteries, the nerves and tendons, of his sacred hands and feet; and by that invincible, that triumphant goodness, which, while the iron pierced his flesh, engaged him to cry out, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' I beseech you, by that unutterable anguish which he bore, when lifted up upon the cross, and extended there as on a rack for six painful hours, that you open your heart to those attractive influences which have 'drawn to him thousands, and ten thousands.' I beseech you by all that insult and derision which the 'Lord of glory bore there;' by that parching thirst, which could hardly obtain the relief of 'vinegar;' by that doleful cry, so astonishing in the mouth of the only-begotten of the Father, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' I beseech you, by that grace that subdued and pardoned 'a dying malefactor;' by that compassion for sinners, by that compassion for you, which wrought in his heart long as its vital motion continued, and which ended not when 'he bowed his head, saying, It is finished, and gave up the ghost.' I beseech you, by the triumphs of that resurrection by which he was 'declared to be the Son of God with power;' by the spirit of holiness which wrought to accomplish it; by that gracious tenderness which attempered all those triumphs, when he said to her out of whom he had cast seven devils, concerning his disciples, who had treated him so basely, 'Go, tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God.' I beseech you, by that condescension with which he said to Thomas, when his unbelief had made such an unreasonable demand, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold mine hands, and reach hither thine hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.' I beseech you, by that generous and faithful care of his people, which he carried up with him to the regions of glory, and which engaged him to send down 'his Spirit,' in the rich profusion of miraculous gifts, to spread the progress of his saving Word. I beseech you, by that voice of sympathy and power, with which he said to Saul, while injuring his church, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' by that generous goodness, which spared the prostrate enemy when he lay trembling at his feet, and raised him to so high a dignity as to be 'not inferior to the very chiefest apostles.' I beseech you, by the memory of all that Christ hath already done, by the expectation of all he will further do for his people. I beseech you, at once, by the sceptre of his grace, and by the sword of his justice, with which all his incorrigible 'enemies' shall be 'slain before him,' that you do not trifle away these precious moments, while his Spirit is thus breathing upon you—that you do not lose an opportunity which may never return, and on the improvement of which eternity depends.

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"I beseech you, 'by all the bowels of compassion which you owe to the faithful ministers of Christ,' who are studying and labouring, preaching and praying, wearing out their time, exhausting their strength, and very probably shortening their lives, for the salvation of your soul, and of souls like yours. I beseech you, by the affection with which all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity long to see you brought back to him. I beseech you, by the friendship of the living, and by the memory of the dead; by the ruin of those who have trifled away their days and

are perished in their sins, and the happiness of those who have embraced the gospel and are saved by it. I beseech you, by the great expectation of that important 'day, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven;' by 'the terrors of a dissolving world;' by the 'sound of the archangel's trumpet,' and of that infinitely more awful sentence, 'Come, ye blessed, and depart, ye cursed,' with which that awful solemnity shall close.

"I beseech you, finally, by your own precious and immortal soul; by the sure prospect of a dying bed, or of sudden surprise into the invisible state, and as you would feel one spark of comfort in your departing spirit when your flesh and your heart are failing. I beseech you, by your own personal appearance before the tribunal of Christ (for a personal appearance it must be, even to those who now sit on thrones of their own); by all the transports of the blessed, and by all the agonies of the damned, the one or the other of which must be your everlasting portion. I affectionately entreat and beseech you, in the strength of all these united considerations, as you will answer it to me, who may on that day be summoned to testify against you; and, which is unspeakably more, as you will answer it to your own conscience—as you will answer it to the eternal Judge—that you dismiss not these thoughts, these meditations, and these cares, till you have brought matters to a happy issue—till you have made a resolute choice of Christ, and his appointed way of salvation; and till you have solemnly devoted yourself to God in the bonds of an everlasting covenant.

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"And thus I leave the matter before you and before the Lord. I have told you my errand; I have discharged my embassy. Stronger arguments I cannot use—more endearing and more awful considerations I cannot suggest. Choose, therefore, whether you will go out, as it were, clothed in sackcloth, to cast yourself at the feet of him who now sends you these equitable and gracious terms of peace and pardon; or whether you will hold it out till he appears, sword in hand, to reckon with you for your treasons and your crimes, and for this neglected embassy among the rest. Fain would I hope the best; nor can I believe that this labour of love shall be entirely unsuccessful—that not one soul shall be brought to the foot of Christ in cordial submission and humble faith. 'Take with you,' therefore, 'words, and turn unto the Lord,' and say unto him, 'Take away all iniquity, and receive me graciously; so will I render the praise of my lips.'"

The impression which this reading produced was such as she had never previously felt; the arrow of conviction had pierced her heart, but the feelings excited were more those of joy than of grief. She re-perused the chapter; it disclosed new beauties—it sent forth a still stronger power of excitement. Her soul was alternately elevated and depressed, agonized and composed, as though she had no control over its movements. She recalled to her remembrance those powerful, yet momentary impressions of truth, which she had experienced in former years, when sitting under the ministry of the venerable Newton; and trembled lest those under which she was now labouring should prove equally transient. It was this fearful apprehension which gave her more pain, than a discovery of her moral danger; because she knew that there was salvation for the chief of sinners; but she knew that if these impressions left her they might never return. She arose from the couch of weariness and suffering, and stood resting on the back of her chair, while she gave vent to her feelings in the following form of prayer:—

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"Blessed Lord, it is enough! it is too much! Surely there needs not this variety of argument, this importunity of persuasion, to court me to be happy, to prevail on me to accept of pardon, of life, of eternal glory. Compassionate Saviour, my soul is subdued; so that I trust the language of my grief is become that of my submission, and I may say, 'My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise' (Psalm lvii. 7).

"O gracious Redeemer! I have already neglected thee too long. I have too often injured thee; have crucified thee afresh by my guilt and impenitence, as if I had taken pleasure in 'putting thee to an open shame.' But my heart now bows itself before thee in humble unfeigned submission. I desire to make no terms with thee but these—that I may be entirely thine. I cheerfully present thee with a blank, entreating thee that thou wilt do me the honour to signify upon it what is thy pleasure. Teach me, O Lord, what thou wouldst have me to do; for I desire to learn the lesson, and to learn it that I may practise it. If it be more than my feeble powers can answer, thou wilt, I hope, give me more strength; and in that strength will I serve thee. O receive a soul which thou hast made willing to be thine!

"No more, O blessed Jesus, no more is it necessary to beseech and entreat me. Permit me, rather, to address myself to thee with all the importunity of a perishing sinner, that at length sees and knows 'there is salvation in no other.' Permit me now, Lord, to come and throw myself at thy feet, like a helpless outcast that has no shelter but in thy generous compassion; like one 'pursued by the avenger of blood,' and seeking earnestly an admittance into the 'city of refuge.'

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"I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait; and in thy word do I hope,' that thou wilt 'receive me graciously.' My soul confides in thy goodness, and adores it. I adore the patience which has borne with me so long; and the grace that now makes me heartily willing to be thine; to be thine on thine own terms, thine on any terms. O secure this treacherous heart to thyself! O unite me to thee in such inseparable bonds, that none of the allurements of rank, or of fortune—none of the vanities of an ensnaring world—none of the solicitations of sinful companions, may draw me back from thee and plunge me into new guilt and ruin! 'Be surety, O Lord, for thy servant for good,' that I may still keep my hold on thee; till at length I know more fully, by joyful and everlasting experience, how complete a Saviour thou art. Amen."

As she sat musing on the wondrous scene which had passed before her, adoring the long-suffering which had borne with her follies, and the grace which had so unexpectedly invested the truth with such attractive and subduing power, she was roused by the entrance of her mother. "I

hope, my dear Louisa," said Mrs. Holmes, "you have spent a more pleasant day than you anticipated." "I have been more free from pain than usual," she replied; "and upon the whole, the hours have passed away agreeably, though I certainly felt my solitude to be irksome."

Many who have felt the renewing influence of the truth, when looking back to the earlier periods of their history, can recal to their remembrance some text of Scripture, an observation in a sermon, or a remark in conversation, which had an extraordinary effect at the time it was heard; fixing their attention as though it spoke with commanding authority; and which may be regarded as the first strivings of the Spirit of God within them. These sacred occurrences have served as the rallying point of hope, when the mind has been driven to the remotest distance from the faith of Christ; and notwithstanding the preference which may have been given for a season to the pleasures of sin, there has been a secret inclination for those of righteousness—God having implanted a witness in the bosom who has never ceased to warn and to reprove.

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Miss Holmes, when about the age of twelve years, heard Mr. Newton make the following remark, in addressing himself to children: "You should treasure up in your memory, while you are young, all the religious knowledge which you can obtain, as it may be of great service to you at some future day, when your attention may be directed to the momentous question of your salvation. You will then, when convinced of sin, and awed by the terrors of the world to come, know how to obtain relief, and be kept from that state of deep perplexity in which many are plunged, who are brought to see their danger, while ignorant of the way of escape."

This judicious remark struck her with peculiar force, and ever afterwards she listened to the preaching of the gospel, in anticipation of the future benefit which she might derive from it. From that moment she lived in the full expectation of the great spiritual change, which was ultimately produced in her mind. Often, at different periods, would she retire from the fascinations of the world to pray for a new heart; and though she had urged her request till hope began to wane, yet she was never permitted to despair of obtaining the blessing. It is true, the paralyzing influence of her new connections and habits had greatly diminished her anxieties and solitudes for the one thing needful; but the early impressions of its importance which she had received, when listening to the faithful appeals of Mr. Newton, were too deeply imprinted in her heart ever to become obliterated; and though she usually assumed great ease of manners, and wore the smile of complacent cheerfulness, yet beneath these outward appearances there lay concealed a wounded, and at times an agonized spirit. She would sometimes join in the satirical play of wit on the eccentricities of professors, but always discountenanced any attack on the truth or sanctity of religion; and though she was becoming more and more conformed to the world, yet she could not disengage herself from the influence which the powers of the world to come had early acquired over her judgment and her conscience. She had too much religion to be happy with the gay, and too little to be happy with the pious; mingling with each, yet not being able to partake of the enjoyments of either, she was doomed to a life of perpetual mortification.

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As her character usually received its peculiar tone and complexion from the society with which she last associated, it was perpetually varying from gay to grave and from grave to gay; her spirits would occasionally rise to the highest mirth, and then sink to the lowest depression; sometimes she appeared open and bland, at other times reserved and gloomy; alternately devoting herself to the pleasures of the world, and the external exercises of religion, it was not till after she became a new creature in Christ Jesus, that her most intimate friends could ascertain the real cause of such extraordinary changeableness in her character.

The impressions of Divine truth on the heart, when produced by a supernatural power, are deep and permanent; but when they claim no higher origin than the agency of man, they soon pass away like the morning cloud and early dew, and leave no trace of their existence. They may, during their continuance, induce an order of thought and reflection, in strict accordance with the general tenor of the Scriptures, but they effect no real change in the heart or character. As they bear a resemblance when they are first received, and at successive periods, to the operations of the Holy Spirit, they are frequently mistaken for them, and a profession of religion made under their influence is often abandoned as soon as they subside. Hence the annals of the Christian church record the names of many who have outlived their avowed attachment to the faith of Christ; and the most awful passages of the sacred volume are directed against those who, after pleading its promises, with the hope of obtaining eternal life, relapse into a course of worldliness or infidelity.

It was under a trembling apprehension of the transitory nature of her religious convictions and feelings, that Miss Holmes formed a resolution to make no reference to them, till by a process of trial she had acquired some satisfactory evidence of their permanency. She remembered an observation which she once heard the venerable Newton make, when preaching on the parable of the sower:—"Genuine religion is distinguished from that which is spurious, not so much by the dissimilarity of its first impressions, as by its power to resist temptation, and to bring the dispositions of the heart into subjection to the authority of Jesus Christ."

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Her indisposition, though severe and protracted, was at no period considered dangerous; it kept her away from the scenes of gaiety to which she would otherwise have been exposed, and gave her an opportunity of devoting her attention more calmly and dispassionately to that subject which now began to appear pre-eminently interesting and important. She knew that her sins were more in number than she could calculate, and that the sentence of condemnation which stood recorded against her might be executed without any impeachment of the justice or benevolence of God; but such was the strength of her faith in the efficacy of the Saviour's death, and in the power of his intercession, that she "was filled with all peace in believing, abounding in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Her transition from a state of nature to a state of

grace—from vain and passing pleasures to those of religion—from the delusive charms of the visible to the more attractive glories of the unseen world, was sudden, but tranquil—unattended by those deep convictions of guilt and that overpowering apprehension of future condemnation which sometimes torture and distract the mind of the young disciple. This was primarily owing to the accurate knowledge of the scheme of salvation which she had acquired by sitting under the enlightened ministry of Mr. Newton; for while it must not be concealed, that the beginning and consummation of personal religion in the heart is to be attributed to the immediate action of a supernatural power, yet it is equally evident that its progress in allaying the fear that produceth torment, in instilling the peace which passeth all understanding, and in elevating and fixing the affections on things above, is usually in proportion to the accuracy and extent of the theological information which is possessed.

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"Many," says an interesting writer, "are too prone to look for a conversion always uniform, not only in its effects, but in its operation, and too much bordering on the miraculous. The soul must be first overwhelmed with fear—then pierced by grief and anguish—then plunged into despair—then suddenly filled with hope, and peace, and joy; and the person must be able to determine the day on which, and the sermon, or the paragraph, or the providence by which the change was wrought. But this is by no means necessarily, or generally the case. There is a variety in the temperaments and habits of men, and in the methods employed to bring them to repentance. We should remember that there are differences of administration, but the same Lord; that often he prefers to the earthquake, the wind, and the fire, the small still voice; that he can draw by the cords of love and the bands of a man; that he can work as effectually by slow as by instantaneous exertions; and that he may change the soul in a manner so gradual and mild, as to be scarcely discernible to any but the glorious Author. And here we are furnished with evidence from analogy. In nature some of God's works insensibly issue in others, and it is impossible for us to draw the line of distinction. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. But who can ascertain which ray begins, or which ends the dawn? If you are unable to trace the progress of the Divine life, judge by the result. When you perceive the effects of conversion, never question the cause. And if perplexed by a number of circumstantial inquiries, be satisfied if you are able to say, One thing I know, that whereas I was once blind, now I see."

The chastened seriousness of spirit which Miss Holmes exhibited, and the new course of reading which she adopted, induced the family to suppose that she was taking a religious turn, though she cautiously abstained from making any reference to it. She felt convinced that some essential change had taken place, yet at times she doubted if it was anything more than the effect of her own spontaneous thoughts and reflections; and as she had, more than once, experienced a mental excitement of a similar nature, she rejoiced with trembling. She knew that the righteous hold on their way, because they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; but as she was often perplexed, when endeavouring to ascertain whether she belonged to that specific denomination of character, she could not anticipate the issue of her impressions with unmingled satisfaction. She felt a distaste for those objects of pursuit and sources of gratification which had acquired such a powerful ascendancy over her; and now she longed to partake of the more refined enjoyment which results from communion with the members of the household of faith and the public exercises of devotion; but she dreaded the prospect of coming into contact with the world, lest another relapse of feeling should take place, which would leave her still more insensible than ever to the unseen realities of eternity.

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The Saviour, in his various offices, was now precious to her, as he is to all them that believe. She dwelt with holy awe and delight on that union of majesty and condescension, purity and compassion, justice and grace, which he displays in his mediatorial character; but she was apprehensive, that when exposed to the rival influence of temporal pursuits, her mind would again be enslaved by their charms, and she would lose the relish she now felt for her new themes of contemplation and enjoyment.

Thus it is wisely ordained, that at every period in the experience of the Christian, there shall be some circumstances to perplex his judgment—some uncertainty to darken his prospect—some apprehensions to disturb his peace, to convince him that here 'perfect bliss cannot be found;' and that no attainments, however high—that no anticipations, however bright and animating—are capable, while we are encompassed with infirmities, of yielding unmingled satisfaction and delight. At times Miss Holmes felt very anxious to disclose to some one the change through which her mind was now passing, that she might have the advantage of Christian sympathy and guidance; but the perplexing question was, to whom should she make the communication. She often thought of speaking to her mother, but when she made the attempt, her courage failed her. At length she addressed the following letter to her friend Mrs. Loader, who had evinced so much solicitude for her spiritual welfare:—

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"THE ELMS, 16th Oct., 18—.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am much obliged by your affectionate epistle, which I received on the 10th; and I regret that you should deem any apology necessary for the introduction of that specific advice which it contains. My obvious indifference to the momentous question of personal religion, and my growing conformity to the customs and habits of the gay world, must, I have no doubt, have given you very considerable uneasiness; and I assure you that it often plunged me into the deepest depression of spirit. I was often cheerful, but never happy; often trying fresh expedients to divert my attention from what I deemed *the gloomy subject*, but never could succeed; and though I became more insensible to the attractions of religion as I grew in years, yet I exposed myself more

frequently to the keenness of its reproofs and the awful terrors of its threatenings. My associates, who had not had the privilege of a pious education, could enjoy the world, and treat with levity the prohibitory injunctions of the Scriptures, but I could not. I never could divest myself of the full conviction that God has the first claim on the affections of the heart; and that he has appointed a day when every human being 'must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.' These thoughts would rush into my mind, not only when alone, but also when in the midst of the gayest company, and by no expedient could I succeed in driving them away.

"It was under the most agonizing mental conflict I ever sustained, that I hailed our tour to the west as likely to dissolve the fatal charm by which I was subdued and enslaved; but I found, on my return, that my *heart* had undergone no change, as I often secretly anticipated a re-entrance into those scenes which my conscience so severely condemned. I once heard Mr. Newton remark, that as our dangers often spring out of our comforts, so the greatest blessings sometimes grow out of our heaviest afflictions. The correctness of this remark I can *now* attest from experience. It was on our return from Devonshire that I met with the accident which has confined me a close prisoner for more than two months; but to that accident which I called disastrous, I owe all my present happiness and my prospect of eternal glory.

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"You express a hope that I have given the book which you so kindly presented to me, a candid perusal, presuming that no season can be more favourable for such subjects of inquiry than those which we denominate afflictive. Yes, my dear friend, I have read it, though I felt such a reluctance to do so that I put it from me several times; and had not my word stood pledged to read it, I had still been a stranger to its soul-stirring contents. I read on carelessly till I came to the tenth chapter, when the subject fixed my attention, and I hope penetrated my heart. Then I *felt* that I was a sinner—then I *felt* that I stood solitary and alone, in the immediate presence of my Legislator and my Judge, confounded, because righteously condemned—then I *felt* that I needed a Saviour. I have had many strong convictions of the truth and the necessity of religion in the earlier seasons of my life; but those produced on this occasion were more clear, and full, and impressive, than any that ever preceded them. They came with an authority which I could not resist; they prevented all vacillation of mind, and constrained me, with a force which I had no disposition to withstand, to yield to their power; and though my evil heart of unbelief would sometimes suggest that all is a delusion, artfully practised on my imagination by Satan, who sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light, yet I can say, in reference to Him who is the chief among ten thousand—'Whom having not seen, I love; in whom, though now I see him not, yet believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

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"When, my dear friend, I received that present from your hand, I did not calculate on the effects which it was ordained to produce; for though I feel unworthy of the notice of the Friend of sinners, yet, on reviewing the recent change which has taken place in my sentiments, my taste, and my feelings, I cannot avoid ascribing it to his sovereign and predetermined will. But though I am fully convinced that a great change has been produced, yet I must not conceal from you the dread I sometimes feel lest it should prove only a momentary excitement. I now can see the vanity of the world; but shall I do so when I am again able to go about? I now can consecrate myself to the service of the Redeemer; but shall I have courage to take up the cross and follow him, when again enticed to mingle with the gay votaries of fashion? It is not my province to dictate to infinite Wisdom, nor prescribe the method by which my religious principles shall be tried; but it is my earnest, and my daily prayer, to be kept within the walls of my solitary retreat, till He whose I am, and whom I wish to serve, has prepared me to resist every temptation by which I may be assailed, and to perform every duty which may devolve upon me.

"Now that I have given you this explanation, you will doubtless be able to account for that singular variation in my disposition and manners, which you must have so often noticed; but if you had known the strange revulsion of feeling to which my poor unhappy mind was perpetually subjected, you would have considered it as perfectly natural. I am by nature a child of imitation—apt to catch the spirit and temper of those with whom I come into contact—easily captivated by imposing manners—averse to all appearance of singularity—volatile and impetuous in my disposition; yet at the early age of twelve, I was so powerfully impressed with the truth and necessity of personal piety, that I do not think I ever spent a day without giving it my most serious attention. Hence, when carried away by the example of others to scenes of gaiety, my spirits would naturally rise to a high pitch of feeling, yet on returning to my graver and more important subjects of reflection, I felt so abased and confounded—so terrified and alarmed in prospect of futurity, that I could scarcely endure the anguish I was doomed to suffer. I do not know that I can better describe the state of my mind, than by quoting the language of Dr. Watts, with a few slight alterations:—

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'I was a helpless captive, sold  
Under the power of sin:  
I could not do the good I would,  
Nor keep my conscience clean.

'My God, I cry'd with fervent breath,  
For some kind power to save,  
To break the yoke of sin and death,  
And thus redeem the slave.'

"The charge which is often brought against religion, as tending to abridge our comforts, and induce a melancholy and dejection of spirit, I can repel from experience. Infallible Truth declares, that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are paths of peace; and now I know, and feel it. My mind, which has been tossed about on the surging billows of doubt and perplexity, has at last gained that haven of rest, where, I trust, it is destined to remain.

"No one of my family has any knowledge of the present state of my feelings, as I have cautiously abstained from making any allusion to religious subjects; not because I am ashamed of religion, but because I am unwilling to make a premature profession; and though perhaps you may censure me for withholding from my dear parents a communication which is so calculated to give them pleasure, yet if I should be permitted, after having made it, to relapse into my former course of gaiety and folly, the disappointment will be so great that it may entail on them perpetual sorrow. Pray that I may be kept in the evil hour—that I may be enabled to walk circumspectly towards them that are without—that I may have courage to make a profession of my attachment to the Lord Jesus, and grace to adorn it, and at length be presented faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.

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"I need not say how acceptable another letter from you would be; but I certainly should prefer a personal interview, if you could make it convenient to pay us a visit. I am happy to inform you that I am much better, and that all the rest of the family are well.—Yours affectionately,

LOUISA.

"To Mrs. Loader."

True piety does not act to be seen of men, nor speak to gain their applause; but though for a season it may remain unobserved, yet the meekness of its spirit and the lustre of its character are marks by which it will always indubitably be known. For the reasons which have been previously assigned, Miss Holmes had abstained from communicating to her family the change which had taken place in her sentiments and feelings; but she was not able to conceal from them the external proofs of it which her conduct and her occasional conversation necessarily supplied. As she was reserved on the subject, so were her parents; and though they felt anxious to ascertain if her great seriousness of manners was anything more than a recurrence of her former deep depression of spirit, yet they knew not how to do it.

It often happens that young persons can make a more free statement of their religious experience to strangers or distant friends than they can to their own parents; but this in general argues some essential defect in the bringing up and arrangements of the family. There may be, I grant, on the part of the child, in the earlier stages of his experience, a reluctance to disclose to any one "the secret movements and operations of his heart towards the best of Beings;" but if Christian parents were to incorporate, in their course of religious instruction, the habit of a free and unreserved conversation on the practical effects of truth, and if they would occasionally retire with their children, to pray *with them* and *for them*, specifically and alone, it would imperceptibly beget such a union and intimacy of spirit, that *they* would be no less anxious to unburden to them the anxieties and sorrows of their heart, than the parent would feel delighted to become their spiritual counsellor and friend.

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When Miss Holmes was sitting with her mother, one Sabbath evening, an allusion happened to be made to the sermon which had been preached at church, and with which Mrs. Holmes expressed her dissatisfaction. "Perhaps," remarked Louisa, "it would be difficult to procure a more pleasant residence than our own, or one which is more conducive to our general health; but I assure you that I often deplore the consequences which must inevitably result, from our being deprived of the privilege of attending an evangelical ministry."

"It gives me pleasure, my dear, to hear you deplore the loss of such a privilege, as it is a proof that you value it."

"Yes, Mamma, I do value it, but now, alas! I have no prospect of enjoying it. Yet I feel more for others, than I feel for myself, especially for the junior members of our family; as I fear, now that they are removed from the restraints which pure evangelical truth imposes on the heart and conscience, they will devote themselves to the pleasures of the world, which will give them a distaste for those of religion."

"And does my dear Louisa then prefer the pleasures of religion to those of the world?"

"I trust, Mamma, I do; though I am almost afraid to speak with confidence on such a delicate and important question. I know from past experience, that there may be deep religious impressions, and powerful religious excitement, even while the heart retains all its evil propensities and antipathies; but I hope it hath pleased God to employ my late affliction as the means of bringing me into fellowship with himself, and his Son Jesus Christ. I murmured when he smote me, but now I can say, 'I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.'"



"Both your father and I have thought," said Mrs. Holmes, "that God was dealing graciously with your soul, and we have often prayed that you might come out of this affliction a new creature in Christ Jesus; yet we could not overcome the strange reluctance we felt to speak to you on the subject; but as it hath pleased God to answer our prayers, I must convey the glad tidings to your father, who will embrace you as one alive from the dead."

"As you have drawn me into a premature disclosure on this subject, I certainly cannot object to your communicating to my dear father the substance of our conversation, but I must request that you will take no notice of it to any other person. For if I should now make a profession of religion, and on the return of health and energy, should relapse into my former course of gaiety and folly, I shall do essential injury to others."

"But, my dear, you may be 'confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'"

"Yes, I know, that when the work of grace is begun, it will be carried on, notwithstanding the various impediments which may obstruct its progress, or the artifices which may be employed by the great adversary to effect its destruction; but I am not quite satisfied that what I feel *is* the work of grace. It may be nothing more than the effect of my own fears; and if so, it will disappear as soon as they subside; or it may be the necessary consequence of that train of serious thought and reflection, which a lengthened indisposition generally originates; and if so, every trace of its existence will be obliterated, when I again intermingle in the pursuits of active life."

"But have you not, my dear Louisa, *tasted* that the Lord is gracious, as well as *felt* his terrors which have made you afraid? and can you, on cool reflection, suppose that He will ever abandon you, now that you have surrendered your heart to him?"

"I have felt none of the terrors of religion, which may be an essential defect in my experience; and the excitements which I have ascribed to the love of God shed abroad in my heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, may prove the momentary joy of the stony-ground hearer, in whom the seed of truth could not thrive, because it took no root. If, after a period of trial, I am induced to believe that I have felt the renovating power of Divine grace, I trust that I shall then have courage given me to make a decided profession of the faith of Christ, without regarding the remarks to which it may subject me; but till then, it is my earnest wish, that you intrust to no one but my dear father the communication which I have almost unintentionally made to you. I have seen so many throw off their religious profession, and return to the course which they had abandoned; and I have such a dread of apostasy, that it is my fixed determination to have some practical proof of the efficacy of my principles to resist temptation, and bring the dispositions of my heart into subjection to the authority of Jesus Christ, before I make any profession."

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"I approve, my dear, of your decision; but while jealous of yourself, you must guard against mistrusting the faithfulness and loving-kindness of God your Saviour, who has pledged his honour to keep you by his power through faith unto salvation."

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## CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.



he scene which opens on the imagination of the young Christian is often so beautiful and enchanting—it so deeply fixes his attention, and enchains his affections—that he turns with an eye of comparative indifference from the objects and pursuits to which he has been previously devoted, under a full conviction that they cannot *now* yield him the gratification they once did; and that he cannot *now* derive permanent happiness, except from that new source of felicity which he has discovered. It is, when he is under these novel and powerful impressions, that the long neglected Bible discloses<sup>[156]</sup> new beauties; no theme of meditation or discussion presents any subduing charm in comparison with Christ Jesus, and him crucified; and having felt the transition from a state of spiritual death to a newness of life, to be attended by such hallowed emotions, he is in danger of anticipating too large a portion of spiritual enjoyment, which not unfrequently becomes the occasion of great mental perplexity, and sometimes of deep depression.

During the continuance of her indisposition Miss Holmes felt so intensely interested in reading her Bible, that she might clearly understand the sublime theory of the Christian faith, and so absorbed in her spiritual exercises, that her health sustained some injury by the severity of her application. As a very natural consequence, a shade of melancholy was cast over her spirit. She was forewarned of the possibility of such an effect being produced; but the usual apology which she made to her pious mother was, "Can I take too much interest in that important subject, into which angels desire to look? or can I ever hope for a more favourable time for its investigation than the present, when I am precluded from mingling in the employments or the amusements of the world?"

The following form of self-dedication to God she now drew up and signed, having vowed in the most solemn manner to observe it to the full extent of her pledge:—

"Eternal and unchangeable Jehovah! thou glorious Creator of heaven and earth, and adorable Lord of angels and men, I desire with the deepest humiliation and abasement of soul, to bow down at this time in thine awful presence, and earnestly pray, that thou wilt impress my heart with a clear perception of thine unutterable and inconceivable glories.

"To thee do I now come, invited by the exceeding great and precious promises of thy Word; trusting for acceptance in the efficacy of the Saviour's death, beseeching thee to 'be merciful unto me a sinner.' The irregular propensities of my depraved nature have in ten thousand aggravated instances wrought to bring forth fruit unto death. And if thou shouldst be strict to mark my offences, I must be silent under a load of guilt, and immediately sink into destruction. But thou hast graciously called me to return to thee, though I have been a backsliding child. I come unto thee, O Lord, convinced not only of my sin, but of my folly; and while I implore mercy through the mediation of Jesus Christ, I would be no less importunate for the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit, that I may be entirely conformed to thee. Permit me to bring unto thee those powers and faculties which I have ungratefully alienated from thy service; and receive, I beseech thee, thy poor revolted creature, who is now convinced of thy right to her, and who desires nothing in the world so much as to be thine.

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"I bring to thee a dark benighted mind, to be illuminated with Divine knowledge. Thou hast the words of eternal life; I therefore resign my understanding to thy teaching. I bring to thee a corrupt and deceitful heart; do thou cleanse and make it upright before thee. Do thou expel all the evils which lurk within it, and make it a temple for thyself. May the same mind which was in Christ Jesus be in me. May I possess the same humility which he displayed, the same indifference to the riches and the pleasures of the world, the same spirit of zeal for thine honour, and of benevolence towards man. May I ever wear the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; be enabled to adorn the profession which I hope to make; and finally be admitted into the kingdom of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"And I do now most solemnly give myself unto thee, as one whom thou hast made alive from the dead, with a firm and unalterable determination to live devoted to thee; loving thee supremely, walking in thy fear, and glorifying thee in my body and my spirit, which are thine."

The practice of self-dedication, which is often recommended to the young Christian, may tend to increase his reverence for God, and to make him more watchful over his own spirit; but unless he has very clear perceptions of the way of salvation, it may be productive of essential spiritual injury. For though we are told in the most express language, that "we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast;" yet when the distinction between obedience, as the fruit of faith, and obedience as the hope of reward, is not accurately and perpetually observed, there is a danger of contracting a self-righteous spirit, which by aiming at personal perfection for ostentatious display, or as a source of mental confidence, may bring the soul into a state of spiritual bondage.

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Miss Holmes having most solemnly dedicated herself to God, and formed a sanguine opinion of the high capabilities of the renewed mind, began to prescribe a set of rules for her self-government, which she resolved to observe. If these rules had related merely to her conduct in social life, she might have kept them; but as they included the regulation of the disposition, and the frame of her mind towards God, they were founded on a mistaken conception of her own ability. They imperceptibly diverted her attention from the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, by faith in which sinners are accepted and justified, to a laborious effort to attain a high degree of sinless excellence; and as she progressively discovered so many, and such lamentable defects in her obedience, the peace of mind which she enjoyed when "first she knew the Lord" was destroyed, and she gradually sunk into a state of despondency. By making this fatal, yet common mistake, she was led to the conclusion, that the attainments of the genuine Christian were placed beyond her reach, and that it would be an act of presumption if she attempted to acquire them.

An evangelical ministry is instituted to promote the edification of them that believe, no less than to convert sinners from the error of their ways; to guard them against those misconceptions of truth, which may prove injurious to their happiness and spiritual prosperity; and to explain that mysteriousness which rests over their earlier experience, when there is a constant, and often a rapid interchange of hope and of fear, of sorrow and of joy, of a bright prospect of future blessedness, and a foreboding apprehension of future woe. Those who attend such a ministry, partake of the advantages of it, without being conscious of the benefit which they receive; but if indisposition, or any other circumstance, prevent a Christian from availing himself of this ordinance of grace, he may linger for a long time, especially in the earlier stages of the spiritual life, in a state of great mental perplexity, and may gradually sink into a morbid depression, without being able either to remove or account for it.

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Domestic engagements prevented Mrs. Loader from paying a visit to the Elms; but the following letter is a proof of the deep interest which she took in the welfare of her friend, and also of her ability to give her judicious counsel:—

"MY DEAR LOUISA,—I am fearful lest you should construe my silence into indifference; but I flatter myself, that the following explanation will protect me from such an imputation. I was from home when yours of last month arrived; and since my return, family matters so engaged my attention, that I have been prevented replying to it. It is impossible for words to express the pleasure I felt on the perusal of your first very interesting letter; and though the degree of that pleasure was somewhat diminished on the reception of your second, yet I cannot refrain from offering you my sincere congratulations, on account of what the Lord has done for you, and is still doing. Clouds and darkness are often round about him, while he is silently and unobserved carrying on his own work; and when it is not in our power to trace the operation of his hand, we are required to stand still, and he will show us his salvation. In the early experience of the Christian there are many circumstances which perplex and confound him, and

which appear to place his good hope in the most imminent danger; but it is the province of faith calmly to wait the issue, which is certain, and will be glorious.

"I am not surprised, my dear Louisa, that you should regret having made what you call a premature disclosure of your Christian experience, especially as you begin to entertain some strong doubts of its being genuine. This is very natural, and very common. If the experimental influence of the truth fell under the immediate observation of our senses, we should be able to mark its progress with the most perfect accuracy; but as the seat of its first and most powerful operations is the heart—that province which the eye can never penetrate; and as it merely diffuses itself over the exercise of our intellectual and moral faculties, without acting alone, and independently of them, we almost necessarily, at times, suspect whether we have ever felt it. It is true, we may see a change in our conduct, and a change in the disposition and temper of our mind; but as this uniformly takes place in consequence of our full conviction of its propriety, we may, especially in a gloomy hour, be incapable of tracing it up to a supernatural cause.

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"The first impressions of Divine truth on the heart are generally strong and deep—they produce a powerful excitement of the affections; and such is the intense degree of interest which is sometimes felt at such a period, that no variation is anticipated, except it be some higher and more blissful elevation of soul—some ascent to a spiritual Pisgah, from whence the lot of our future inheritance with the saints in light may be clearly seen. But when the mind becomes more familiar with the sublime truths of religion, they lose somewhat of their novelty; and though they still retain their ascendancy over the judgment, yet the impressions which they produce become less powerful. This change in the feelings often induces the young Christian to suspect, that the cause of its original production must be found, not in the grace of God, but the uninfluenced operations of his own faculties and passions. It is when the mind is thus variously exercised, that the invisible enemy of our peace often comes to augment our perplexity, by insinuating, that if we were renewed, the fact of our renovation would be so conspicuous, that we could never doubt it—that if we did really love the Lord, our love would glow with undiminished ardour—that if our faith were genuine, we should never be permitted to stagger at any of the promises of God through unbelief—that if we were made partakers of the Divine nature, we should for ever escape the corruption that is in the world—and if our spiritual emotions were actually produced by the operation of a supernatural power, they would neither subside nor fluctuate.

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"If then, my dear Louisa, you should doubt, where others have doubted before you, and if you should feel those causes of perplexity and depression operating on your mind, under which the faithful in Christ Jesus in every age have laboured, you ought to comfort yourself by the reflection that you are now passing through the usual trials of Christian experience. If you had no doubts, you would have cause to fear; and if you knew no change of feeling, you would have cause to suspect your change of heart.

'Come then—a still, small whisper in your ear,—  
*She* has no hope, who never had a fear:  
And *she* that never doubted of *her* state,  
*She* may perhaps—perhaps *she* may, too late.'

"I am happy to find, by your last letter, that you have disclosed the state of your mind to your dear parents; for while I certainly approve of the motive which induced you to conceal it from them, yet I think you have acted wisely in breaking through your resolution. As they so often wept over you, when you were living without God, and without Christ in the world; and have, with so much fervour, intermingled their supplications at the footstool of the Divine throne for your conversion, it would have been an act of unkindness to have kept them in a state of ignorance on a subject in which they are so deeply interested. You should communicate to them not only the general fact, that you are *now become 'a fellow-heir of the grace of life,'* but also the perplexities which disquiet and depress you, as they are so well qualified to give you that instruction and consolation which you may require. It is by giving vent to the feelings of the soul, that we gain relief from our most poignant griefs; and though you perhaps can more readily communicate your experience to an absent friend than to your own parents, yet, if you make the effort, the barrier which obstructs an unreserved disclosure of all you feel, and all you fear, will soon be broken down, and then your spiritual intercourse will be free and unfettered. It will require, on your part, I have no doubt, a great sacrifice of feeling, to take the step which I now venture to recommend; but you know who has said, My grace shall be sufficient for thee—as thy day, thy strength shall be; and if you by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your request unto Him, He will give you wisdom and strength to follow the advice I now offer.

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"I have often regretted your removal from London, especially when I found that you are not favoured with an evangelical ministry in the church. This circumstance must operate as a serious drawback upon your social happiness; and now you are brought to feel the importance of religion, I am not surprised that you should deeply deplore it. You ask me what you are to do, now you are able to attend public worship. This is an important question, but I feel no hesitation in giving you the advice which I have given

to others, who have been placed in similar circumstances. If there be no Dissenting chapel within a convenient distance, in which the gospel is preached, go to your parish church as usual, to avoid the appearance of Sabbath profanation; but if there be one, I think it your duty to attend there. I do not recommend you to secede, for the mere sake of secession; but for your spiritual improvement, which will depend more on a pure evangelical ministry, than any other secondary cause. Some, I am aware, would urge you to prefer your parish church to a Dissenting chapel, even if the minister be an irreligious man, and to stay there till it shall please God to introduce the gospel into it; but as it is not in my power to reconcile such advice with the injunction of our Lord, *Take heed what ye hear*, you cannot expect that I can approve of such a course. The eminently devout Christian loves the habitation of the Lord's house, and the place where his honour dwelleth; but we have no reason to believe that God visits any place with the manifestations of his love, where the minister does not preach salvation by grace through faith. But suffer the word of exhortation. You are now coming out amongst the difficulties of a public profession of religion; one friend may recommend you to adopt one plan, and another, another; and the more you consult, the more you may be perplexed, till at length you may be incapable of coming to any decision. To obviate this evil, go and meditate seriously on the following passage—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Reduce to practice the admonition of the wise man, and you will find that the Lord will give wisdom, as well as strength.

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"I am much obliged by your kind invitation to the Elms, and intend, as soon as I can leave home, to pay you a visit, when I hope to find you in perfect health. Remember me very kindly to every member of your family, and believe me to be, yours affectionately,

E. LOADER."

One of the most common-place charges which is brought against evangelical religion, is, that it has a tendency to make its possessor melancholy; and if we were to form our judgment of it from the appearance and manner of some who profess it, we should be disposed to admit its correctness. They not only abstain from all the pleasures and amusements of the social circle; but habitually wear a gloom on their countenance, which indicates a singular dejection and moroseness of spirit. But this dejection of spirit, which we may sometimes discover in a professor of evangelical religion, is not produced by his religious principles, but by his sense of personal guilt, and his want of that assurance of forgiveness, which the gospel of Jesus Christ is intended to convey. He may be permitted to remain for a season, by the Holy One of Israel, whose laws he has violated, and whom he has neglected to glorify, under the sentence of self-condemnation; but when he is enabled to rely on the atonement made by Jesus Christ, and to appropriate the promise of mercy, he enjoys the peace which passeth all understanding. If then, we wish to form a correct estimate of the real tendency of evangelical truth, we must not go to the penitent sinner while he is suffering under the deep convictions of guilt, as then he is more prone to put from him the words of consolation, than to embrace them; but we must go to the established believer, who, having received the truth in the love of it, is enjoying its sacred and blissful influence. He will repel the charge as a libel on his faith, and unblushingly avow, that he never knew solid and substantial happiness till he derived it from communion with God, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, and a hope of being presented faultless in his immediate presence. And though the spirit of scepticism, which is so prevalent in all ranks of society, may ridicule such an avowal, as a delusion attempted to be practised on human credulity, yet surely no one, on reflection, can presume to say that a Christian is not competent to bear testimony to a fact of his own experience. The religious principles which he has embraced, are represented by those who have never felt their influence, as having a tendency to make their possessor melancholy; and yet he declares that he has had more mental satisfaction since he embraced them than he ever had before. Whose testimony shall we admit to be most conclusive?—the testimony of those who are entirely ignorant of the subject, or of those whose knowledge qualifies them to speak? Suppose, for example, a question to arise respecting the excellencies or defects of a piece of music, we should not venture to place any dependence on the opinion of a man who has no taste for the science. If we did, we should expose ourselves to ridicule or contempt. On such a question we should require the opinion of a competent judge; and I appeal to the sound sense of my readers, if they can allow those persons to pronounce a judgment on the tendency of religion who have never felt its holy influence on the heart. They may express their opinion, and they often do express it, but of what value or importance is it in relation to the subject? They may say that its tendency is to make us unhappy; but how can they prove it? Not certainly by appealing to the obvious design of Christianity, for that has been so unequivocally announced by the celestial messengers, that we cannot misconceive it. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." And if they venture to appeal to the experience of the religious man, he candidly says, "I am happy; but my happiness differs from yours, it takes its rise from a different source, and possesses qualities which are peculiarly its own; it is more pure, more exquisite, more substantial, because more intellectual and spiritual than yours. My happiness is the peace that passeth all understanding." But when we mention peace, we mean not the stupid security of a mind that refuses to reflect; we mean a tranquillity which rests on a tried and durable basis—a peace which, founded on the oath and promise of Him who cannot lie, and springing from the consciousness of an ineffable alliance with the Father of spirits, makes us

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to share in his fulness, and become a partner with him in his purity; a repose serene as the unruffled wave, which reflects the heaven from its bosom, while it is accompanied with a feeling of exultation and triumph, natural to such as are conscious that ere long, having overcome, they shall possess all things.

There are many periods in the history of human life, when the power of religious principles over the mind commands the respect, and excites the admiration of the most inveterate infidel. Go and see the poor Christian, contented amidst his privations—the suffering Christian, patient under his protracted affliction—the dying Christian, resigned and happy in prospect of his approaching dissolution; and if you do not pay a spontaneous homage to the influence of the principles which have such an effect in elevating and supporting the soul of man, when visited by these direful calamities, it must be referred either to a want of taste, or to a want of judgment.

"He is the happy man, whose life ev'n now  
Shows somewhat of that happier life to come;  
Who, doom'd to an obscure, but tranquil state,  
Is pleased with it; and, were he free to choose,  
Would make his fate his choice.

\* \* \* \* \*

Content, indeed, to sojourn while he must  
Below the skies, but having there his home.  
The world o'erlooks him in her busy search  
Of objects more illustrious in her view;  
And, occupied as earnestly as she,  
Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the world.  
She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not;  
He seeks not hers, for he has proved them vain.  
He cannot skim the ground like summer birds  
Pursuing gilded flies; and such he deems  
Her honours, her emoluments, her joys.  
Therefore in contemplation is his bliss,  
Whose power is such, that whom she lifts from earth  
She makes familiar with a heaven unseen,  
And shows him glories yet to be revealed."

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## DOUBTS AND PERPLEXITIES.



he change which had taken place in Miss Holmes, became the topic of general conversation in the circle of her gay associates; and though some of them predicted that she would again appear amongst them, when "the fit of melancholy" was over, their anticipations were disappointed. She returned the calls of inquiry as soon as her health permitted; but she left a deep impression on the mind of all her friends, that worldly pleasures had lost their charms for her, and that other and nobler objects of pursuit now engrossed her attention. One of the first proofs of her decision, was consenting to become secretary to a female branch of an Auxiliary Bible Society, which was established in the vicinity of the Elms, and which brought her into immediate connection with several pious families. Having derived so much spiritual benefit from the Scriptures during her long confinement, she felt anxious that they should be universally circulated; and voluntarily devoted a large portion of her time and her influence to secure the co-operation of others in<sup>[167]</sup> accomplishing this important object.

One of the most conspicuous professors in her neighbourhood was a Mr. Corrie, whose father had attended the ministry of Romaine, and transmitted to his son a profound veneration for the memory of that distinguished clergyman. He was a widower, rather advanced in life, a man of wealth; and had residing with him two unmarried sisters. These ladies were amiable and intelligent—zealous and active in the cause of humanity and religion—and their chief delight was in going about doing good. Mr. Corrie usually spent the forenoon in his study, while his sisters went forth on their visits of mercy to the cottages of the poor; and they generally passed their evenings in agreeable and profitable conversation, or in reading to each other. They often read a portion of Mr. Romaine's Works, which they considered the standard of orthodoxy; and though they were willing to submit every religious opinion to the test of Scripture, yet they never thought of subjecting his opinions to such an ordeal. His treatises on the Life and Triumph of Faith, and some Letters which have been published since his decease, they regarded with almost as much reverence as the Epistles of the inspired writers; believing that no author equalled him in correctness of sentiment and depth of experience.

Miss Holmes, in her perambulations on behalf of the Bible Society, happened to call on the Misses Corrie, to solicit their subscriptions, just as they were sitting down to tea; and being pressed to remain, she consented to spend the evening with them. Their cheerfulness—the spirituality of mind which they discovered in their conversation—the fervent spirit of devotion which was apparent in Mr. Corrie when engaged in family prayer—and the confidence with which they spoke of their interest in Christ, operated so powerfully on her feelings, that she remained with them much longer than she intended; and when the lateness of the hour compelled her to

leave, she could not do so without requesting permission to repeat her visit. "We shall be happy to see you at any time," said Miss Corrie; "and if it be in our power to teach you the way of the Lord more perfectly, we shall consider ourselves highly honoured."

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Religious conversation is one of the most useful methods of instruction and consolation we can employ; but sometimes, when a false standard of experience is adopted, it becomes the means of perplexing and distracting inquiring minds. Our Lord taught his disciples, as they were able to receive instruction; keeping alive their attention, while he allayed the restlessness of an unprofitable curiosity, by saying—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." And on this wise maxim the Holy Spirit condescends to conduct His process of instruction, that we may not be confounded by communications which we are unable to understand; but be led on step after step in the province of Divine knowledge, till we are "able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God." And it is of great importance, in relation to the government of our conduct towards others, and for our own tranquillity and spiritual improvement, that we rigorously adhere to the same maxim; or we may inflict a wound, while attempting to impart the consolations of our faith, and absolutely retard that growth in knowledge which we are anxious to cultivate and advance.

Mr. Corrie was eminently pious, but a man of rather weak understanding, and who had associated with but few intelligent Christians in the earlier part of his life. His first undigested thoughts had grown up into firm and immoveable opinions; and though he devoted a large portion of his time to reading the Scriptures, yet, owing to the bias of which he was not conscious, he more frequently searched for passages in support of his own peculiar notions, than studied them to enlarge his views of the entire scheme of Divine truth. He was positive, but not perverse; inflexibly attached to his own belief, but not disposed to inveigh against that of another; and though he imbibed some religious opinions which have done great injury to the dignity and the amiability of the Christian character, yet in him their tendency was neutralized by the sweetness of his natural disposition and the fervour of his devotional spirit. He dwelt much on the high points of election and predestination; maintained with great pertinacity that human nature undergoes no moral improvement, but remains as impure and deceitful after the great change has taken place, as it was before; and he considered an assurance of our final salvation so essential to the nature of faith, that he would not regard as a true believer a person who did not enjoy an unclouded prospect of eternal glory. These topics bounded the range of his inquiry; and though at times he would unawares make concessions which compromised their accuracy, yet when apprized of his danger, he would step back with singular adroitness, and resist the force of an argument to expose their fallacy, by saying to an antagonist, "*You* see through a glass darkly, while I see face to face." If these opinions had been confined within the circle of his own family, and the few pious friends who were of the same theological school, he would have done no injury, as their devotional spirit and habits would have proved a safeguard against their pernicious tendency. But by bringing them forward in promiscuous company, and by holding them up as essential articles of the Christian faith, he often involved the judgment of the young disciple in great perplexity, and unintentionally threw down some of those barriers which the Scriptures have raised to restrain the evil propensities of our nature. The effects of these opinions on the mind of Miss Holmes may be seen in the following letter, which she addressed to her friend Mrs. Loader, a few weeks after her introduction to this family:—

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"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I should have replied earlier to your last letter; but since my convalescence I have been so engaged with my new duties, as the secretary to our Auxiliary Bible Society, that I have not been able to find time. I cannot express to you in words, how much pleasure I derived from your communication. It came at a season when my mind was sinking into despondency, and when I was tempted to give up my hope; but the Lord was pleased to employ it as the means of dispersing the darkness which was hovering around me, and I was enabled to rejoice once more in the light of his countenance. I had gained that elevated spot—that spiritual Pisgah, to which you so beautifully allude; from whence I could read

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'My title clear  
To mansions in the skies;'

and from whence I thought I should never be displaced; but alas! I am again compelled to give utterance to a feeling of despondency.

"I had my fears at the very commencement of my religious course, that my convictions and impressions, like the morning cloud and early dew, would soon pass away, and that I should be permitted to relapse into my original state of darkness and indifference; yet these fears came upon me only at times, like a sudden gust of wind in a serene evening. Now, alas! I have to mourn over their perpetual presence and desolating power; and I sometimes think, the doom of a backslider, or an apostate, awaits me. I shudder in anticipation of such a dreadful issue; and though I often pause and listen, yet I hear not the voice of the Comforter. Yet I cannot go back; perhaps I may say, when taking a survey of the more general state of my heart, I move slowly onwards between hope and fear.

"I have lately formed an intimate friendship with two excellent ladies, who reside with

their brother, not more than a quarter of a mile from the Elms; and in whose society I spend a considerable portion of my leisure hours. From the influence of their example, and from their conversation, I anticipated much spiritual improvement; but the oftener I visit them, the deeper I am plunged in mental despondency; and though I have ventured to allude, in indirect terms, to the perplexed state of my mind, yet I cannot obtain from them the words of consolation which I need. They and their brother have adopted the views of Romaine as their religious standard; and hold his memory in such veneration, that they rank him next to the inspired writers, and tacitly condemn all who, on any religious points, differ from him. They have lent me his treatises on the Life and Triumph of Faith, which I have read with close attention; but instead of deriving from them that satisfaction which I was led to expect, they have revived all my former fears, and invested them with a tenfold poignancy. He says, when addressing the believer, 'Thou must be first persuaded of thine interest in Christ, before thou canst make use of it, and improve it; and therefore the knowledge of thy union with him must be clear and plain, before thou canst have a free and open communion with him.' I might have passed over this passage, without having taken any particular notice of it, had it not coincided with the belief which has been so often expressed by my excellent friends, the Misses Corrie and their brother. They say, in the most express terms, that an assurance of our interest in Christ, and of our final salvation, is essential to faith; but this assurance I do not possess. Sometimes I have thought that the Saviour has looked with an eye of compassion on me, and has raised my desponding soul to the ineffable manifestations of his love; but I cannot say that 'he gave himself for me.' I rely on the efficacy of his death for acceptance and eternal life; but I dare not say that my dependence is genuine. In some favoured moments, I have anticipated the blissful interview, when I have hoped to see him as he is, but I cannot speak with confidence—O no! I dare not. While my necessities compel me to go to the Saviour, and plead his promises, my want of assurance keeps me back; and thus, being suspended between these propelling and repulsive powers, I suffer extreme mental torture.

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"But this is not the only subject on which my mind is perplexed. In a conversation the other evening, when we were tracing up the bestowment of every good and every perfect gift to the free and unmerited grace of God, Mr. Corrie asserted, with the utmost degree of confidence, that no true believer in Jesus Christ can doubt his personal election to eternal life. This assertion, made by so good and amiable a man, and which met the decided approbation of his sisters, fell upon my ear with all the terror of the condemning sentence; and from that moment to the present, I have been driven, as an outcast, from the promises of mercy, I have read the Scriptures to satisfy my mind on this point, and there I read of sinners being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world—of their being elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father—of their being predestinated; but this high point appears invested with such terror, that my spirit recoils when attempting to approach it; and though I have prayed for faith to receive the hidden mysteries of revelation, and for wisdom to understand them, yet I cannot believe that I am one of the selected number, whose name has been enrolled in the Lamb's book of life. But should I feel all this terror on my spirit, when adverting to a doctrine which appears stated, with the utmost degree of explicitness, by the inspired writers, if I had that faith which is of the operation of the Spirit of God? Should I, if I possessed like precious faith, recoil, with almost instinctive dread, from a subject on which my pious friends speak with so much animation and delight? Surely there must be some defect in my experience, which renders me incapable of disengaging myself from the bondage of fear in which I am held; and which holds me back from a participation of that glorious liberty which I see enjoyed by the children of God around me.

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"There is one point of resemblance between my experience and that of my friends, too striking to pass unnoticed; yet, when reading the Scriptures, it has merely served to involve me in a still more perplexing labyrinth of difficulty. It is this—they maintain 'that our hearts undergo no moral improvement when the great renovation takes place, but remain as impure and deceitful as before.' I certainly did anticipate, when I first felt the influence of the truth, that I should grow in grace as well as in knowledge; and that I should attain to a more near conformity to the image of Jesus Christ; but on a close and impartial examination, I am compelled to believe that I have made no progress; indeed, I fear I have made a retrograde movement. I do not feel that calm satisfaction, or any of the blissful emotions I felt, when my attention was first arrested by the unseen realities of eternity. I do not feel that indifference to worldly objects, which I felt when confined to a couch of pain and languor. I am not so deeply affected by the unparalleled love of Christ, as I was when I first viewed him bearing away the iniquities of the people by the agonies of his death; nor does sin appear so exceedingly sinful, as when I first experienced its bitterness. I am neither so grateful for my mercies, nor so abased on account of my transgressions, as I was when the light of a supernatural manifestation first threw open to my view my neglected obligations and concealed defects. I feel, if possible, more fully convinced of the absolute need of a Saviour, than I was when I first felt the burden of guilt upon my conscience, but yet I am less able to exercise faith in him; and instead of that peace which was diffused through my heart when I first believed, I am sometimes driven to the verge of despondency.

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"I have not yet communicated to my dear parents the present perturbed state of my

feelings, as I am unwilling to give one pang of sorrow to their tender bosom; and though I sometimes pray that the Lord would be pleased to turn away from me the face of his anger, and comfort me, yet I cannot pray in faith. Surely no one else ever felt what I feel, or suffered what I suffer. There are two verses in a favourite hymn, which, I believe, was composed by the venerable Newton, which I can repeat with intense earnestness:—

'Lord, decide the doubtful case;  
Thou who art thy people's Sun,  
Shine upon thy work of grace,  
If it be indeed begun.

'May I love thee more and more,  
If I love at all, I pray;  
If I have not lov'd before,  
Help me to begin to-day.'

"I am happy to inform you, that there is a Dissenting chapel about three quarters of a mile from the Elms, in which the gospel is preached with great simplicity and power, and where my esteemed friends, the Corries, usually attend; so that a kind Providence has made that provision for our spiritual necessities outside the pale of the Establishment, which we should have preferred within, but which is denied us unless we go to a considerable distance. We have attended this chapel regularly for some time, and are much delighted with the minister. He is an amiable, unobtrusive man—imbued, I trust, with the spirit of his Master—cheerful in his disposition, but rather reserved. Those who are admitted into more familiar intimacy, speak of him in the highest terms of affectionate respect; and he is much esteemed by his people. You know we are attached to the Church; but, after mature deliberation, we are satisfied that it is our duty to hear the gospel; and as it is not preached by our Vicar, we feel it no less a duty than a privilege to go where the Lord has sent it. Our decision has offended some of the *anti-evangelical* high church families, who regard the Church of England with as much veneration as a Roman Catholic would a relic of St. Peter; but we must obey the dictates of conscience, which will no longer permit us to attend a ministry where the truths of the gospel are not preached.

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"From some of our new clergyman's discourses I have derived consolation, but he has not touched on any of the points of perplexity in which my mind is involved; and though at times I have thought of soliciting a personal interview, to make known to him all I feel, and all I fear, yet I cannot assume a sufficient degree of confidence to do it. Indeed, I cannot speak freely on such delicate subjects to any one but to you; and I hope, if you cannot spare time to pay us your long promised visit, that you will favour me with your advice, and I know you will not neglect to pray for me.

"My sister Emma, I regret to say, continues to manifest a decided aversion to the things of the Spirit of God—they are foolishness to her; but Jane is becoming much more serious. I do not think that she is yet decided, but I hope the good work is begun. I often find her with her Bible, and sometimes she retires to her own room in the evening, where I hope she spends some portion of her time in praying to her Father in secret; and if so, He who seeth in secret will ultimately reward her openly.—Yours affectionately,

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"LOUISA.

"To Mrs. Loader."

When a young Christian searches the Scriptures for correct information on the great questions of religion, and is favoured with the assistance of judicious and pious friends, he usually passes on from one degree of knowledge to another without meeting with the formidable obstructions and perplexing embarrassments to which he is exposed, by the conflicting opinions which are prevalent amongst us. The light which shines on the sacred page, when it comes *directly* from above, is clear and pure, and makes distinctly manifest, to the judgment and the conscience, the truth as it is in Jesus, in its simplicity and power. But when it passes through a human medium, it often shines in an oblique course, throwing into the shade some essential parts of the economy of Divine truth; and hence a defective theory is sometimes embraced, which always proves unsatisfactory, and sometimes fatal to our peace. It is therefore impossible to exercise too much caution, in the early periods of our experience, in the choice of our religious associates, and of the books which we read; as it is in the power of error, whether it comes from the lips of friendship or from the press, to do more essential injury than the truth may be able to repair, till after a lengthened period of extreme anxiety and disquietude. And as we are so liable to receive pernicious impressions from the numerous errors which are in perpetual circulation around us, we cannot depend with too much simplicity, or docility of disposition, on the Holy Ghost, whom the Saviour has promised to his disciples. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." Hence it is indispensably necessary for the Christian, in every period

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of his life, but especially when entering on his religious course, to implore the gracious influence of the Divine Spirit, to guard him against every species of error—to lead him into all truth—and to invest the truth with that holy unction, which will render it no less a source of the highest intellectual improvement, than of the most exquisite mental enjoyment. Such a habit of dependence on Divine aid will be an effectual safeguard against the spirit of self-sufficiency, which proves so fatal to those who are enslaved by it; and while it will stimulate to mental diligence in searching the Scriptures, that we may ascertain what is the mind of the Spirit, it will keep us in a state of independence of human opinion.

But while I wish to point out to the attention of the young Christian, the dangers to which he is exposed from the society of his pious yet injudicious friends, and to bring him into immediate connection with the Spirit of truth, I would, at the same time, guard him against indulging any visionary expectations respecting the mode of His instruction, or the infallible certainty of the opinions He may permit us to form. He teaches through the medium of the Scriptures, even while the judgment is altogether unconscious of any supernatural assistance; but His communications are restricted to those points in the system of truth which are essential to salvation; leaving us to form our own judgment on questions of minor importance. Hence the agreement amongst the disciples of Christ, on what is essential, and their diversity on what is non-essential.

But even when we are taught by the Holy Spirit, and thus imbibe the truth in its most perfect state, it will not always retain its original power of impression, but will admit of a partial declension in moving the affections, even while its authority over the judgment and the conscience remain undiminished. Hence the lines of Cowper are often employed as expressive of the disconsolate state of the heart:—

"Where is the blessedness I knew,  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view,  
Of Jesus and his Word?  
What peaceful hours I once enjoy'd!  
How sweet their mem'ry still!  
But they have left an aching void,  
The world can never fill."

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And this cessation of a powerful excitement, which usually succeeds the first impressions of truth, is often regarded, by the Christian, as an indisputable evidence of the decay of his religious principles, when it may be nothing more than a necessary consequence of the more advanced progress of his personal experience, as the change of the leaf, from living green to the auburn hue, is a plain indication that the fruit is advancing in its ripening process.

The above account presents an instance, which has many parallels, of the struggles, anxieties, and perplexities, which so often beset the mind of the believer on his first entering on his career of Christian experience. I shall return soon to the continuation of the history of Mr. Holmes' family; but, in the meantime, must beg the courteous reader to accompany me back, for a short space, to my own town, from which I have been led by this digression in my narrative.

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## THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS.

### PART I.



One morning, while musing on the changing scenes of my eventful life, recalling the past, and speculating on the future, I received a letter from an old friend, requesting that I would call on her as soon as I could make it convenient. From the tone of the letter, and some expressions contained in it, I judged she was in trouble, and accordingly proceeded immediately towards her house. As I was passing along,<sup>[178]</sup> I remembered that, several years before, I had received a similar note, written by the same hand, and in a similar strain of grief. The writer was a widow, whose husband had been cut off in the flower of his days, leaving her to provide for their children, who were at that time all dependent on her. On the occasion I speak of, I found her bewailing the alarming illness of her only son, a youth of about fifteen years. She complained with bitterness that the Almighty, who had taken away her husband, was now about to take away her first-born also. I attempted to bring her mind into a state of acquiescence to the Divine will, by reminding her that no affliction came by chance—that he who works all things after his own counsel, often sends an early affliction, to prevent a more painful one—and that when he is pleased to take from us our choicest comforts, it is "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." She replied that the Almighty might tear her son from her, but she could not surrender him. When I expostulated with her, she did not attempt to justify her opposition to the will of God, but excused herself from the affection she bore her son; and earnestly requested me to pray for him, and pray that his life might be spared. We prayed together for the lad, and in due time he was restored to health. Having removed soon after this to a different quarter of the town, I had seen but little of him or his family for a considerable time.

Perhaps, thought I, as I drew near the house of sorrow, the life of this son is again in danger. He has been spared a few years, as the staff of his mother's strength, and now she is inured to

her troubles, he is about to be taken from her. Indulgent, yet mysterious Providence! The lines of the poet recurred to my recollection with peculiar force—

"The ways of heaven are dark and intricate.  
Puzzled with mazes and perplex'd with errors,  
Our understanding traces them in vain—  
Lost and bewilder'd in the fruitless search. Nor sees  
With how much art the windings turn,  
Nor where the regular confusion ends."—*Addison*.



JAMES GODWIN. W. L. THOMAS.  
**THE MOTHER'S HOPES BLASTED.**

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When I entered the room, I found her reclining on a sofa, and in tears, her three daughters weeping apart. Though I knew not the cause of their distress, I felt at once that some great calamity had befallen them. My presence seemed to revive their grief, for when they beheld me, there was a spontaneous burst of anguish. At length, when nature had given vent to her feelings, and recovered a portion of that strength which had been consumed by the violence of grief, the sufferer informed me that her son had brought upon them a deluge of sorrow. Without going into particulars, she requested me to read the following letter, which was lying on the table:—

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"MY DEAR MOTHER,—Apprehensive that you may be alarmed by the abruptness of my departure from home, I write to inform you that I am well; and when I reach the place of my destination, I will send you my address. I now regret the course I have taken, but this will not bring back my departed reputation, nor heal the wound which I have inflicted on your peace. Had I taken your advice, and kept myself from evil companions and vain amusements, I had still been a virtuous and happy man—your comforter, and the support of the family; but I disregarded your lessons, and became a regular attender of the theatre, to the fatal attractions of which, I am convinced, I now owe my ruin. From the theatre, it was but one step to the tavern and the gaming table. To gratify my passion for the latter, I embezzled my masters' property, and am now a wretched fugitive from the pursuit of justice. Remember me very kindly to my sisters, and tell them never to enter a theatre, for it is to my attendance at that place of dissipation, that I attribute my first deviation from the right path.—Your undutiful, yet affectionate son,

W. HARVEY."

"Oh! my poor William," exclaimed his mother, "oh! that I should ever have lived to see this day! Our disgrace is all over the town this morning. Look at this, too," she continued, producing a hand-bill offering a reward of £50 for the apprehension of William Harvey, absconded.

After perusing these, I expressed my heartfelt sympathy with the family, and tried to soothe their feelings and offer words of comfort; but what comfort could I impart in such circumstances! In answer to my inquiries, I drew from her, amidst sobs and tears, an account of her son, and the causes which had produced the fatal transformation in his character. It was to the following effect:—At the decease of his father, he was removed from school, and placed in the counting-house of Messrs. —, extensive merchants in the town. Being a lad of strong natural powers and quick perceptions, active and industrious in his disposition, he soon made himself very useful, and within the space of three years, had so established himself in the esteem and respect of his employers, as to be promoted to a post of responsibility and trust. He was distinguished from most young men of his age, by the soundness of his judgment, and the sobriety of his habits, and so devotedly attached to his mother and his sisters, that he made the promotion of their

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happiness his constant study. In the morning he went to the duties of his station with cheerfulness; and in the evening, when the toils of the day were ended, he either retired to his own room, to read the amusing or instructive page, or passed it away in their society. He would often admit, when conversing with his pious mother, the necessity of personal religion, yet he thought some distant futurity a more convenient season for attending to it than the present time; and hence the strong impressions which he occasionally received, when engaged in the public exercises of devotion, were soon obliterated by the tumultuous anxieties of commercial life. But when about the age of eighteen, he began to feel the necessity of personal religion; and though he did not suffer its interesting and important inquiries to divert his attention from his secular pursuits, yet he was convinced that it was no less his duty to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," than diligent in his business.

His mother witnessed this moral renovation of his character with peculiar delight; and soon had the pleasure of hearing him lead the devotions of the family both morning and evening. For the space of two years, he was equally distinguished for his diligence in business and his fervour of devotion, till at length he fell into the company of a young man who ultimately effected his ruin. This young man was the son of a wealthy citizen, as accomplished in manners as he was corrupt in principles; and though he made no profession of religion, yet he affected to treat it with great respect, and thus more effectually gained an ascendancy over young Harvey. Their first acquaintance soon ripened into the maturity of an ardent friendship; and notwithstanding the dissimilarity of their opinions, they became almost inseparable companions. Each felt anxious to gain the other over to his own course, and adopted what he conceived to be the most likely method; but it soon became apparent, that evil communications more speedily corrupt the virtuous, than good communications reclaim the vicious. One of the earliest symptoms of this corruption of principle, was his becoming an occasional frequenter of the theatre, a place which, hitherto, the pious admonitions of his mother had prevented him from entering. Then came abandonment of his home, and of the society of its inmates, after the business of the day had terminated, which broke in upon the devotional order of the family, and often led to inquiries and remonstrances which were natural, but painful. These gentle and affectionate remonstrances at first had a powerful effect, and he was induced to return to his former habits; but in process of time, they were either heard with indifference, or resented, and he who had officiated at the family altar, in a humble and apparently contrite spirit, informed his mother that he should in future decline engaging in such a responsible office. She besought him in the most urgent and imploring manner, to rescind his avowed determination, and once more break away from that fatal charm, which was seducing him from the path of righteousness and peace; but she could not succeed. He was resolute and decided; and after this time rarely returned home till very late at night.

"I have sat alone," said his mother, "watching for his return, till one, two, three, and even four in the morning; and when I have opened the door, he more often abused me for my kindness, than apologized for his misconduct. Having spent his midnight hours in dissipation, he consumed those of the morning in sleep; and sometimes did not get to business much before noon. Though he foresaw what might be the consequences of his folly and impiety, yet no arguments were sufficient to induce him to change his course. He grew worse and worse, till at length he disappeared two days ago, and I heard nothing of him till yesterday, when I received the letter which has thrown us all into such misery. This trial, which would have been a severe one under any circumstances, is to me peculiarly poignant; as it brings to my remembrance my sins. It is now just seven years since the Almighty appeared to be taking him from me, and such was the heavenly frame of his mind, that he was not unwilling to go. Had he died then, I should have wept over his grave, but I should have had the prospect of meeting him in a better world. Or if I had felt resigned to the will of God, he might have been restored to me in mercy, as was Isaac, when the angel of the Lord forbade his venerable father to slay the sacrifice which he had so willingly bound, and placed on the altar; but I was rebellious. I prayed for his life, because I thought it essential to my happiness; and his life has been spared; but alas, he is become the destroyer of our peace. It is now, Sir, only two years since he began to turn his attention to religious subjects, and to lead the devotions of our family; and though, like most parents, I rejoiced with trembling, yet hope preponderated, and I thought he would have been my support and comfort in my old age; but alas, the vision of bliss has disappeared, and I am left to desolation and despair." Here she paused to weep, and then resumed her tale of sorrow. "I watched his gradual departure from the ways of righteousness with much anxiety, and made many efforts to reclaim him; and though he yielded at first to my solicitations, and made many solemn promises, yet he broke them all, and gave himself up to the company of the wicked. *The stage has been his ruin.* Till he entered the ill-fated theatre, which throws out its unhallowed attractions to beguile and captivate the thoughtless and the gay, he was one of the best of sons, and one of the kindest of brothers, fond of home, and devoted to his mercantile duties; but after he had acquired a taste for its scenes and its performances, he became undutiful to me, unkind to his sisters, indolent and extravagant, unwilling to submit to the control of authority or of reason, and determined to follow the devices and desires of his own heart, even though he should plunge us all in ruin. It was in the theatre that he fell into bad company—it was there he lost his strength to resist temptation; and being once overcome, he surrendered himself, a willing captive to the service of iniquity. Ill-fated place! There many a virtuous youth has become the victim of sin! and there my William fell, and in his fall he has destroyed my happiness for life. Where he is gone, I know not, nor do I know what destiny awaits him; but this I know, from bitter experience, that the theatre will corrupt the most virtuous; and while it professes to afford only amusement and instruction, it often becomes the destroyer of personal honour and of social happiness."

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I retired from this scene, my mind loaded with anxiety on behalf of the unfortunate family, deeply regretting that it was not in my power to afford them any effectual relief. I could not reclaim the infatuated youth, nor yet repair the moral injury which the attractions of the theatre had brought upon the honour and peace of their household. I was grieved by their tale of sorrow; but it did not surprise me, as I had met with too many proofs of the debasing tendency of theatrical amusements, to be astonished by such a narrative.

I had an engagement to spend the evening of the day on which the above conversation took place, at the house of a friend, who had invited me to meet a gentleman from London, an acquaintance of his, who was then paying him a visit. On arriving there I found a small party assembled. In the course of the evening, after a desultory conversation on various matters, we found ourselves involved in a close, though not angry debate. The circumstance which led to this spirited discussion, was a reference to a recent verdict which had been given against a celebrated comedian, for a crime which never can be visited with too much severity, as it tends not only to the corruption of public morals, but the destruction of private and domestic happiness.

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"It is of importance," said Mr. Proctor, the gentleman at whose house we were spending the evening, "that they who lash the vices of the age, and who hold them up to scorn and contempt, should be virtuous themselves, or they will do more injury by their example, than they will do good by their professional labours."

"Very true, Sir," replied a Mr. Talbot, one of the party, who was a great admirer of the drama, "but we must not expect to find the perfection of human nature in a profession which is exposed to so many and such powerful temptations!"

"The perfection of human nature!" exclaimed Mr. Proctor's London friend, Mr. Falkland, "perhaps it would be impossible to find a class of men, in any single profession, in which we shall find so little virtue and so much vice as in the theatrical profession."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"But, Sir, do you really mean to say, that the stage never exhibits, in the private character of its performers, the beauty and consistency of virtue? Surely you are not so uncharitable!"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"I will not say that every one who appears on the stage is immoral, in the broad acceptation of that term; but I mean to say that the great majority are more depraved in their tastes, habits, and conduct, than the general average of society. This is a fact which I presume no one will attempt to deny, who possesses an accurate knowledge of the character of the performers at our theatres."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"There is, I admit, too much truth in what you now say; and how will you account for it?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"To account for it is not difficult—the moral tendency of their profession is a sufficient reason; and that we may have the most palpable and unequivocal evidence of its nature, it is allowed by Providence to operate in the first place and to the fullest extent on the morals and character of the persons who are engaged in it."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"There, Sir, I am at issue with you; for I maintain that the moral tendency of theatrical amusements is favourable to the cultivation and growth of private and public virtue; and though some who are touched with the puritanical spirit of the age, may assert the contrary, yet I think they will not be able to prove it."

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*Mr. Falkland.*—"Then, Sir, if the moral tendency of theatrical amusements be favourable to the cultivation and growth of private and public virtue, will you be kind enough to say, how it comes to pass that the very persons who are employed to conduct them, are, in general, the most profligate members of society?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Why, Sir, they are profligate before they enter the profession."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"But can't men of high-toned virtue be induced to enter a profession, which is intended to promote the moral improvement of the age—to make us wiser and better?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Very few. The majority are persons of talent, who go '*through all the vagabondry of life,*' and then offer themselves to the stage as a *dernier* resort."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"They first become profligate, and then betake themselves to the stage, as a forlorn hope!"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"They are profligate before they enter on the stage, which is an evil every virtuous man must deplore."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"And *remain* profligate after they are on."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Too many."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"The majority, Sir."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Perhaps so."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Then, Sir, if the tendency of their profession be favourable to the cultivation and growth of virtue, how is it that it does not reclaim these profligate players? How is it that it does not scatter the seeds of virtue among them, and raise it to a high state of culture?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Why, Sir, are there not many who wear the gown immoral?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"I fear there are, Sir."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"And yet, I presume, you will admit, that the moral tendency of the clerical profession and duties is favourable to the cultivation and growth of private and public virtue."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Most certainly, Sir."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Then, how comes it to pass, if it be so, that these men still remain immoral?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Permit me to say, that the introduction of this question is no satisfactory reply to my argument. Answer that in the first place, and then you are at liberty to propose what queries you think proper. If the tendency of the theatrical profession be favourable to the cultivation and growth of virtue, how is it that it does not reclaim these profligate players? This is the question under debate, and let us keep to it. We may ramble after we have settled it."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Why, Sir, there are two reasons which may be assigned—their extreme profligacy before they enter their profession; and the numerous and powerful temptations to which they are exposed after they have engaged in it."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Then, Sir, theatrical amusements will not reclaim extreme profligacy, nor produce virtue where it is most needed?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Perhaps not."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Then, Sir, you require a stock of virtue to insert your graft on, or you do not calculate on raising any good fruit?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Exactly so, Sir."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Then, as men of high-toned virtue, with few exceptions, cannot be induced to engage in the theatrical profession; and as it is found incapable of reclaiming the profligate, we can never expect to find a preponderance of virtue amongst the members of that profession; and, consequently, we are reduced to the necessity of admitting this astounding fact—the men who are employed to chastise the vices of the age, and to cultivate its virtues, are, with few exceptions, the most profligate in their manners!"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"But, Sir, will you make no allowance for men and women who are necessarily exposed to so many temptations in the discharge of the duties of their profession?"

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*Mr. Falkland.*—"Why, Sir, what peculiar temptations to vice ought to stand connected with the duties of a profession which is intended to promote private and public virtue?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Why, you know they often appear, when on the stage, in a rank far above the level of their condition, which may imperceptibly induce them to cherish those habits of extravagance in private life, for which they are so notorious. But the most fatal temptation to which they are exposed, is the too familiar intercourse which necessarily takes place between the actors and actresses on the stage, which cannot be avoided, unless the most popular plays are suppressed; and would it not betray an ignorance of human nature, to expect that this circumstance should produce no injurious effect on their moral character?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Certainly. You reason very properly. You have given a faithful, just, and true account of an evil which is generally admitted. But, in accounting for this evil, have you not made a concession which invalidates the correctness of your general position, that the tendency of theatrical amusements is to promote the cultivation and growth of private and public morals?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"No, Sir, I have merely assigned the causes of that general profligacy of manners which prevails amongst players, as a reason why you should be more indulgent towards them; and why you should not expect the perfection of virtue to grow in such near contact with the most fascinating temptations."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"I know full well what you intended to do, and also what you have done. May I be permitted now, to place your leading assertion, and your last concession, in one sentence?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Yes, provided you do it fairly."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"I will attempt it. The tendency of theatrical amusements is to promote the cultivation and growth of private and public virtue; but the actors and actresses, who are employed in this good work, are necessarily placed in a position which destroys their own virtue, and brings on amongst them a general profligacy of manners. That is, their representation of vice and vicious characters on the stage often leads to immoral practices in their private conduct. Does not this prove that the tendency of their professional duties is injurious to their own morals?"

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"Have I not admitted it, Sir?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Yes, and proved it, at the extreme hazard of endangering your own proposition, that the stage is favourable to the interests of *private* virtue."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"But, Sir, are there not many who wear the gown, and who make much higher pretensions to virtue than players do, who, after they have given their public lectures on morality, will retire and sin in secret. Now, permit me to ask, if the sanctimonious hypocrite is not a more odious character than the profligate player?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"I regret, Sir, that you should overstep the bounds of the question under discussion, to attack the clerical profession; but lest you should imagine that you are occupying a position from which no fair argument can displace you, I will for once attempt to follow you. I admit, then, for the sake of the argument, that there are some who make higher pretensions to private virtue than the actors and actresses of our theatres, who, after delivering their public lectures on morality, retire and sin in secret; but will the vices of one class of men justify the

vices of another? If some of the clergy are corrupt, will the fact of their corruption diminish the magnitude of the players' vices? Why you have introduced this charge against the clergy into the discussion I cannot say, as it has nothing to do with the question at issue, which is the necessary connection between a player's profligacy of manners and the duties of his profession. That is, that the very performance of his duties, when he is engaged in promoting the morality of the public, has a tendency to produce a corruption of his own morals. But you can bring no such charge against the moral tendency of the clerical duties. A clergyman is not compelled, in the discharge of his functions, to give utterance to any expressions, or to perform any actions, which have even a remote tendency to vitiate his taste or corrupt his morals; so that if he should turn out a bad man, you must look for the cause of it, not, as in the case of the stage-player, in any impure and contaminating influence of his profession, but in the depravity of his nature. If he become immoral, he acts an inconsistent part, offers an insult to the sentiments of the virtuous part of mankind, and loses his place in society—as a man who is a disgrace to his profession, whose example is in direct opposition to the acknowledged tendency of his ministerial functions. But as a pure moral character is not necessary to qualify a man to appear on the stage, no one feels at liberty to charge a theatrical performer with inconsistency, even if he should become notorious for swearing, gaming, drunkenness, or debauchery. He may revel in these vices, and yet appear before an audience with as much confidence of affording them gratification by his performances as he would feel if he were a man of the purest moral excellence. It is true, that if publicly convicted of some flagrant offence, and held up, through the medium of the press, as the base wretch who violates the sanctity of friendship, the admirers of the drama will express a virtuous indignation, and wish him to perform a sort of quarantine before he again makes his appearance before them; yet they will never regard it as a lasting disqualification for his professional duties."

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"Well, Sir, after all the attacks which you have made on the character of theatrical performers, and the defence which you have set up in favour of the clergy, I maintain that the sanctimonious hypocrite who retires from the pulpit, where he has delivered his grave moral lectures, to sin in secret, is a more pernicious character than the most profligate player that ever disgraced his profession. For do not the vices of the clergy shake our confidence in the truth of religion, which you know is never done by the vices of the stage; and is not their example, in consequence of their more powerful influence over the public mind, more destructive to the morals of society?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"If, Sir, your belief in the Divine origin of Christianity is ever shaken by the vices of its professors, you give a decisive proof that it does not rest on the legitimate evidence which is offered in confirmation of it. Christianity claims a Divine origin, and she adduces irrefragable arguments in confirmation of it; but the consistent conduct of *all* her professors is not one of them. Judas was a traitor, but his treachery did not weaken the force of evidence which the miracles of Jesus Christ supplied in favour of his Divine mission; and though it is very common for us to look for an exact correspondence between the life of a Christian and the purity of his professed faith, yet if all who profess to believe in the Christian religion should become as licentious in their manners as the most notorious libertines, their profligacy would not weaken the evidences on which Christianity founds her claims to our belief. They would be convicted of the crimes of which they are guilty; but by what process of fair argumentation could you bring the verdict recorded against them to disprove the divinity of a system of religion which is supported by the evidence of prophecy, of miracle, of testimony, its own internal purity, and its more than magic power in the renovation and transformation of the most impure and debased of men?"

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"Well, perhaps I made a slight mistake by saying that the vices of the clergy tend to shake our confidence in the divinity of our faith. It would have been more correct to say, they have a tendency to make us mistrustful of the integrity of the clerical character. But will you not admit that they have a most pernicious influence over the popular mind—more especially on young men who are just entering into active life?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Yes, Sir, I readily concede that the vices of the clergy have a more pernicious effect on the morals of society than the vices of players, because the clerical character is held in higher estimation, and because the clergy have free access to families who would feel themselves degraded if a player was to be introduced into their company. The clergy who support the dignity of their profession, as the great majority of them do, are esteemed and respected—their friendship is highly valued and assiduously cultivated; but players are doomed to neglect when off the boards—they are shunned in the ordinary intercourse of social life, and kept in a state of exclusion, which is something like an instinctive evidence, pervading all classes, with a few exceptions, that they must be kept aloof from the sacred precincts of the family circle. And it is to this sensitive abhorrence, which the virtuous part of society feels, against any familiar intercourse with players, that we are to attribute the comparatively trifling injury which the profligacy of their private character does to the morals of the public; but if ever this safeguard should be broken down—if ever the line of demarcation which estranges us from them should be removed, and they should have free access to our homes—allowed to associate with our sons and daughters, they would introduce amongst us a degree of moral corruption which no authority could check or influence subdue."

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"But, Sir, I have known some players introduced into the highest intellectual circles of London and Edinburgh. Why, it is a well-known fact, that the Kembles and Siddons, Bannister, Young, and many others, were often guests at the mansions of some of the most virtuous and accomplished of our nobility."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"I admit, Sir, that the intellectual eminence of a few of the profession has

procured for them an admission into the society of literary men; but a virtuous public, and even that part of the public which admires the drama, with few exceptions, will not receive them into its private or social friendship. And in the case of the few exceptions into whose circles they have been received, shall we find no husband or father who has not had occasion to rue the day when he consented to call an actor his friend? It would be invidious to give names, or I could, from my personal knowledge, mention some instances of the lamentable results of intimacies with players. Enough was brought before the public to justify the remarks of the *Times*:—"The conduct of persons who appear on the stage has never been the most irreproachable; and it may be doubted whether such a mass of living vice, as the actors and actresses but too generally present in their private lives, is not more injurious to public morals than the splendid examples of virtue which they exhibit in their theatrical characters are useful."

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"And, Sir, has no unsuspecting family had occasion to rue the day when they received into their friendship the ministers of religion? Have *they* never broken down the fence that guards the sanctity of domestic virtue? Have *they* never been publicly convicted of crime?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Yes, Sir; but when you compare the relative numbers of the two professions, you will be compelled to admit that there are but very few of the clerical order who trample on the decencies and virtues of social life, and yet continue to discharge their ministerial functions. Only let a clergyman be suspected, and he is shunned; but let him be convicted, and he is disrobed, and held in abhorrence, not only by the public, but by his brethren. And though the light and trifling spirits of the age are fond of traducing the reputation of the ministers of religion, and often impute to them crimes of which they are not guilty, yet I fearlessly assert that, with rare exceptions, they are an ornament to society, and are not surpassed, if equalled, by any order of men, for sobriety, chastity, benevolence, and all the virtues which bless and adorn social life."

*Mr. Proctor.*—"I very much dislike the introduction of reflections on the clerical order into these discussions, because they are irrelevant to the question before us, and tend to perplex and embarrass it rather than to bring it to a fair issue. The question is simply this, '*Is the moral tendency of theatrical amusements favourable to the cultivation and growth of private and public virtue?*' It is admitted that the members of the theatrical profession are, with few exceptions, loose in principles and profligate in manners; and our friend has attempted to prove that their profession has a tendency to make them so. Now, I think if these amusements are favourable to the cultivation and growth of virtue, we have a right to expect that the persons who are employed to conduct them should exhibit in their own character the virtues which they profess to inculcate. But they do not. This is a fact. We never think of recommending our sons or our daughters to go to the actors and actresses of the stage, for models from which to mould their own character. If we knew that they were forming an intimacy with any of them, we should forbid it, under a full conviction that such intimacies would sink them in the esteem of the more respectable part of society, and expose them to the most powerful and seducing temptations. Thus far, I think, our friend has gained his point; but the question is not yet decided. The players may be profligate, and a close connection may be traceable between their professional labours and the corruption of their moral principles and habits; but notwithstanding this, *we* may derive great advantage from their theatrical representations. 'Their business is to recommend virtue and discountenance vice—to show the uncertainty of human greatness, the sudden turns of fate, and the unhappy conclusion of violence and injustice'—to expose the folly of pride, the baseness of ingratitude, the vileness of hypocrisy, and to prove, by an appeal to the senses, rather than by logical reasoning, that virtue is its own reward and vice its own tormentor; and surely, Sir," addressing himself to Mr. Falkland, "you will not presume to say that the immorality of 'their private lives' disqualifies *us* from receiving the moral benefit of their public labours? This, I think, would be a position which you could not maintain."

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*Mr. Falkland.*—"But, Sir, I maintain that the frequenters of our theatres sustain, with rare exceptions, more moral injury from the representations they witness on the stage, than they receive moral benefit. Your friend Mr. Talbot admitted, in an early part of this discussion, that familiarities of expression and action take place on the stage which offend modesty, and if so, I appeal to you whether such expressions and actions can produce any other effect than an impure and demoralizing one."

*Mr. Proctor.*—"But these offensive familiarities are not of perpetual occurrence."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"But they are of frequent occurrence; and when they do occur they taint a pure mind and inflame a corrupt one. The following is a just critique on our popular comedies:—"The English comedy is like that of no other country. It is the school in which the youth of both sexes familiarize themselves with vice, which is never represented there as vice, but as mere gaiety."

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*Mr. Proctor.*—"I admit the correctness of this statement to a certain extent; and will confess that I have at times wished my children out of the theatre, from an apprehension of the possibility of their sustaining some injury from what they saw and heard; yet I still cleave to the stage, for a reason which, I think, you will not controvert."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"And what may that be?"

*Mr. Proctor.*—"The stage is a source of amusement—I may say, of great amusement. It drives away the vapours, raises our spirits, and gives an agreeable variety to life. I willingly overlook what is objectionable in expression and action, for the sake of the high gratification which a good comedy yields; and so do others. To be candid, we think less about our virtue than our enjoyment. We must have some sort of excitement to help us to endure the cross purposes and the ups and downs of life."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"I have no doubt but the great majority who frequent the theatres, enjoy, even to ecstasy, the scenes which are exhibited, and retire from the enchanting place deeply regretting that the dull uniformity of life presents no attractions half so exciting. They smile and laugh, and even chuckle with delight, when the intrigue of double-dealing has ensnared its victim—when the lewd debauchee ogles his mistress, and by some sudden spring seizes her by surprise—when virtue is made to look ridiculous by the tenderness of her scruples—when the doctrines and precepts of our holy religion are caricatured by the profane witling of the stage—and when vice, disgusting and appalling vice, speaks out its profanity, or acts its part with the adroitness of consummate villainy. Then it is that 'the feast of soul' is enjoyed, and the spirits which have been exhausted by *ennui*, or by the monotonous duties of a long day's labour, are recruited, and the agreeable alterative of the mind takes place. O yes, the stage amuses! It is indeed an elysium of bliss; and if it should be closed, many would weep and sigh who never wept or sighed over a remembrance of their sins; and deem that life a burden which was given, not for the participation of such polluting enjoyments, but for the nobler purpose of deriving pure felicity from the invisible Fountain of all goodness and excellence."

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*Mr. Proctor.*—"But, my good friend, must we be always weeping over our sins, and never allowed to partake of any pleasure but what arises from religious pursuits?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"I presume, Mr. Proctor, you will admit that we ought sometimes to mourn over our sins; and ought *sometimes* to devote our attention to religious pursuits, unless we reject the entire system of revelation as a cunningly devised fable?"

*Mr. Proctor.*—"I think, Sir, I am as firm a believer in the Divine origin of Christianity as yourself, though probably we may differ on some high points of speculative opinion; yet I cannot perceive that Christianity condemns the theatre, nor am I disposed to object to its performances *in toto*, because an audience sometimes derives a momentary gratification from scenes and expressions which a severe moralist might condemn. I admit that the stage would derive some benefit by being submitted to a purifying process, but I would rather retain it as it is, with all its faults, than have it abolished."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"If, as Mr. Falkland appears to contend, the Christian religion condemns theatrical amusements, and if, notwithstanding, they are innocent and rational, it then follows that man was not made for the Christian religion, although that religion was made for man; the scandal of such an inference, and its infallible support of scepticism, cannot but make it highly desirable to prove that the Christian religion does *not* condemn them."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"If they are innocent! and if they are rational! But I maintain they are not innocent; and, if viewed as they ought to be, in connection with our eternal destiny, I maintain they are not rational. But to avoid anticipating arguments which may be afterwards adduced, I at once challenge you to bring forward proof from the Scriptures in favour of these corrupting amusements."

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"I have no positive proof to adduce in favour of them, as the Scriptures are entirely silent on the subject; but is not that silence a strong presumptive evidence in their favour? Did any of the apostles ever condemn the theatrical exhibitions of the times in which they lived? but would they not have done it if they thought their tendency had been at variance with the spirit and design of that religion which they came to propagate amongst mankind?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Then, Sir, because they did not in their epistles, which were addressed to the converted pagans who had renounced their former evil customs, condemn the gladiatorial exhibitions of Rome and of Greece, you think that a fair argument arises in favour of them?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Why, if they had considered them unfavourable to the morals of the people, they most certainly would have condemned them."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"What if the persons to whom they wrote had previously renounced them?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"But we have no proof that the early Christians did abstain from these sources of amusement."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"There, I think, you are mistaken. We have incontestable evidence to prove that the early Christians not only abstained from them, but condemned them in the most unqualified terms of reprobation; and I will now, with your leave, read a collection of testimonies on the subject, with which I was lately favoured by a friend:—

"'The Romans,' says Cæcilius, the heathen, in Minutius, 'govern and enjoy the world, while you Christians are careful and mopish, abstaining even from lawful pleasures. You visit not shows, nor are present at the pomps; you abhor the holy games—a melancholy ghastly people ye are.'

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"'True,' says Octavius, 'we Christians refrain from the play-house, because of its intolerable corruptions. We cannot be present at the plays without great sin and shame.'

"Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, who flourished about the year 170, in his book to Autolicus has these words:—'It is not lawful for us to be present at the prizes of your gladiators, lest by this means we should be accessories to the murders there committed. Neither dare we presume upon the liberty of your shows, lest our senses should be tinctured and disobliged with indecency and profaneness. The tragical distractions of Tereus and Thyestes are nonsense to us. We are for seeing no representations of lewdness. God forbid that Christians, who are remarkable for



modesty and reservedness—who are obliged to discipline and trained up in virtue—God forbid, I say, that we should dishonour our thoughts, much less our practice, with such wickedness as this!

"Tertullian, who flourished in the same century, is copious upon this subject:—'We Christians have nothing to do with the frenzies of the race-ground, the lewdness of the play-house, or the barbarities of the bear-garden.'

"Clement Alexandrinus, who lived about the year 200, affirms that a circus and theatre may not improperly be called the 'chair of pestilence.'—*De Pædag.* lib. iii.

"St. Cyprian, who lived in the third century, has spoken at large upon the stage, and after having described the diversions of the play-house, he expostulates in this manner:—

"'What business has a Christian at such places as these? A Christian who has not the liberty so much as to think of an ill thing?—Why does he entertain himself with lewd representations? Has he a mind to discharge his modesty, that he may sin afterwards with the more boldness? Yes: this is the consequence. By using to see these things, he will learn to do them. Why need I mention the levities and impertinences in comedies, or the ranting distractions of tragedy? The folly of them is egregious, and unbecoming the gravity of believers.

"'As I have often said, these foppish, these pernicious diversions must be avoided. We must set a guard upon our senses, and keep the sentinel always upon duty. To make vice familiar to the ear is the way to recommend it. And since the mind of man has a natural bent to extravagance, how is it likely to hold out under example and invitation? If you push that which totters already, whither will it tumble? In earnest; we must draw off our inclinations from these vanities. A Christian has much better sights than these to look at.'

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"St. Cyril, who lived in the fourth century, in his Catechism for the newly baptized, has these words:—

"'You have said at your baptism, I renounce thee, O Satan; I renounce all thy works and all thy pomps. The pomps of the devil are the diversions of the theatre, and all other the like vanities; from which David begs of God to be delivered: 'Turn away mine eyes,' says he, 'that they behold not vanity.' Do not then suffer yourself to be led away by a fondness for the entertainments of the stage, to behold there the extravagancies of plays full of wantonness and impurity.'"<sup>[17]</sup>

The discussion between Mr. Talbot and Mr. Falkland was here broken off, but shortly afterwards resumed, as follows in the next chapter.

## THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS.

### PART II.



These quotations which you have read from the ancient fathers," said Mr. Talbot, "merely express their private opinion on the expediency of not attending such scenes of amusement; but as they were not endowed with the spirit of infallibility, their opinions may be submitted to the ordeal of examination no less than your own."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Nay, Sir; these quotations do more than express the private opinion of the historians from whose works they are taken; they record the fact that the primitive Christians did not attend public places of amusement, because they knew that their moral tendency was unfavourable to the cultivation and growth of virtue. They also prove that the stage undergoes no moral change—indecent and profane in the olden times, when amusing Greeks and Romans; indecent and profane still—*semper eadem.*"

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"But, Sir, do not the expostulations of these writers, and the arguments which they employ against an attendance at the theatres, lead us to the conclusion that some of the early Christians did attend them?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"No doubt, Sir, that some of the early Christians did attend them; but their attendance was considered as the first step to the abandonment of their religious principles—as an act of inconsistency, which subjected them to the censures of their brethren—an approximation to the customs of the votaries of paganism, which, if persisted in, was visited by an exclusion from church-fellowship. This, I think, you must admit to be decisive of the opinion which the pure part of the primitive Christians held respecting the lawfulness and tendency of theatrical amusements."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"But, Sir, waiving the opinion of the ancient fathers, allow me to ask you one question: If the moral tendency of such amusements be unfavourable to private virtue, how is it that there are no express prohibitions against them in the writings of the apostles?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"But, Sir, do you believe that the apostles approved of every practice which they

did not *expressly* condemn?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Why, yes, Sir, and I think there is strong presumptive evidence in favour of such an opinion. Were they not employed to furnish us with a code of laws for the government of our conduct? and is not that code perfect? If, then, there be no law to condemn our attendance at such places of amusement, are we not at liberty to believe that their silence is a tacit, though not a positive sanction?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"If, Sir, we adopt the principle for which you are now contending, we shall be reduced to the necessity of admitting that every modification of evil, which is not expressly condemned by the sacred writers, is actually sanctioned by them. The absurdity of such an opinion is not more flagrant than its tendency would prove pernicious to the welfare of society. Is the crime of gaming, or bull-baiting, or of forgery expressly condemned by the Scriptures? and yet, Sir, would you venture to appeal to the silence of the Scriptures as a tacit sanction of these vices? Some of the vices to which human nature is addicted, in every age and in every country, are expressly condemned, while others, which spring out of local customs, and casual temptations, are condemned only by implication. As a proof of the correctness of this assertion, nothing is said in Scripture against the savage custom of exposing children; nothing against slavery; and nothing expressly against duelling. But is not the exposing of children condemned in that charge against the Romans that they were 'without natural affection?' Is there not a strong censure against slavery conveyed in the command to 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you?' and against duelling, in the general prohibition of murder contained in the sixth commandment?"

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"I admit the validity of your argument, in its application to the crimes which you have mentioned, because they are the more refined modifications of crimes which are expressly condemned; but permit me to say that I do not recollect any passages in the sacred volume, which by a fair implication, really condemn theatrical amusements."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Then, Sir, by your permission, I will quote a few. 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful' (Psal. i. 1). Does not this passage condemn our going into the assemblies of the ungodly? 'But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment' (Matt. xii. 36). Are there no idle—no profane words spoken on the stage? and if it be a crime to utter them, can it be less than a crime to go and listen to them? 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers' (Eph. iv. 29). Do no corrupt communications proceed from the mouth of players? and if it be a crime to advance them, can it be less than a crime to receive them? 'But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks' (Eph. v. 3, 4). Are there no filthy expressions—no unhallowed jesting on the stage? and if these vices are not to be named amongst Christians, ought they to be sanctioned by them? 'For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you' (1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.) Does not the apostle, in this passage, commend those to whom it was addressed, for having renounced their former revellings and banquetings? and does he not arm them against the reproaches which their exemplary conduct would bring upon them? and can we suppose that, if the apostle was now on earth, he would give his sanction to the practice of some modern Christians, who are to be seen, now at church, and anon at the theatre?—now receiving the sacrament on bended knees, and anon kindling into rapture by the exhibitions of the stage?—now giving utterance to the solemn words, *O God, the Father of heaven, have mercy upon us miserable sinners*, and anon applauding expressions and sentiments which no lips can articulate but the lips of impurity? And, Sir, lest we should, through inadvertency, expose ourselves to the hazard of being overcome by the force of temptation, are we not commanded to 'abstain from all appearance of evil?' (1 Thess. v. 22);—to have 'no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them?' (Eph. v. 11). Are not these injunctions violated by those who frequent the theatre? Are we not taught to pray, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil?* and do we not offer a violence to our own belief, and an insult to our Father in heaven, when we pass from the attitude of prayer, into the place over which the evil spirit reigns in undisturbed sovereignty, and where temptations of the most seducing tendency abound?"

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"But, Sir, in the application of these passages of Scripture against an attendance on theatrical amusements, you have taken for granted that their moral tendency is injurious to the cultivation and growth of private and public virtue, which, permit me to say, without intending to reflect on your good sense, is a species of logical artifice, which I did not suppose you would condescend to employ. It is an attempt to carry a position by surprise, which you should have approached openly—a jesuitical manœuvre to take the question of debate by the adroitness of a sheer cunning, rather than by fair argumentation. If, Sir, you had first proved that their tendency on the morals of society is, what you assert it to be, injurious and pernicious, I grant there would be a propriety in the application of the passages of the Bible which you have made, and the contest would soon be terminated; but, as that point has not been proved, and as I now challenge you to the proof of it, allow me to say that your reasoning has produced no effect."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"You are at perfect liberty to examine any arguments which I may adduce against theatrical amusements with the utmost degree of severity, and to employ what terms you please when expressing your opinion of their character, or of their effect; but, Sir, you cannot

expect that I shall submit to your descriptions if I think them unjust. You accuse me of taking for granted what remains to be proved, which, you say, is not only unfair but useless. But I appeal to your candour if I took more for granted than what was tacitly admitted in proof, if not actually recorded. Has it not been admitted, that expressions are sometimes uttered on the stage which the lips of virgin modesty could not utter? If so, will you presume to say, that the quotation which I made does not condemn them—'But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment?' Has it not been admitted, that expressions are uttered, and some actions are performed in the theatre, which have a tendency to corrupt the minds of the actors and actresses? and if so, will you say that the injunction which commands us *to abstain from even the appearance of evil*, does not prohibit our witnessing such actions or listening to such expressions? If this be not proof against theatrical amusements, what will you call proof? If this argument does not fairly apply, it is not because it has not strength to strike, but because you are endeavouring to raise the dust, that you may bear off your colours to prevent them being taken. But that you may not shout victory on your retreat, nor taunt me with unfair dealing when you are going down, I will consent to clear the space, and meet you on the question of the obvious and direct influence of the stage on the morals of society."

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"I grant, Sir, that the Bible censures all indecent and profane expressions, and that it points the severity of its rebuke against every action which has a demoralizing tendency either on the mind of the performer or the spectator; but I presume you will not take upon yourself to say, that our best and most popular comedies come under this sentence of condemnation? There are two questions, I apprehend, which have an immediate claim on our attention—first, What is the design of comedy? and, secondly, Will the desired result be attained through its instrumentality? In reply to the first question, I will quote the language of the celebrated Dr. Blair:—'Comedy proposes for its object, neither the great sufferings nor the great crimes of men: but their follies and slighter vices—those parts of their character which raise in beholders a sense of impropriety, which expose them to be censured and laughed at by others, or which render them troublesome in civil society.' And I doubt not, but with all your rancour against the amusements of the theatre, you will agree with him in the following opinion which he pronounces on the tendency of such a mode of attack:—"This general idea of comedy, as a satirical exhibition of the improprieties and follies of mankind, is an idea very moral and useful. There is nothing in the nature, or general plan of this kind of composition that renders it liable to censure. To polish the manners of men, to promote attention to the proper decorum of social behaviour, and above all, to render vice ridiculous, is doing a real service to mankind.' This is the design which comedy proposes to accomplish; and now, Sir, we will, if you please, pass on to the consideration of the second question, Will the desired result be attained through its instrumentality? By the exhibition of folly and vice, in the persons of the actors and actresses, who are held up to ridicule and censure, a moral effect is produced on the audience, who retire from such a scene, where the absurdities of the human character have been exhibited to their view, infinitely more disgusted by them, than they ever felt when listening to the grave lecture of censure or condemnation from the pulpit. And I think, Sir, you will admit that the worthy doctor has given us a proof of the correctness of his judgment, when he said, that, 'Many vices might be more successfully exploded by employing ridicule against them, than by serious attacks and arguments.' And though, Sir, I have too much reverence for the pulpit to treat it with contempt, and form too high an estimate of its moral utility in correcting the disorders of society, to run it down, yet I doubt whether it *can* wield such a keen and powerful weapon against the folly and vices of the times, as the well-regulated and well-conducted stage."

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*Mr. Falkland.*—"Your last remark, Sir, savours so much of infidelity, that it is both offensive to my taste, and repugnant to my understanding; and though it does not affect the question at issue, yet I cannot let it pass without replying to it. The pulpit, Sir, when it is the oracle of truth, is denominated the *power of God*—that moral instrument which he uses to renew and sanctify our corrupt nature; and on which he has conferred the singular honour of employing it as the means of subverting the idolatry of ancient and modern times, and of reclaiming many thousands of the children of disobedience to the wisdom of the just; but has he ever identified himself with the stage? has he ever employed the stage to turn men from darkness to light—from the power of Satan to himself? O no! Did the stage ever recover Greece or Rome from their licentious and barbarous rites and ceremonies? It found them corrupt, and corrupt it left them. And what has it done for modern Paris, where it exists in the plenitude of its glory? There you have a proof of the weakness of its strength to reform a people, and of the charm of its power to corrupt them. Indeed, Sir, it requires a high degree of moral corruption as the basis of its exhibitions, for it will be found that its performers, and its admirers, are alike strangers to that elevated moral purity, which brings the human spirit to some degree of resemblance to the immaculate sanctity of the Divine nature. Hence, while many who profess and call themselves Christians, rank amongst its advocates and its friends, it is a fact too notorious to be concealed, that they who are a *peculiar people*, and whose moral peculiarities are those which the Scriptures hold out as the distinctive evidences of the Christian character, shun it, as the habitation of evil, from whence they are excluded no less by the force of principle than by the voice of authority. A real Christian in a theatre, animated and delighted with the scenes which he must behold, and with the sentiments and expressions which he must hear, would be as great a phenomenon as a stage player weeping at church when confessing his sins, or overpowered with gratitude when receiving, on his knees, the sacramental memorials of the Saviour's death."

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"I was not aware, Sir, that the accidental expression of an opinion, which has no bearing on the question at issue, would have called forth such a spontaneous burst of disapprobation; and though it would not be very difficult to turn back some of your pointed

interrogations to your own annoyance, yet as that would probably consume too much of our time, we will, if you please, confine our remarks in future to the subject under discussion. To my questions, Sir, if you please."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Well, Sir, then to the first question. You have given such a very flattering description of the *design* of comedy, that you remind me of a certain painter who engaged to draw a likeness that should represent a whole fraternity, but when he produced it, it was found to resemble no one, having been sketched from fancy rather than real life. I admit that a comic writer, of rare and extraordinary powers, could get up a piece that would keep in view, through the whole of its plot, the censure and reprobation of the follies and vices of mankind; but have the writers of English comedy done this? Did not the author from whom you have made your quotations speak the truth when he said, '*that the English comedy has been too often the school of vice?*' And is it not so? Do not the most popular plays that are acted on the English stage exhibit such scenes as must compel virtue, if present, to hide her blushing face, and wish herself away? Do they not give utterance to sentiments and expressions, which, to say the least, border on profanity and blasphemy, and which, if admired or approved of, must contaminate and defile?"

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"But, Sir, I hope in the ardour of your zeal against the stage, you will not overlook the distinction which the wisest and best of men have made between the use and the *abuse of a thing*. I grant that certain abuses, at various periods of its history, have disgraced this department of the drama; but what then? is it an argument against the thing itself, any more than the impositions of priestcraft are arguments against the value of true religion? I grant you that the most obscene and licentious compositions have disgraced the stage, but is the abuse of a thing any objection against its use? Licentious writers of the comic class, as Dr. Blair very justly remarks, have too often had it in their power to cast a ridicule upon characters and subjects which did not deserve it; but this is a fault not owing to the nature of comedy, but to the genius and turn of the writers of it."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"It happens unfortunately, however, for your side of the question, that its *abuse* has hitherto been almost the universal characteristic of comedy, while its *use* has scarcely ever been exemplified. Indeed, I defy any one who has a regard for propriety to go to a theatre without hearing something to shock his moral feelings."

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"Why, Sir, you are aware that no play can be acted on the English stage unless it is licensed by the lord-chamberlain, fourteen days before it makes its appearance in public; and do you not know that he is invested with full power to prohibit the representation of any play, if he thinks it militates against the interests of virtue?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Then, Sir, if I understand you, it is lawful to introduce any play on the stage which the lord-chamberlain licenses?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Exactly so, Sir."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Indeed! is not this rather singular! But if a licentious play should pass through the chamberlain's office without being detected, and come to be represented on the stage, what would be its reception? Are you quite sure that it would be hissed off by a British audience?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Nothing, Sir, can be a stronger proof of the respect which a British theatrical audience feels for pure virtue, than the well-known opposition made to the re-appearance of K —, after his disgraceful conduct."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"That determined opposition on the part of the more respectable public was very gratifying; but yet I am decidedly of opinion, that if he had absented himself for a few months, or weeks, till the public feeling had somewhat subsided, he would have met with a cordial reception on his re-appearance on the stage. But he was precipitate, he did not dream that there could be much more virtue before the scenes than behind; in this, so far happily, he was mistaken. He forgot that many who will connive at the vices of the stage while they remain in comparative obscurity, or are only whispered abroad in private circles, dare not, out of respect to the decent little observances to which they are attached, connive at them when they are sent out of a court of justice with a badge of indelible infamy hanging about their necks. His precipitancy was the cause of his rejection, rather than his crime; for even his greatest opponents promised him their support, if he would refrain, only for a fortnight, from appearing on the boards, in deference to the taste and voice of the public."

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"Well, Sir, after the public had expressed their disapprobation of his disgraceful conduct, and compelled him to perform a theatrical penance, did you expect them to force him off the stage for ever?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"No, Sir, I did not expect it. I know them too well. The vices of the players will never be the means of excluding them from the stage, if they possess the talent of pleasing the admirers of the drama. These are a humane people whose mantle of charity is so broad, that it will easily cover a multitude of sins; and though some of them, when goaded by the severe invectives of the press, will raise their indignant voice against the bold transgressor who passes at once from a court of justice, where his delinquencies have been exhibited in all their enormity, to the stage, the so-styled school of morals, yet the lapse of a short interval will soon induce an oblivion of his offences, and the charms of his acting will soon re-establish him in the favour of the public. But I must now return to the question under consideration. It is not, What will a theatrical audience do, when an actor is convicted in a court of justice of one of the worst of crimes that can be committed against the sanctity of domestic honour and happiness? but, What is such an audience *accustomed to do*, when a lewd or profane comedy—a comedy which is the abuse of the thing—a comedy which is the school of vice—is brought on the stage, and acted in

their presence?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Why, Sir, I presume you know that the public often reject plays?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Yes, when they are not to their liking."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Well, Sir, then the point is decided."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Nay, good Sir, not till you have proved that their lewdness, their profanity, and their demoralizing tendency, was the cause of their being rejected. Prove that, and you have gained your point, and redeemed the audience from the heavy charge which I bring against it, of having uniformly given the least degree of support to the purest plays, and the greatest degree of support to the most objectionable. When the writers of comedy mix up with their plots incidents which we could not tolerate in virtuous life, and introduce characters in their scenes which we should shun as the corrupters of our manners, and do this to excite ridicule and contempt against the religion of our country by holding pious people up to obloquy, the audience have uniformly exclaimed, 'Ah, ah, so we would have it! This is to our taste!' The play is again and again called for. What you call the abuse of the thing, has been, and still is, more popular than the thing existing in what you call its purity. How will you account for this, unless you admit that the taste of the audience is formed from the character of their amusements, which tend to deprave and vitiate it?"

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"Why, Sir, I admit that many who attend our theatres are persons of dubious virtue; yet, formerly a great play-goer, I can flatly contradict this imputed propensity on the part of the public to applaud a licentious play. I have always heard noble sentiments echoed in public applause, and, on several occasions, the lurking remains of the old broad comedy received with marked disapprobation. And whatever be the opinion of those who do *not* go to the theatre, these facts will be corroborated by all who *do*."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"You say that all who go to plays corroborate the facts that noble sentiments are always applauded, and obscene expressions are marked with disapprobation. Now, Sir, I can flatly contradict this assertion, though not from personal observation, yet from undoubted testimony. I grant that fine passages, delivered in an eloquent style, and which breathe the noble sentiments of patriotism, and valour, and benevolence, and indignation against some *unpopular vice*, are heard with pleasure; but the self-same audience, which makes the house ring with its acclamations on these occasions, not only silently sanctions but likewise loudly applauds profanity and indecency at other times. If this be not the case, how is it that the plays, which are the school of vice, still appear on the stage, and still retain their hold on popular favour?"

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"What plays do you refer to?"

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Why, Sir, *The Hypocrite* is one."

*Mr. Talbot.*—"The *Hypocrite*! What! do you object to *The Hypocrite*?—A comedy which was applauded by royalty, and in which a striking example is afforded of the attempt of fanaticism to undermine the principles and well-being of society for its own individual advantage, under the specious garb of religion! Surely, you must be a very fastidious person indeed, to find anything objectionable in that most excellent comedy! I can hardly think you are serious."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"The design of that comedy is to hold up personal piety to ridicule and contempt, by associating it with the weakness of the intellect, the vulgarity of unpolished manners, and the vices of the human character; and though the writer makes an effort at the conclusion to redeem it from such an imputation, yet such is its obvious tendency, and such is the effect which it is known to produce on an audience. But as I wish to shape my objections into a tangible form, allow me to say that the introduction and exposure on the stage of any person making pretensions to elevated piety is, of itself, an objectionable feature, and more calculated to excite prejudice against all professions of religion, than to induce the hypocrite to throw off the mask. Is this favourable to the cultivation and growth of virtue? It may be of the virtue of a theatrical audience, which reaches not the maturity of its growth till it has acquired the art of caricaturing righteousness, after it has been accustomed to make a mock of sin; but it is destructive of that pure religion which teaches us to avoid all 'foolish talking and filthy jesting;' and to correct our personal imperfections, instead of making sport with the vices of others. I have read this disgusting comedy, and I do not hesitate to say, that its indecent allusions and profane language, are enough to corrupt any mind; and that the woman who can retire from the theatre after the curtain drops with a desire to see it performed again, must have lost all that refined delicacy of feeling which forms the greatest ornament of her sex."

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"Stop, Sir! I cannot allow this libel to be pronounced, without entering my protest against it."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"No, Sir, it is not a libel. The allusions, the language, and some of the actions of that play, are more becoming a house of ill-fame than the school of virtue, as you wish me to believe the play-house is; and I am conscious that no decent persons, in any rank of life, would tolerate such allusions or actions in their families. Allow me to ask one question, What opinion would you form of a female who would consent to read that comedy in the presence of an indiscriminate assemblage of young people?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Of course, Sir, I should not solicit her to do it."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"But suppose she was solicited to do it, and suppose she did it without faltering and without blushing, what opinion would you form of her modesty, or of the tone of her mind? Would you like that female to be either your mother, your wife, your sister, or your daughter?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Perhaps not."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"So I presume; for, as the poet says—

'Immodest words admit of no defence,  
For want of decency is want of sense.'

If, then, you would not like to hear a female read that play in a private party, especially if that female was your own daughter, how can you attempt to justify your conduct in wishing her to go and see it performed?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Why, there is a little difference between the two cases."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Yes, I grant there is a little difference between the circumstances of the two cases; but, Sir, I appeal to your candour and to your judgment, whether that comedy, when acted on the stage, can promote the growth of virtue, which would have a demoralizing effect if read in a private circle?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"In a theatre, each one is lost in the mass of the audience, and hence no immediate effect is produced." [212]

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Then, Sir, how can the stage, when it exists in its purity, promote the growth of virtue, and how, when it is abused, does it become the school of vice, if no immediate effect is produced by the sentiments and actions which are there delivered and performed?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"I mean, Sir, that a female does not sustain that injury in the opinion of others, who goes to see this comedy performed, which she would, if she read it to a promiscuous assembly."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"I grant it, Sir; but will her imagination sustain no injury by the polluting impressions which it will receive? Will her moral taste sustain no injury by the obscene sentiments and allusions which she will hear? Will she retire as pure from all corrupt associations, as she was when she first entered the theatre? Will her memory carry away no expression which you would rather she would forget?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"But, Sir, when people become familiar with the stage, none of these evil effects are ever felt, which you imagine must be the consequence of their attendance."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"They may not be felt so forcibly as at first, because by habit the taste becomes reconciled to them, which proves that the stage lowers the high tone of virtue, and brings it down so softly and so imperceptibly on a level with impurity, that eventually its more disgusting forms and expressions merely excite the passing smile or the burst of laughter.

'Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,  
As to be hated, needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.'"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"It is no use, Sir, to argue against facts. I have gone to the theatre without being injured by it; and I have known many of my friends who have never been injured by it."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"It may be so; but would you like a son or a daughter to acquire a passion for theatrical amusements? And would you suffer them, if they had acquired it, to go alone?" [213]

*Mr. Talbot.*—"No, Sir, I should not like my children to become *passionately* fond of the theatre, though I should not object to their occasional attendance, yet I would not suffer them to go alone."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Not like them to become passionately fond of an amusement, which is intended and calculated to promote the growth of their virtues! Surely, good Sir, you don't wish their virtues to be stunted for want of nutriment; and though I can easily conceive that the expense attending this source of gratification and moral improvement, may form one formidable objection against its repeated indulgence, yet, can money be better laid out, than on the cultivation of our children's virtuous principles and habits? Suppose, for example, you have a son who is somewhat inclined to an evil course—one, over whose mind the grave lectures of morality which the clergy deliver have lost their influence—who is rather prone to treat parental authority with contempt; would you not wish to see him cherish a passion for theatrical exhibitions, which, according to the opinion of Mr. Proctor, and in which opinion you concur, are designed and adapted to recommend virtue and discountenance vice; and thus prove, by an appeal to the senses, rather than by a process of reasoning, that virtue is its own reward, and vice its own tormentor? If he should feel no deep interest in these exhibitions, it is not likely that they will produce any more powerful effect on his mind, than the grave lectures of morality which he instinctively abhors; but if his passions are strongly excited, and he returns to this school of wisdom and of virtue, *con amore*—if he cannot refrain from going, without doing violence to his feelings—if he long for the hour of evening dress, and for the agreeable alternative of mind, which is to divert him from the dull, monotonous duties of his station—if he enter into the spirit of the comedy, which usually makes a libertine the most attractive character in the piece—or if the spirit of that character enters into him—do you not suppose that he will soon be reclaimed from vice, and be so smitten with the charms of virtue, as to follow her through evil and through good report? And suppose several such young men should meet in the lobby of a theatre, which you know, Sir, is not impossible; and suppose they should sit together during the play, and should retire together, after the curtain falls, and the last charms of the comic muse have passed from the eye and the [214]

ear, do you not think that they will very naturally begin to resolve on amending their evil course, and as naturally resolve to become chaste, and temperate, and domesticated in their habits? Of course you cannot for a moment imagine that they will retire from this school of virtue to the tavern or the brothel! No, Sir! The comic muse would stand in their way, and dispute their passage, even if they should have a secret predilection for such haunts; as a dumb ass once reproved the madness of a certain prophet, on whose mind no other agent of persuasion could operate!"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"Satire is no argument, Sir."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"But it often puts forth a biting one, from under the folds of its concealment; yet, as you seem to dislike it, I will dismiss it, and return to the more grave form of debate. Permit me, then, to ask you, if the company into which the young are introduced at a theatre, does not form a very powerful objection against it?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"This is an objection against theatrical amusements, which I have been expecting to make its appearance for some time; and now it is out, I am not unwilling to meet it. I will then confess, 'that the English box lobbies are too much disgraced by the open display of female prostitution,' and that too many of the baser sort of our own sex frequent the theatre; yet, as the wisest and the best are always to be found in attendance on the comic muse, we may very easily keep with them, and thus avoid that contagion of evil, to which you imagine we are necessarily exposed. We know that vice, like every other marketable commodity, will be offered for sale in all great public assemblages. But, Sir, can you see the vast majority of an audience rivetted on the scenic representation, without confessing that many a youthful passion is preserved from the *out-of-doors* temptation to vice, by this intellectual occupation of his time within? London, and all large towns, are, by reason of their congregated numbers, hotbeds of vice; you know licentiousness would find other haunts, and not be one whit limited by the suppression of the theatre; it would be hard, indeed, that virtue should imprison itself, because vice frequented the same resort; on that principle we might not walk the great streets of the metropolis, in broad day light, because of the 'polluted' neighbours on all sides."

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*Mr. Falkland.*—"Then you admit that the theatre is one of the haunts of vice; and yet you say that the wisest and the best are always to be found in attendance there, *and from choice!* How odd, that the wisest and the best of our wise and good men and women, young and old, should choose to go where the most profligate and licentious resort! Surely, you will not adduce their conduct on this point, as a conclusive argument in favour of their superior wisdom, or their superior love of virtue! You say, if we go, we may keep with them! But, how shall we know the wisest and the best from the most depraved, in such a promiscuous throng as usually crowd a theatre?—From instinct? or from some secret sign which, like that of the Masonic order, is concealed from every one but the initiated?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"When I go to the theatre, if I go alone, I keep apart from others; and if I go in company, I keep with them; so that I have no intercourse with the general audience."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Very possibly; but do all who attend the theatre adopt the same judicious maxim?"

*Mr. Talbot.*—"They may if they choose, and if they do not, they alone are to blame."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"Yes, they may! but do they? No, Sir, they do not! Is it not there that the evil spirits of impurity spread their nets for thoughtless and unsuspecting youth? Is it not there that he often picks up an acquaintance, who leads him, after the play is concluded, to the tavern—to the gaming-table—and to the house of ill-fame? Is it not there, that the profligate female practises her arts of seduction,<sup>[18]</sup> that he learns a profane language, and familiarizes himself with vice in its most disgusting forms? Is it not to this school of virtue—to this resort of the wisest and the best—to this elysium of bliss—to this paradise of excellence—that many of the young of both sexes have ascribed their ruin? Wonder, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth! The school of virtue teaching vice!—the resort of the wisest and the best the haunt of the most licentious!—the elysium of bliss the common receptacle of outcast misery!—where iniquity reigns, as in the high place of its dominion, and on which thousands look in all the bitterness of anguish, as the spot where they fell from their original purity and honour to degradation and crime!"

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*Mr. Talbot.*—"You can paint, Sir."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"But not the theatre as it is. That's impossible. I cannot describe the evils, the contaminating evils, to which a young person is exposed who visits this haunt of vice—this dwelling-place of sin—this temple of lewdness, of whose priests and priestesses 'it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret'—this Augean stable of infamy, which no waters have ever been able to cleanse. You say, that while the youth is within the theatre he is preserved from the temptations which are out of doors—a truism no one will doubt; and so he is, when in a gaming-room, and so he is when in a tavern; but, Sir, is he not, when coming away from the theatre, exposed to the out-door temptations, and very often prepared, by what he sees and hears, to yield more easily to them. The following fact, which is too well attested to be denied, lets us into the awful secret of the tendency of theatrical exhibitions; and if it were necessary, I could adduce many instances of the most promising young men, and of the most amiable females, who, by frequenting a theatre, have lost their character; blasted their prospects of happiness for life, and brought down the gray hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave:—

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"The robberies committed daily in the streets, during the representation of the *Beggar's Opera*, were beyond the example of former times; and several thieves and robbers confessed in

Newgate, that they raised their courage in the playhouse by the songs of their hero, Macheath, before they sallied forth on their desperate nocturnal exploits. So notorious were the evil consequences of its frequent representation become, that the Middlesex justices united with Sir John Fielding in requesting Mr. Garrick to desist from performing it, as they were of opinion that it was never represented on the stage, without creating an additional number of real thieves.' Thus we see the debt of gratitude which the morality of the public soon contracted with this agent of its reformation, who, for sixty-three nights in succession, during the first season of his labours, delivered his maxims of wisdom, and his lessons of virtue, which, by some peculiar fatality, became the means of corrupting the audience to a most alarming extent; but to hold the stage responsible for this, would be, of course, a breach of the law of charity! 'The second season of this opera was as productive as the first; nor were the provincial stages without their gleanings from the poet's harvest; it was acted fifty nights at Bath and Bristol. Not only Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, but Minorca, and other distant regions, saw it in their theatres; while its songs were everywhere to be read on fans, handkerchiefs, and fire-screens.' Wherever this thief-maker went, he was received with raptures by the admirers of the drama; they sung his praises and gave him the homage of their affection as the idol god of their theatrical adorations, and he had, like ancient Moloch, the high gratification of seeing many of his devoted worshippers doomed to an untimely destruction. And yet, Sir, with such facts staring you in the face—with such confessions of convicted guilt—you have the temerity to maintain that the theatre is favourable to the cultivation and the growth of public and private virtue! Can you hope to gain proselytes to your opinion? Do you imagine that we are to be duped into the admission of an assertion which no argument can support, which recorded facts so unequivocally disprove, and which the worst men, in common with the best, reject as an insult offered to the obvious dictates of their understanding? Do you suppose that we have reached the dotage of our existence, when the intellect, paralyzed by some extraordinary visitation of Heaven, or worn out by the intensity of its own labours, is to sit down at the feet of absurdity, to receive the monstrous extravagancies of convicted falsehood as the lucid and resistless enunciations of oracular truth? No, Sir. A general belief is gone abroad, and it exists no less firmly amongst many of the admirers of the drama, than amongst its most determined opponents, that while the stage may be vindicated as a source of amusement, an attempt to vindicate it as the handmaid of virtue is no less disreputable to the understanding, than it is to the moral taste of the advocate, who, however dexterous he may be in his pleadings, labours under the disadvantage of appearing in court, after the judges have taken the verdict of an honest jury."

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*Mr. Proctor.*—"I am now, Sir, decidedly of your opinion on this point; though I must confess I have often enjoyed a good play. The stage, in its present state, amuses many, and gratifies their taste, but it certainly does defile the imagination, and too often pollutes the heart; and where one young person receives any moral good, very many, I do believe, are corrupted and ruined. It may be defended as a source of amusement, but it is no handmaid of virtue; it is a very demon in the art of seduction. I had many qualms of conscience, when I did go to the theatre; but it is now more than two years since I entered one, and I must confess, that the present discussions have satisfied me, that I have acted a wise and a safe part by abstaining from going; nor will I ever go again, or allow any child of mine to go. In fact, I think it would be a public good, to shut up all the theatres in the country."

*Mr. Falkland.*—"My respected friend, I assure you, I am highly gratified to hear from your lips, such a candid confession and such a noble resolve; and I think my formal antagonist in these discussions, on cool reflection, will admit, that a passion for theatrical amusements had better be repressed than encouraged; as it is always hazardous, and sometimes fatal, especially to the young and incautious."

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## UNITARIANISM RENOUNCED.



he power of early impressions and education is universally admitted; and when erroneous views have been imbibed from infancy, and become associated with everything that is hallowed in our domestic recollections, the influence exercised by them on the mind is so strong as very generally to maintain undisputed authority throughout life. Truth will sometimes, however, assert her supremacy, and succeed in producing conviction, even where she has to contend with the most deep-rooted feelings and long-cherished prejudices. These remarks are suggested by the history of Mr. Macfarlane, an intelligent and pious young man, whom I met at the house of Mr. Proctor, on the occasion of the discussion narrated in the foregoing chapters. I had frequently heard of him from a friend, of whose church he was a member, and been led to take a great interest in him from the account which had been given me of his religious history and that of his sister. This I shall now proceed to narrate, as exhibiting the progress, from the frigid zone of Unitarianism, to the warmth and sunshine of pure evangelical religion.

Mr. Macfarlane's father was a wealthy merchant in the town where I resided, universally esteemed for his amiable character and unsullied integrity. Descended from ancestors who had borne a distinguished part in the struggles for civil and religious liberty during the seventeenth century, he was himself the son of pious parents, but their death, within a short period of each other, while he was but a child, deprived him of the advantages which he might have derived from their example and instructions. Left to the care of a maternal uncle, whose sentiments were

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of no decided order, he grew up to manhood with no one to guide him in his religious belief; and having, on his first entering into business, formed an intimacy with some zealous Unitarians, he imbibed their opinions, and regularly attended the ministry of one of their most celebrated preachers. He was too eager in the pursuit of wealth to devote much time to speculative inquiries, and of too retiring a disposition to take any part in discussion when theological topics became the subject of conversation; but he cheerfully and conscientiously supported the benevolent institutions connected with his denomination, which he thought the most enlightened and intelligent in the kingdom. While he admitted the truth of the Christian religion, he thought its records so ambiguous, or so corrupted in the early ages, that they ought not to be implicitly received. "I will believe nothing," he often used to say, "which I cannot fully comprehend; and I feel myself as much at liberty to dispute the opinion of an apostle, when he speaks on any speculative doctrine, as I do to examine the opinion of any other man." He rejected the divinity of Jesus Christ as indignantly as a Christian would the divinity of the pagan deities—often expressed his surprise that any enlightened man could be brought to believe in the doctrine of the atonement—and regarded the belief in the reality of a supernatural influence over the human mind, as one of the corruptions of Christianity, which exposed it to the ridicule and contempt of infidels.

But though a decided Unitarian, he did not condemn those who differed from him, believing that the Supreme Being is altogether regardless of our speculative opinions, if we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with him. "If we are virtuous in this life we shall be happy in the life to come,"—was with him a favourite saying. He was the living personification of the social virtues; and justly esteemed for his kindness, his generosity, his integrity, and universal benevolence. Mr. Macfarlane, Senior, was a widower, with two children, a son and daughter, who, at the time I speak of, were between twenty and thirty years of age. The son was in business with his father, and the daughter managed the household affairs. Miss Macfarlane was a young lady of amiable temper, retired in her habits, fond of reading, and devoted to the promotion of the happiness and comfort of her father and brother. As she had a good deal of leisure at her disposal, she was employed as the almoner of her father's bounty; and took much pleasure in this work of mercy.

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She was somewhat religiously inclined; but as the system of religion under which she was educated possessed no power to interest the heart, her religion was confined to a cold assent to a few speculative opinions, and the observance of some external ceremonies. She occasionally read the Bible, but from her religious training she yielded no submission to its authority; and, as a natural consequence, she was strongly prejudiced against the evangelical sentiments of orthodox Christians. Though she had several friends belonging to their number, and among others Miss Reynolds, a young lady of decided piety, yet even with her, notwithstanding their great intimacy, she invariably declined to enter into conversation on the subject. She usually accompanied her father and her brother on the Sabbath to the Unitarian chapel, where the celebrated Dr. R— preached, to whose ministry they were all much attached. On one occasion he delivered a discourse from the beautiful words of the psalmist:—"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm xvi. 11). After an eloquent dissertation on the nature of the Deity, and the assistance afforded by Him to those following the arduous path of virtue, he concluded thus:—"Supposing the ideas which I have set before you to be no more than the speculations of a contemplative mind, such as were wont of old to be indulged by the philosophers of the Platonic school, still they would deserve attention, on account of their tendency to purify and elevate the mind. But when they are considered in connection with a revelation which we believe to be Divine, they are entitled to command, not attention only, but reverence and faith. They present to us such high expectations as are sufficient to determine every reasonable man to the choice of virtue, to support him under all his present discouragements, and to comfort him in the hour of death. Justly may they excite in our hearts that ardent aspiration of the psalmist:—'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; O! when shall I come, and appear before him?' But with this wish in our hearts, never, I beseech you, let us forget what was set forth in the first part of this discourse;—that in order to arrive at the presence of God, *the path of life* must previously be shown to us by him, and that in this path we must persevere to the end. These two things cannot be disjoined—a virtuous life and a happy eternity."

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As they were conversing together in the evening of the Sabbath, a reference was made to this discourse, when young Macfarlane expressed the high degree of pleasure which it had given him. "I never," he remarked, "heard a more interesting sermon. What a sublime prospect does Christianity open before us! I wonder how any intelligent person can reject it."

"Yes," said his father, "it was a very judicious sermon. I was much delighted with it. We have something to look forward to when it shall please God to remove us by death; for as I have often told you, *If we are virtuous in this life, we shall be happy in the life to come.*"

"But, father," said the son, after a short pause, "if only the virtuous can attain to a state of felicity in heaven, as we were informed this morning, what will become of the wicked?"

"I cannot tell; and I think that Dr. R— displayed his accustomed good sense in making no reference to them."

"But, father, we know that the majority in every age, and in every country, are wicked; and it strikes me, though I confess I have never thought on the subject before, that if the Deity condescended to reveal a system of religion, to promote the present and future happiness of his creatures, he would reveal one that is adapted to the moral condition of the majority, rather than to that of the select few."

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"We have nothing to do with others; it is enough for us to know, that if we are virtuous in this life, we shall be happy in the life to come."

The subject was now dropped till after their father had retired to rest, when it was resumed. "Your remark on the sermon we heard to-day," said Miss Macfarlane to her brother, "I think is a very just one. It certainly demands attention. If the virtuous only can be saved, the great majority of the human race must perish."

"Very true; and we know that many who become virtuous in old age, have been dissipated in their youthful days. Can such persons expect a state of future felicity as confidently as though they had always been virtuous? And, after all, what is virtue? It is simply a line of conduct that runs parallel with the requirements of the society amongst which we live, and which we know varies so much in different nations and amongst different people, that what some call a virtuous action, we should condemn as an outrage on the feelings of humanity. A Hindoo applauds the virtue of the eldest son, who sets fire to the pile which is to consume his deceased father and living mother; but were he to do such a deed here, he would be execrated as a monster, and amenable to the law. Can we suppose that the Supreme Being will award a state of future happiness to a Hindoo, for an action for which he would punish an European, by excluding him from heaven? Impossible!"

"And beside," said Miss Macfarlane, "how shall we know when we have acquired that *exact degree* of virtue which will entitle us to expect a state of felicity in the life to come? The more I think on the subject, the more I am perplexed. What shall we do, for I feel the subject too important to be dismissed?"

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After some further conversation, they resolved to examine the Scriptures, to see if they could gain any information; and provisionally they turned to the fifth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. There they read the following verses with deep interest:—"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.... God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.... For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "Here we find," said Mr. Macfarlane, "the apostle speaking of the salvation of *the ungodly*, of *sinners*, and of *enemies*." They proceeded in their examination, and perceived, from many passages which they met with in other epistles, that the current language of the Scripture plainly and unequivocally proves, that the revelation of mercy was intended to benefit the guilty and depraved as well as the virtuous.

One passage particularly arrested their attention in the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians—"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." On reading these verses, Mr. Macfarlane remarked:—"We are to remember, that at the period when Christianity was first promulgated by the apostles, the whole of the Gentile world was sunk into a state of the grossest ignorance, superstition, and vice; and though some of its most celebrated philosophers and statesmen were distinguished for their love of virtue, yet the immense majority of the people were addicted to almost every species of gross immorality. If, then, a state of future felicity is reserved only for the virtuous, and no provision is made for the salvation of the wicked, the labours of the apostles must have been restricted to the few who had kept themselves from the moral corruptions of the age in which they lived. But such an opinion receives no sanction from this passage, which speaks of the salvation of those who had their conversation in times past in the lusts of their flesh, 'fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.'"

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On turning their attention to the brief delineation which the apostle has given of his own character before his conversion to the faith in Christ, they were struck with his declaration respecting the design of our Lord's mission. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." "You perceive," said Mr. Macfarlane to his sister, "the apostle says, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; and saved the chief of them, as a pattern for the encouragement of others who may deem themselves equally guilty, to hope in the mercy of God."

"We thus see," said Mr. Macfarlane, "that the epistles prove that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners from a state of future misery, and to fit them for heaven; but then comes the question, What degree of dependence ought we to place on their testimony? May they not have become corrupted in the course of time? or may not the writers of them have committed some mistake?"

"So, brother, we have been taught to believe, but it is possible that we may be mistaken. However, as we cannot now, by any process of inquiry, decide on the genuineness of the passages which we have been examining, let us turn our attention to the gospels, and see if they exhibit the same views on this subject as the epistles. Because we may fairly infer, that if the whole of the Bible is written by the inspiration of the Almighty, we shall find a continuity and harmony of thought running through the various parts of it, and especially on that paramount question which now engages our attention."

"As it is now getting very late," Mr. Macfarlane observed, "we will not go into that question to-night; but I will contrive to get home to-morrow rather earlier than usual, when we will pursue our inquiries."

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"My mind, dear brother, is painfully excited by the discoveries we have already made, as they have convinced me that our theory of belief is in direct opposition to that of the apostles, who were initiated into the Christian faith by the oral instructions of Jesus Christ."

"Yes, this I feel. But still the discovery should not distress us; it should rather excite our gratitude; for if we find, on more careful inquiry, that we have been holding false opinions, we can renounce them, and adopt the true system of belief."

They continued their investigations of Scripture from evening to evening, sometimes together, sometimes apart, and made rapid progress in the knowledge of Divine truth.

"I have hitherto thought," said Mr. Macfarlane, as he sat with his sister one evening, "that Jesus Christ came as a teacher, to instruct us how to attain to a state of future happiness, and to inculcate on us, by the purity of his example, the cultivation of the social virtues. However, on a careful examination of the New Testament, I feel very much struck with the express reason which He gave to his apostles, for his coming into the world—'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Matt. xx. 28). He certainly knew what he came to do—and he says he came to die—to die voluntarily, by giving his life, not giving it as an act of martyrdom, but as a ransom to redeem many. Now this must refer to the *many*, in some condition of danger; not to any select few of the amiable and virtuous, in no danger."

"I also," remarked his sister, "feel very forcibly impressed with the reason which Jesus Christ assigns for his going to visit Zaccheus, who appears to have been before his conversion a great sinner. 'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke xix. 10). There is nothing about teaching, as the direct import of his mission, but seeking after sinners to rescue them from the danger of perishing. This harmonizes with the statement of the apostle Paul, which has already engaged our attention."

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"Very true. And if we take for our guidance the undisputed axiom, that facts determine and explain theory, we may, by a careful examination of the narratives which are reported by the evangelists, make some safe progress in the inquiry we are now pursuing as to the design of the mission of Jesus Christ. You have been turning your attention to the conversion of Zaccheus, and I have been turning mine to that of the thief on the cross, both ranked among the chief of sinners; but both were converted and saved by faith in Christ. The malefactor, when dying, made his appeal to Jesus, saying, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom' (Luke xxiii. 42). How prompt and benign is the answer, 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise!' What a solace this promise must have been to the poor sufferer—a bright and soothing prospect in the midst of his agonies! And with what authority Jesus speaks—assuming the right of fixing the final destiny of this dying criminal, and of advancing him to the honour of associating with him in the celestial paradise! He must have been something more than man to speak thus, and to assume such a prerogative, on such an occasion."

"Such a conviction," observed Miss Macfarlane, "forced itself very strongly on my mind, when reading the Gospel of John, particularly the following passages, which never attracted my attention before: 'For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.... And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.... And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.... I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world' (John vi. 33, 35, 40, 51). 'As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.... I and my Father are one' (John x. 15, 30). We here see that he claims an equality with his Father, which would have been an act of blasphemy to have done if he were only a man; he lays down his life of his own accord, for the benefit of man; asserts that the possession of everlasting life is made dependent on our believing on Him; and says, that if we do so, He will raise us from the grave at the last day."

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"You have compressed within a very narrow compass, a series of truths which now appear novel to us both, though we must often have seen them when reading the New Testament; and which most certainly are of immense importance, demanding our most serious attention. Hitherto we have regarded Jesus Christ as a mere man, though one of a superior order—surpassing all other men in intelligence and personal excellencies; but I begin to regard him as God in the form of man, as on such an hypothesis, all his sayings and doings, I believe, will be found to harmonize. On coming home this evening, I stepped into a bookseller's shop, and asked for the best work on the divinity of Jesus Christ. I bought the one recommended, and here it is—*The Scripture Testimony to the Messiah*, by the Rev. Dr. J. P. Smith. Let us then postpone all further discussion on the subjects of our present inquiry, till we have carefully read Dr. Pye Smith's book. When we have done this, we shall be better qualified to pursue our inquiries, and arrive at some satisfactory conclusion. There are three leading questions we have to attend to—*First*, What is the testimony of the sacred writers as it relates to the person of Jesus Christ?—is he a mere man, or does he unite in his person the Divine with the human nature? *Second*, What is the express purpose for which he came into the world?—was it to teach the lessons of wisdom and of virtue, enforcing his instructions by the purity of his example? or was it for the purpose of redeeming sinners from some fatal danger? And, *third*, Are his sufferings expiatory—the meritorious cause of human salvation? or must we look upon them as a contingent evil, inseparably connected with his mysterious history?"

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"Yes," said Miss Macfarlane, "these three questions will include everything we want definitively

settled; and I hope the Spirit of wisdom from above will guide us in our researches, to understand what is revealed to us in the Bible. I will take, if you please, the Doctor's second volume, which I see is an examination of the narratives given to us by the evangelists."

"And I will go through his third volume, which gives us the testimony of the apostles; and when we have done this, we will examine together his first volume, which is a record of what the prophets predicted concerning him."

The absence of Mr. Macfarlane, Senr., for a few weeks, on his annual visit to a brother who resided in Yorkshire, gave them an opportunity of devoting their attention more uninterruptedly to the important inquiry in which they were now engaged. As they advanced, they felt the evidence in confirmation of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and his vicarious death, gradually increasing in clearness and force, till they arrived at the full conviction that he was the Son of God, on an equality with his Father, though appearing on earth as the Son of man, and giving his life as a ransom to redeem the guilty and worthless.

They now began to feel anxious in behalf of their father, who was living in the rejection of the essential truths of the Scriptures, under the delusive spell of Unitarian error. They, however, deemed it advisable to proceed with caution, lest he should peremptorily refuse to have any discussion whatever on the subject. On the Sabbath after his return, they excused themselves from going with him to chapel, which astounded him; but he had too much respect for the right of private judgment to attempt to impose any restraint. In the evening, as they were conversing together, he said, "Why did you leave the intelligent preaching of our learned minister, to hear the mysterious doctrines of Calvinism enforced? Have you been as much pleased as you were with the excellent discourse we heard the Sunday before I left home?" [230]

"The discourse which we then heard," replied his son, "we thought very excellent; but we were so much struck with the remark of Dr. R—, that the felicities of heaven are reserved only for the virtuous, that, on reflection, we could not agree with him; because on such an hypothesis the vast majority in every age, and in every country, would be consigned over to a state of hopeless misery."

"And do you now think that any other but virtuous people will ever be received into heaven?"

"On searching the Scripture, which we have done with diligence during your absence, we find that the ungodly—that transgressors—that those who are enemies to God by wicked works—that the children of disobedience—and that the chief of sinners, may be saved. This new view of the revelation of mercy, which is sanctioned by the current language of the Bible, appears to us more consistent with the benevolence of the Supreme Being, and much better adapted to the real character and condition of the great mass of mankind, than the statement of Dr. R—."

"By your permission, Papa," said Miss Macfarlane, "I will read Dr. Doddridge's 'Paraphrase and Improvement of one of our Saviour's Parables,' which I think is so excellent, and so much in point, that it will afford you as much pleasure as it has given me."

"I have no objection to your reading a quotation from Dr. Doddridge, because I have always considered him a moderate, as well as a very learned man. I think he is mistaken in his views of some of the speculative truths of revelation; but I like him as a practical writer."

The parable is contained in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel by Luke, and the paraphrase runs thus:—"But [Jesus] for the encouragement of these few penitents, as well as to rebuke the censorious and uncharitable Pharisees, spake to them this parable, and said, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine, that were feeding together in the pastures of the wilderness, and go from place to place in search after it, and having at length found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, greatly rejoicing, as a man in such circumstances naturally would? And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, and says unto them with great pleasure, My friends, you may now rejoice with me; for my labour and search have not been in vain, but I have found my sheep which was lost. And as he thus is more delighted with the recovery of the sheep which he had lost, than with the safety of the rest, which had not wandered, so I say unto you that greater and more sensible joy will be in heaven among the blessed and benevolent spirits that dwell there, over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance, or such a universal change of mind and character." [231]

"How graceful and lovely does our Lord appear, while thus opening his compassionate arms and heart to those wretched outcasts, for whose souls no man cared! Who can choose but rejoice at this jubilee which he proclaimed among them, and at the cheerful attention which they gave to these glad tidings of great joy? May we who are his followers never despise the meanest, or the worst of men, when they seem disposed to receive religious instruction, but rather exert ourselves with a distinguished zeal, as knowing that the joy of the heavenly world, in their recovery, will be in some measure proportionable to the extremity of their former danger.

"Let us often recollect the charity and goodness of these perfected spirits, who look down from their own glory with compassion on mortals wandering in the paths of the destroyer, and who sing anthems of thankfulness and joy, when by Divine grace they are reclaimed from them. Let every sinner be touched by a generous desire that he who has been in so many instances the offender and burden of the earth, may become the joy of heaven by his sincere conversion."

"You know, my children," said old Mr. Macfarlane, "that I have endeavoured to train you up in the paths of virtue, and to give you what I conceive correct views of religion; but if you on examination feel dissatisfied with any opinions which I have inculcated, you ought most certainly [232]

to renounce them. You have the same right to think, and judge, and decide for yourselves, as I have; and I feel too much affection for you to throw on the path of your inquiry the slightest shadow of opposition. I know you are virtuous; and if I see you happy, I shall be satisfied. You will proceed in your inquiries after truth with caution—weigh with the greatest nicety the evidence which may be submitted to you; as many opinions, when they first strike our attention, appear very specious and plausible, which will not endure the ordeal of a critical investigation. I cannot give you better advice than that which the apostle gave to the believers of Thessalonica, 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.'

"To be candid, my dear father," said his son, "the result of the investigation which we have been pursuing with close, and I may say prayerful, attention, is a firm belief in the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ; and also in the reality and efficacy of the atonement he made in behalf of sinners by his vicarious death."

"I certainly regret that you should adopt such a belief, which, I have always told you, is a corruption of Christianity."

"No, father, it is a belief which owes its origin to the concurrent testimony of the sacred writers. If the sacred writers, and if Jesus Christ himself had made no statements on this subject, the question of his divinity would never have been agitated, neither would the question of his atonement for the sins of the world. If, then, it be an error, it is one for which they are responsible; they assert the fact of his divinity so clearly, that I feel compelled to do one of two things—either impeach their integrity, or admit his divinity. To give you a specimen. The prophet Isaiah says, 'His name shall be called Wonderful, the MIGHTY GOD;' the apostle Paul says, 'He was GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH;' and Jesus Christ himself, who knew who and what he was, asserts his EQUALITY with his Father, in *power*, in *knowledge*, and in his claims on the homage and love of his disciples. Would the prophets and apostles have used these expressions if they had been Unitarians believing in Christ's exclusive humanity?"

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"You must not form your judgment from a few isolated passages of the Bible, which are susceptible of a different interpretation."

"I admit this; but, in the first place, Dr. Pye Smith, and other men of learning, have proved, that the most correct interpretation of the passages I have now quoted, is the orthodox interpretation; however, waiving that debateable point, would any Unitarian, if left to express his own opinion of the person of Jesus Christ, employ terms which should allow any one fairly to infer that he is a Divine Incarnation?"

"Why, no, I should think not."

"Then, why have the sacred writers done it? But to proceed: in the next place—these isolated passages, dear father, are in exact harmony with the general statement of all the sacred writers. Surely we cannot suppose that the very men who were employed as the agents of a Divine revelation, would be allowed to entrap us into the double crime of idolatry and blasphemy, by compelling any one who admits their integrity, to bow down and do homage to Jesus Christ as to God. There is one fact in the history of our Saviour, which, in my opinion, may set at defiance the most ingenious and subtle casuist that ever made an effort to subvert or mystify human belief. In addressing his opponents, he adopted a style of speech which stirred up their wrath, and made them accuse him of blasphemy for making himself God, that is, by trying to make them believe he was God. Now, father, I put this plain, common-sense question, Would any good man, especially one so good as Jesus Christ, when speaking of himself, employ expressions which should convey to others the idea that he was God in the form of man, to whom all men are to pay homage, and on whom all who hope to be saved are to depend for salvation and eternal life?"

"There is a great deal of ambiguity in the language of the Scripture, which, as the apostle Paul says, is hard to be understood."

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"That I admit; but such an admission does not affect the question before us; which is this—Would any man of intelligence and virtue, when speaking of himself, use any expressions which should induce people to believe that he was God? In fact, would not such an attempt, if made, as has happened occasionally in modern times, be considered a proof of insanity? The rejection of the divinity of Jesus Christ would indeed reduce me to a very serious dilemma. In the first place, I must impeach the integrity of the sacred writers, which would compel me to reject the entire system of revelation, as a gross imposition on human credulity; and, in the next place, I must look on Jesus Christ as an insane person, or a blasphemer. I see no alternative between universal scepticism and the devout reception of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ and his atonement."

"I certainly should prefer what is called orthodoxy to universal scepticism; but I shall never be able to bring my mind to receive what I cannot comprehend; and this a believer in Christ's divinity and atonement is compelled to do."

"This, my dear father, is one of the delusive objections to the orthodox faith, under which we have too long taken refuge. Why, is not a Unitarian compelled to believe what he cannot comprehend? For example, do you not believe in the eternal existence of God—a glorious self-existing Being, who lives by the power of his own volition, with whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning?"

"True; though I must confess it never struck me before. This staggers me. Well, my dear children, our difference on points of speculative belief will make no alteration in our mutual attachment; you will remain, I have no doubt, pure and virtuous, as you always have been; and I trust we shall together participate in the felicities of heaven, when our earthly course is finished,

even if we should never, as we once did, believe exactly alike."

In the course of the following week, Miss Macfarlane received a visit from Miss Reynolds, her pious friend already referred to, who was not more astonished than delighted by seeing her at the chapel in — Street, on the preceding Sabbath. After a little desultory conversation, Miss Reynolds said, "We were rather surprised to see you and your brother at our chapel on Sabbath; but I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you there again."

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"Your surprise," replied Miss Macfarlane, "is very natural. Yes, you will see us again, as we have both decided to attend Mr. — in future. The system of Unitarianism, in which we have been educated, we have discovered is delusive—a fatal perversion of the theory of revealed truth; and though it may suit the virtuous part of society, who have no perceptions of the evil of sin, yet, as it makes no provision for the salvation of sinners, it cannot afford peace to a wounded conscience."

"And has my dear Eliza at length discovered that she is a sinner!"

"I have not only discovered it, but I have felt it; and I still feel it. You know how I have repelled such a charge in time past; but I can repel it no longer. My conscience bears testimony to its truth. I cannot accuse myself of having violated any of the laws of social life, but I perceive that I have broken the law of God, and stand guilty in his sight."

"As this is a new discovery, will you tell me how you made it?"

"The first circumstance which excited our attention was a very excellent sermon, preached a short time since by Dr. R—, on the felicity of heaven, which he said was reserved only for the virtuous. When conversing together on the subject, in the evening of the Sabbath, my brother said to Papa, If the virtuous only can attain a state of felicity, what will become of the wicked, who we know constitute the great bulk of society in every age and in every country? As his reply gave us no satisfaction, we began to search the Scriptures, which soon convinced us that even the chief of sinners could be saved. The subject of inquiry appeared to us no less important than it was novel; it deeply engaged our attention, and we pursued it with intense application. Dr. Pye Smith's *Scripture Testimony to the Messiah* settled our belief; and now we feel compelled to withdraw from all religious fellowship with those who refuse to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus Christ. Knowing, from your testimony and that of others, that your excellent pastor stands very high in public estimation, we decided on hearing him, and I trust that the impression which his discourse made on our minds will never be effaced. He has given to us, if I may use such an expression, the clue of a clearer discovery on some important branches of revealed truth; and now we can perceive beauties in the sacred volume which lay concealed from our eye, and we can now understand many passages which had ever before appeared obscure and inexplicable. But at times I feel a depression of spirits which I cannot remove; yet it does not proceed from any regret at the step we have taken, or any mistrust in the truthfulness of our new belief, but from a keen sense of my personal unworthiness of the Divine favour."

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"I am rejoiced, dear Eliza," replied Miss Reynolds, "to hear you utter such sentiments. God is dealing graciously with your soul. He wounds to heal. He has convinced you of the evil of sin, and unveiled before you that abyss of danger, to which you were exposed, so as to prepare you for the manifestations of his favour, beaming on you through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"But I fear that the Saviour will not look on me with an eye of pity, as I have so often insulted him by denying his divinity, and the efficacy of his death as an expiation for human guilt. I am now astonished how I could reject doctrines which are so plainly revealed in the Bible; and sometimes the guilt of my conduct appears so great, that I am more disposed to despair of mercy than to cherish the hope of obtaining it."

"If you still persisted in denying his divinity, and rejecting the atonement which he has made for sin, you might despair of mercy; but if you admit these essential doctrines of the Christian scheme of salvation, you may plead the promises of grace with confidence. The Redeemer will execute judgment in the last day upon ungodly sinners for all the hard speeches which they have spoken against him, if they die in a state of confirmed impenitence; but if they repent of their evil deeds and hard speeches, he will, as a faithful and merciful High Priest, have compassion on them, will intercede for them, and will save them."

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"I now receive these doctrines as essential parts of the system of revealed truth; but yet I sometimes feel a recurrence of my former prejudices against them, which causes me unutterable distress. When pleading the atonement as the foundation of my acceptance with God, I am tempted to mistrust its efficacy; and when my heart begins to glow with warm affection for the Redeemer, it is suddenly chilled and suppressed by the influence of early opinions and associations. They have taken such a firm hold of my imagination, that I cannot disengage myself from them; and I fear they will always continue to perplex and depress me."

"That does not surprise me. It is no easy thing for the human mind to disengage itself from the influence of early opinions, even after they have been renounced; but the Lord has laid help upon One who is mighty, and whose grace will be found sufficient for you. I would advise you to read the Scriptures with close and devout attention; but your greatest dependence for deliverance from your early associations should be placed on prayer. For the judgment may be convinced of the truth by a logical process of investigation and reasoning, even while the heart is unimpressed by it; God having reserved to himself the power of making the truth effectual to the salvation of

them that believe, which power he exercises in answer to prayer. The language of the psalmist is very applicable to the present state of your mind—'Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy loving-kindnesses: for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.'

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"There is one part of the system of revealed truth," continued Miss Reynolds, "which has not yet engaged your attention, and as it is one of vital importance, I cannot avoid alluding to it. The part to which I now refer, is the agency of the Divine Spirit, by which we become strengthened in our inner man, to receive the truth in the love of it, and to discharge the high and sacred obligations which devolve on us. By your permission, I will read to you an extract from a book which I happen to have brought with me:<sup>[19]</sup>—

"As we are indebted to the Spirit for the first formation of the divine life, so it is He who alone can maintain it, and render it strong and vigorous. It is his office to actuate the habits of grace where they are already planted; to hold our souls in life, and to 'strengthen us, that we may walk up and down in the name of the Lord.' It is his office to present the mysteries of salvation; the truths which relate to the mediation of Christ and the riches of his grace, in so penetrating and transforming a manner, as to render them vital operating principles, the food and the solace of our spirits. Without his agency, however intrinsically excellent, they will be to us mere dead speculation—an inert mass: it is only when they are animated by his breath, that they become spirit and life.

"It is his office to afford that anointing by which we may know all things; by a light which is not merely directive to the understanding, but which so shines upon the heart, as to give a relish of the sweetness of Divine truth, and effectually produce a compliance with its dictates. It belongs to him 'to seal us to the day of redemption,' to put that mark and character upon us, which distinguishes the children of God, as well as to afford a foretaste, as an earnest of the future inheritance. 'And hereby,' saith an apostle, 'we know that we are of God, by the Spirit which he hath given us.' It is his office to subdue the corruption of our nature, not by leaving us inactive spectators of the combat, but by engaging us to a determined resistance to every sinful propensity, by teaching our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, so that the victory shall be ours, and the praise his. It is his office also to help the infirmities of saints, who know not what to pray for as they ought, by making intercession for them 'with groanings which cannot be uttered.' He kindles their desires, gives them a glimpse of the fulness of God, that all-comprehending good; and by exciting a relish of the beauties of holiness, and the ineffable pleasure which springs from nearness to God, disposes them to the fervent and effectual prayer which availeth much. In short, as Christ is the way to the Father; so it is equally certain, that the Spirit is the fountain of all the light and strength which enable us to walk in that way."

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"I assure you, my dear Matilda, both my brother and myself feel devoutly thankful to the God of all grace, for rescuing us from the fatal delusion of Unitarianism, which we conscientiously renounce as an anti-scriptural system, no less derogatory to the honour of God, than inapplicable to the moral condition of man—a system which flatters the pride of the heart, but which makes no provision for the relief of a wounded conscience; and which, by placing the hope of final blessedness on the attainment of personal virtue, supersedes the necessity of the Saviour's death and mediation, which constitute the most prominent and essential parts of the grand scheme of redemption."

After the lapse of a few months, Mr. and Miss Macfarlane were admitted as members into the chapel in — Street, of which the Rev. Mr. — was pastor. They were received into communion amongst their Christian brethren, with the utmost degree of cordiality and affection, and are still living, the faithful witnesses of the truth as it is in Jesus. They had many virtues adorning their character when they were called Unitarians, but now they carry their virtue to a greater height, by deriving their motives for its practice from the authority of God, rather than the praise of man. While, therefore, they feel it to be their duty still to add to their "virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity;" they are fully conscious of their innumerable defects, and wait in humble expectation of eternal life, not as a reward for their good deeds, but as a sovereign and unmerited favour.

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## THE PATH OF TRUTH FORSAKEN.



If all who make a public profession of religion remained faithful unto death, we should be led to form such a high opinion of the steadfastness of the Christian character, that we should never dread any change of feeling or of principle. But, alas! who has not seen the most ardent zeal grow cold—the most fervent devotion degenerate into a lifeless formality—and the most spotless integrity become corrupted by the maxims of the world? Who has not seen the most eager stopping short in their course; and some, who once bade fair to occupy stations of honour and usefulness in the church, break away, either suddenly or gradually, from all their religious connections, to mingle again with the workers of iniquity, and place themselves in the seat of the scorner? What more melancholy sight than this can be presented to the real Christian? and how can he

sufficiently deplore such a calamity? In plaintive accents he often says, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" But there are circumstances which sometimes render this melancholy occurrence peculiarly affecting. If the renegade from the faith be a near relative, or an intimate friend—one with whom we have taken sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company<sup>[241]</sup>—one who rejoiced over us "when first we knew the Lord"—who poured the soothing words of consolation into our minds when we first felt the deep convictions of guilt—who was our guide and counsellor—and whom we loved with an ardent and tender affection—how much more intense is the pain of such an infliction; and how applicable that noble passage of Robert Hall to such an event:—"Where shall we find tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle? or, could we realize the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of our compassion and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light, and the moon her brightness, to cover the ocean with mourning, and the heavens with sackcloth? Or were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?"

In the previous chapter I have described the influence of truth prevailing over long-cherished feelings and deeply-rooted prejudices, and the substitution of correct evangelical views for the erroneous tenets of Unitarianism. The history I am now about to record is of a different description, and presents a melancholy contrast to the former, exhibiting the abandonment of the faith after a fair and apparently sincere profession, and teaching us the necessity of constant labour and watchfulness, if we wish "to make our calling and election sure."

Henry Beaufoy was the only son of poor but respectable parents, who resided in the beautiful village of Brookcombe in Devonshire. This village remained for a long series of years in a state of spiritual darkness, till it was visited by some of the local preachers of the Methodist Connexion. At first, when they declared the glad tidings of salvation amongst the people, they were insulted and reproached; and the few who received them became a by-word and a proverb amongst their ignorant and bigoted neighbours. But regardless of all opposition—bearing patiently every species of reviling—and demonstrating by their gentleness of spirit, that they knew how to return good for evil, they ultimately succeeded in subduing the prejudices of ignorance and the violence of bigotry, and established a flourishing society. [242]

It happened here, as in many other places where the introduction of the gospel has been opposed, that some of the chief of the opponents were the first to feel its renovating power. Among this number the parents of Henry Beaufoy held a distinguished station. At first they, in common with many others, entertained strong prejudices against the preachers, and endeavoured to persuade others from attending their ministry; but at length their curiosity was awakened, and they went to the chapel. They listened—the word came with power—they felt the deepest contrition for their past sins, especially their sin of opposing and ridiculing the gospel of Christ; and eventually became no less distinguished for their attachment, than they had been for their enmity to the faith. Their son Henry was about twelve years of age, when this moral change took place in his parents, and though he felt somewhat surprised at the suddenness of the transition from the most determined hostility against the Methodists (as they were reproachfully termed), to the most cordial attachment, yet he was too young and too thoughtless to examine into the causes of it. He generally accompanied them to the little chapel, which was erected under the brow of a hill; and as he was fond of music, and had a fine voice, he assisted in leading the psalmody of the congregation. No material change, however, took place in him, till after he had attained his eighteenth year; when, being on a visit to Plymouth, he went to hear the Rev. Samuel Bradburn, who was one of the most celebrated and one of the most useful ministers of his day. The text from which he preached on that occasion was selected from Heb. iv. 12—"For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Young Beaufoy was struck with the colloquial simplicity of his style of address, no less than by the force of his argumentative reasoning; but when he directed his bold and masterly appeals to the consciences of his hearers, his heart was deeply wounded, and, like the Philippian jailor, he could not refrain from saying, "What shall I do to be saved?" On his return home, the unusual gravity of his manners, his more frequent attendance at the village chapel, his habit of reading the Bible, and of retirement for the purposes of devotion, led his parents to indulge the hope that their Henry was become a new creature in Christ Jesus, and after the lapse of a few weeks, they had the satisfaction of hearing an account of his conversion from his own lips. [243]

If it be possible to excite in the soul of a pious parent a feeling of joy approximating to the pure unmingled bliss of the heavenly world, it is when his child comes to him to state the fact, and detail the manner, of the great spiritual change which has taken place in his heart. It is then that the prayers of the godly father are turned into praises—that the deep and tender anxieties of the virtuous mother begin to cease, as they then can recognize in their son or daughter, a fellow-heir of the grace of life, with whom they expect to live for ever and ever.

It was about this period that I first became acquainted with the Beaufoy family. I had gone to Devonshire for change of air for a few weeks, and took up my abode in the village of Brookcombe, where I lodged in the house of the father and mother of young Beaufoy. I was much pleased both with them and their son, the latter of whom used frequently to accompany me on my excursions into the surrounding country. On these occasions we used to have long conversations together, in which he displayed an intelligence far above what might have been expected from his position in life, and this, joined to his amiable temper and pleasing manners, led me to take a great interest



in him. On leaving Brookcombe, I suggested that he should occasionally write to me—a proposal which he received with much satisfaction, and we maintained for a number of years a close correspondence. Shortly after parting with him, however, an event occurred which materially changed his prospects in life. The same intelligence and amiable qualities which had won my heart, recommended him to the notice of a wealthy citizen of London, who came to visit his patrimonial estate in the neighbourhood, and he gave him the offer of a lucrative situation in his employment. The offer was accepted, and he prepared to leave the scenes of his youth. His pious mother, who dreaded the temptations of London as much as she would have dreaded the plague, said to him on his departure, "My Henry, I am sorry you are going to leave us. I wish you could have remained amongst us, and continued the solace and comfort of your father and myself. But when you are far away, exposed to the snares and dangers of the great city, I shall have no sleep at night, for I shall lie awake to pray for you; and I shall have no peace by day, for I shall be always trembling for you, my child."

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"Oh! mother," said Henry, whose heart was full of the thought of parting, and whose fortitude began to fail at the sight of his mother's tears, "do not weep. God can keep me from the temptations of the city as well as the temptations of the village; and I have no doubt but I shall escape them. I'll come and see you once a-year, and then we will rejoice together."

"But how can I endure the thought of looking on you, my child, only once in the year, on whom I have gazed these one and twenty years with so much delight! My eyes will be dim with sorrow before the first year is up."

"But I will write, mother, once a-month."

"But letters can't speak as I have heard you talk for nearly twenty years. I wish the gentleman had never come amongst us. He has broken down the fence of our union, and taken away the first-fruits of our wedded happiness, and what have we left to make up for our loss? But I know I must be resigned—yet I have not Abraham's faith. The Lord bless you, and keep you, and bring you back to your father's house in peace, that we may bless you before we die."

Henry set off in company with the gentleman who had taken him under his patronage, and though he felt the pang of separation to be violent, yet he bore it with firmness, and, turning away his thoughts from the scene of grief which he had just left, he began to amuse himself with the varied objects which presented themselves to him in the course of this his first journey to the metropolis.

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On arriving in London, he took lodgings in the City Road, in the house of Mr. Jordan, whom the reader will remember as the worthy landlord of Mr. Lewellin.<sup>[20]</sup> This was shortly after the return of the latter from the country, on recovering from the dangerous illness which had produced so important a change in his moral character. From residing together in the same house, a close intimacy sprang up between Mr. Lewellin and young Beaufoy, which was much strengthened by the similarity of their religious sentiments. Though belonging to different evangelical bodies, they, nevertheless, zealously co-operated together in the advancement of all the various schemes instituted by Christian benevolence, for the promotion of the spiritual and temporal happiness of our fellow-men. Mr. Beaufoy, who had received his first religious impressions amongst the Wesleyan Methodists, and imbibed all their peculiar opinions, very naturally chose to attend their chapel. They received him with their usual kindness, and for several years he grew in their esteem and confidence, as a young man of superior intelligence and decided piety. For a considerable time I both corresponded with young Beaufoy, and also, on one or two occasions, when in London, I called on him, and invariably met with the warmest reception. I frequently held conversations with him on the subject of religion, and from the deep interest which he seemed to take in the subject, I believed that he had indeed become a decided Christian. But how deceitful sometimes are appearances, and how cautious ought we to be in forming conclusions from mere external circumstances, however fair the prospect may be which they present!

Henry Beaufoy possessed a mind admirably qualified for business, and his abilities, in this respect, enabled him to make rapid progress in the counting-house of his employer, where he soon filled a lucrative and responsible situation. About five years after his first arrival in the metropolis, he married a young lady occupying a good position in society, but who made no decided profession of religion. She attended the chapel because she had been accustomed to do so from her earliest childhood, and felt attached to the people amongst whom her parents lived and died; but she had no clear perceptions of the nature or design of the gospel, nor had she ever felt its enlightening or renovating power. She was handsome, amiable, and intelligent, but she did not possess *the one thing needful*; and though her habits and associations were of a religious nature, yet being destitute of its pure and heavenly spirit, she became a snare to her husband, by drawing off his mind, by imperceptible degrees, from things that are unseen and eternal, to those that were visible and temporal.

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Mr. Beaufoy's income was, as already mentioned, considerable, which, together with the fortune he had with his wife, enabled him to live in a style far above his early expectations; but he had too much good sense to involve himself in debt, and too much regard for his parents to allow them to be in difficulties, while he had abundance. He often used to say, when in his native village, "I covet wealth that I may enjoy the luxury of doing good;" and when Providence granted him his desire, he partook of this source of gratification to a very large extent. His regular remittances to his parents exceeded their wishes; while his liberality to the poor, and every religious institution with which he stood connected, raised him high in the esteem of his Christian brethren. But, alas! his spirituality did not keep pace with his prosperity; nor did the fervour of his devotional spirit equal the degree of his diligence in business.

In compliance with custom, he spent the first few weeks after his marriage amidst scenes of gaiety and pleasure—in receiving and returning the visits of his friends and associates; and though he found an apology for this course of life in the example of others, yet he felt it to be injurious to the religious tone of his mind, and longed to return to his more settled religious habits. Had Mrs. Beaufoy possessed a similar spirit, this incursion into the land of the enemy would not have been productive of any essential injury; but as she was now treading on her native soil, and moving in an element congenial to her taste, she succeeded in estranging her husband from the simplicity of a religious life, and induced him to adopt the habits of the men of the world. The prayer-meeting, in which his voice had often been heard, leading the devotion of others, was now deserted for dinner and evening parties. The sacredness of religious conversation with those who loved and feared the Lord, was exchanged for the vain and trifling conversation of the votaries of fashion; and though on the Sabbath-day he was seen in his pew, yet the marked seriousness and peaceful serenity of his countenance was supplanted by the knitted brow, or the listless and inattentive air. The society of his former religious friends, including Mr. Lewellin, now became less agreeable to him than that of some gay worldlings, into whose company he was frequently thrown. His letters to myself also were shorter and more reserved; but I was still far from suspecting the dangerous nature of the career on which he was now entering. Thus while retaining a name and a place amongst the members of the church, he was rapidly receding from the purity and fervour of the Christian spirit.

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One of the earliest symptoms of apostasy from the pure faith of Christ, is a fastidiousness of hearing, which few preachers can please. The truth as it is in Jesus is tolerated on account of the form or the manner in which it is presented; and the messenger is admired more than the message which he delivers. Though we would not condemn a predilection for the more graceful and the more eloquent appeals of the pulpit, nor insinuate that a correct taste is a *prima facie* evidence of a heart in a state of departure from God, yet it requires no lengthened argument to prove that when the truths of the gospel are not loved and received for their own sake, and on account of their beneficial tendency, it is a decisive proof that the tone of the mind is injured; and that, notwithstanding the outward appearance of devotion which may be kept up by a professor, he is not walking in the fear of the Lord, nor in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. He may have his favourite preachers; but if the truth which they preach is not esteemed when it is delivered by men equally zealous, and equally devoted to God, though not equally gifted, we are supplied with a melancholy symptom of his being in a backsliding state. It was this spirit of preference for the learning of Paul—for the eloquence of Apollos—and for the peculiar charms of Cephas, amongst the members of the church of Corinth, that the apostle regards as an evidence of their indifference to Christ; and which he adduces as a proof that a corrupt leaven was then working amongst them. "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos," is it not a convincing proof, that the speaker is more delighted with the correctness of the language which a preacher employs, than the purity of the doctrines which he preaches?

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Mr. Beaufoy, on his settlement in London, gave a decided preference to the most evangelical and the most experimental preachers in his Connexion; but now he began to admire the most fanciful and the most florid, to whom he listened as an amateur does to a piece of music—more for the gratification of his taste than the spiritual improvement of his mind; and as he could not always hear them, he began to absent himself from the chapel when they were not expected. His habit of attendance at length became so irregular, that some of his Christian brethren, who had watched with great anxiety the progress of his defection, felt it their duty to have him admonished; and they deputed an aged elder, in whom dwelt the spirit of wisdom and of grace, to visit him.

The manner in which reproof is received often develops the real temper and disposition of the mind, and supplies us with a good criterion to form a correct judgment of character. "Let the righteous smite me," said the Psalmist, when reviewing the imperfections of his conduct, "it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." And it is by the kind admonitions and the gentle reproofs that we timely receive from those of our friends who watch over us, that we are often indebted, under the Divine blessing, for our spiritual prosperity, and to which we may trace our recovery from that state of religious declension, to which we are so fatally prone.

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"Indeed," said Mr. Beaufoy to his venerable friend, in whose company he had formerly passed many a pleasant hour, "I think I am at liberty to attend where and when I please, without being subject to the inquisitorial interference of others. And though you are pleased to say, that my late conduct has given my best friends reason to fear that I am not so spiritual as when they first knew me, yet you will permit me to say that I am the best judge on that subject."

"You certainly," replied the venerable elder, "are at liberty to go where you please; but I hope you will not go away from Him who 'hath the words of eternal life;' and are at liberty to go when you please; but do not forget the Divine injunction which commands us to 'consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.'"

"I hope I shall not, Sir; but I must be permitted to consult my own taste in the choice of the preachers on whose ministry I attend, without being censured for any decrease in the spirituality of my mind. If I do not talk quite so much on religious subjects as I once did, that is no proof that I feel less; as we become reserved on these high and awful considerations in proportion as we are impressed by them."

"The Psalmist says," replied the elder, "'While I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue.' I know you are displeased with me, my brother, for the language which I have

addressed to you; and I assure you, that your displeasure gives me greater sorrow than the cause of my visit, inasmuch as it convinces me that your heart is not right with God. I have but a few years to live, and perhaps only a few hours; and as I may not live to repeat a visit which is as unacceptable to you as it is painful to myself, I cannot leave you without giving you and Mrs. Beaufoy a message from the Lord—"Take heed, lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

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"I have no doubt, Sir, but your motives are good, and that you deem the solemn admonition of the apostle necessary; but you will permit us to form our own judgment on the propriety of its application."

The venerable elder then arose, took his young brother by the hand, and wept; and after struggling for some moments to subdue the feelings which were agitating his breast, he said, "My brother, I fear that you have departed from the Lord, and that his Spirit has departed from you; but let us kneel together at the throne of grace, as we used to kneel when the light of his countenance shone upon you, and pray for its return." He then knelt down, and offered up a solemn and affecting prayer, which bespoke the fidelity of his affection for his erring brother. When he arose, he received the cold thanks of courtesy for his labour of love, and retired under a strong presentiment that he should see his fellow-member's face no more. And so it proved; for his feeble frame had received a shock that evening from which he had not strength to recover. He hastened home as fast as his tottering limbs would carry him—partook of his frugal meal—read the twenty-third Psalm, and, in company with his pious housekeeper (for he had buried his wife about six weeks before this affliction came upon him), he knelt down, and closed the toils of the day in the hallowed exercise of communion with God. One petition he presented which he had never been heard to utter before—"And if, Lord, it should please thee to call thy servant this night, I thank thee that I am at last enabled to adopt the language of Simeon—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." This petition was expressed with an energy of voice which indicated the animation of a mind feeling its near approach to the prize of its high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He retired to bed at his usual hour, but he was restless and feverish; and about midnight he rang the bell. His housekeeper entered his room, and on drawing aside the curtain of his bed, heard him say,

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"O! the pain, the bliss of dying."

He requested her to fetch his pious medical friend, who speedily arrived, but it was only to confirm his old servant's worst fears. The dying elder now related to the doctor, as a member of the same church with himself, the particulars of his visit to Mr. Beaufoy. "I know," he said, "I am dying, and that in a very few hours I shall see the King in his beauty; but death hath lost its sting, and I have lost my fears. I have long waited for my salvation, and now it is come. I die in full and certain hope of a joyful resurrection to eternal life. Give my dying love to my dear wandering brother, and tell him that the language of the prophet is so impressed on my mind, that I cannot leave the body without expressing a desire that he will meditate on it. 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee; know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.'" He now gently waved his hand as he repeated the triumphant language of the apostle:—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and reclining on the bosom of his friend, he had one strong convulsive struggle, and then expired with a smile settled on his venerable countenance.

The sudden death of this devout elder, who had been for more than fifty years an ornament to his Christian profession, produced a powerful sensation through the whole Society; and many attended his funeral as an expression of the esteem and veneration in which they held his character. Deep and heartfelt was the sorrow expressed on the countenance of the assembled throng on that occasion, and every one seemed to mourn as though he had lost a father or a brother. On the following Sabbath, his funeral sermon was preached in the chapel by the Rev. Mr. R—, from the words, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Prov. xvi. 31). After a correct delineation of the character of the deceased, he described the closing scene of his life. "He was," said the preacher, "not only a good, but a devout man, and pre-eminently endowed by the God of all grace, with a double portion of the spirit of wisdom and understanding. Tremblingly alive for the honour of his Master's cause, he would often weep when it was endangered by the inconsistent conduct of its professed friends; and it was to an extraordinary excitement occasioned by a visit of mercy to a fellow-member, that we may ascribe his sudden decease. His tender and sympathetic spirit yearning over the object of its solicitude, was thrown into an agitation from which his feeble frame never recovered. Having finished the work assigned him, he sunk beneath the weight of his own grief, but not till he had assured his mourning friends that he died in full and certain hope of a joyful resurrection to eternal life. Be ye followers of him, who through faith and patience is now inheriting the promises; and be on your guard, lest, in departing from the living God, you should bring down the gray hairs of some venerable elder with sorrow to his grave, whose love may impel him to manifest a care for your soul." Mr. Beaufoy heard this discourse, but it was evident by his restlessness, and the indignant look which he cast towards the preacher, that his pride was mortified, by the allusions which were made to him.

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Fidelity on the part of a minister is essential, not only to his happiness, but his usefulness; yet when he permits his feelings to overpower the dictates of prudence, he is in danger of frustrating the design he wishes to accomplish. He should declare the word of life without fear; but in administering reproof, he should never be so personal in his remarks or allusions, as to turn the

eyes of an audience on the individual who may deserve it. By the adoption of such a course no one would feel secure from attack, when he comes to hear the message of grace; nor is it likely that the offender will be reclaimed from the error of his way, when he finds himself made a spectacle of reproach in the presence of his brethren. Instead of relenting, he will be hardened; and may be induced to abandon the place which the angel of mercy visits with his healing power, rather than remain to receive instruction and reproof. A minister should always combine the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove; and while he desires to be faithful in the pulpit, he should be solicitous to guard against all appearance of personality.

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When the power of vital religion is declining in its influence over the mind of a professor, and he begins to cherish feelings and adopt habits which are opposed to the purity of his avowed principles, he will not be able to endure the close appeals of the pulpit. Prudence will often keep him from making any complaints against the general fidelity of the ministry, even while his heart is writhing under it; and his habits of intimacy with his Christian brethren will sometimes prevent him from leaving a society with which he has formed a close and a sacred union; but when the principle of apostasy has gained ascendancy over his conscience, and he begins to treat the friendly remonstrances and admonitions with contempt, he will soon discover some justifiable cause of offence, and retire in disgust, if not in wrath.

Thus it was with Mr. Beaufoy. Stung to the quick by the allusions which the preacher made to the visit of the venerable elder, and the supposed cause of his sudden death, he left the chapel in the greatest indignation; and the following morning, he sent his arrears of subscription to the managers, requesting, at the same time, that they would consider him as no longer a member of their church.

On being informed of her husband's abandoning his connection with the Wesleyans, Mrs. Beaufoy was rather pleased than disappointed, as she hoped she would now have greater scope for sharing in the amusements of the gay world. Both thought it right, however, still to attend some place of worship, and thus keep up the appearance of respect for the public services of religion. Where to go, was a question which they could not easily determine; but as some of their friends, whose acquaintance they had lately made, attended a Socinian meeting in E— Street, they resolved to go there on the following Sabbath. This sudden transition, from the fervid devotion of Methodism, to the frigid apathy of Socinianism, produced no unpleasant impressions on the mind of his wife, but Mr. Beaufoy was not quite prepared for it. His heart was become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, yet he still believed in the essential doctrines of Christianity, which retained their dominion over him, though they had lost their original power of impression. They were both struck with the gracefulness of the preacher's manner, and admired his elocution; but Mr. Beaufoy could not renounce the divinity, or the atonement of Christ, nor could he regard the doctrine of regeneration as a corruption of the gospel. Mrs. Beaufoy thought that every modification of Christianity was equally acceptable to God, but Mr. Beaufoy was capable of distinguishing truth from error; and while she adopted for her creed the poet's stanza,

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"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;  
His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right,"

he was convinced that no man ought to be considered a Christian, who rejected the leading doctrines of revelation.

At length, when expressing his abhorrence of some of the daring charges which he heard advanced against the orthodox faith, and which he considered as tending to universal scepticism, she replied, "Well, my dear, you can very easily retain your own opinions, and yet attend on Mr. B —'s ministry, because he cannot force you to believe against the dictates of your own judgment, and if you sometimes hear them controverted, that circumstance ought not to disquiet you. As your belief is founded on evidence, and matured by deep reflection, you are in no danger of being carried about with every wind of doctrine, but may fairly calculate on your ability to hold it fast, amidst all the efforts which may be employed to destroy or disturb it." "Very true," he replied, "I like the morals of Socinianism better than the doctrines. Well it shall be so;"—and so it was. They took their pew, and occupied it; and as the only restraint which had kept them for a long time from a more extended course of gaiety was now removed, they began to walk more openly in the ways of their own heart, and in the sight of their own eyes. Hitherto they had kept up some semblance of religion, but now they began to conform to the customs of the world, and to avail themselves of the various sources of gratification which its pleasures and amusements afford. Family-prayer, the last vestige of their former habits of devotion, was now entirely neglected. The Bible, which they once revered as their guide to everlasting life, was thrown aside; and though Mr. Beaufoy could not forget that he had been a religious man, yet he wished others to believe that now he was a more happy one.

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It has been very justly observed, that when we begin to think lightly of error we are in great danger of being corrupted by it; and the experience of all ages proves, that if a professor hold the truth in unrighteousness, he is ultimately given up to believe a lie. That there have been many departures from evangelical principles in modern times no one will presume to deny; but if they were closely examined, it would be found that they were preceded by a neglect of private prayer, watchfulness, self-diffidence, and walking humbly with God; and every one may perceive that they are followed with similar effects. It has been acknowledged by some who have embraced the Socinian system, that since they entertained those views they have lost even the gift of prayer. Perhaps they might draw up and read an *address to the Deity*; but they could not pray. Where the principles of the gospel are abandoned, the spirit of prayer and all communion with God will likewise depart. The confession of Peter, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, is thought to

be that which our Lord denominates the rock on which he would build his church. We are sure that the belief of this article of faith was required as a test of Christianity; and who can look into the Christian world with attention, and not perceive that it still continues the key-stone of the building? If this give way, the fabric falls. Relapses of this nature are infinitely dangerous. He that declines in holy practice has to labour against the remonstrances of conscience; but he that brings himself to think lightly of sin, and meanly of the Saviour (which is what every false system of religion teaches), has gone far towards silencing the accusations of this unpleasant monitor. He is upon good terms with himself. The disorder of his soul is deep, but it is of a flattering nature. The declension of serious religion in him is no less apparent to others than the physical decay of the body in a consumption, where in each case the party himself frequently has no suspicion of his danger.

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As Mr. Beaufoy had no family, the love of accumulation had less dominion over his mind than the passion for display, which had taken an earlier possession of his mind than he himself was aware of, and to its fatal tendency may be attributed, in a great measure, all the evils and misery of his subsequent life.

On this subject we may here quote the words of a judicious writer:—"We need not affect singularity in things indifferent, but to maintain a constant endeavour to follow in the train of fashion, is not only an indication of a vain and little mind, but is certainly inconsistent with pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The desire of making an appearance has ruined many people in their circumstances—more in their characters—and most of all in their souls. We may flatter ourselves that we can pursue these things, and be religious at the same time; but it is a mistake. The vanity of mind which they cherish destroys everything of a humble, serious, and holy nature, rendering us an easy prey to the temptations which are thrown in our way. A Christian's rule is the revealed will of God; and where the customs of the world run counter to this, it is his business to withstand them, even though in so doing he may have to withstand a multitude—yea, and a multitude of people of fashion; but if we feel ambitious of their applause, we shall not be able to endure the scorn which a singularity of conduct will draw upon us. Thus we shall be carried down the stream of this world; and shall either fall into the gulf of perdition, or if any good thing should be found in us towards the Lord God of Israel, it will be indiscernible and useless."

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Mr. Beaufoy's amiable disposition, and admirable conversational powers, made his society courted by an extensive circle of acquaintances. Balls, parties, and theatres now consumed the hours of the evenings which were once devoted to reading, meditation, and prayer; and not unfrequently the sanctity of the Sabbath was violated by excursions to the country. It was just after they had made an engagement to take an excursion on the Thames on the ensuing Sabbath, that Mr. Beaufoy received a letter from his aged mother, whom he held in the highest veneration, and from whom he wished to conceal the fact of his apostasy. It breathed a spirit of gentle reproach and remonstrance, and opened to his view her agony of mind, occasioned by the intelligence of the defection of her beloved son from the paths of righteousness:—

"BROOKCOMBE, *12th July, 18—.*

"MY DEAR HENRY,—You know I always dreaded your going to London, and now, if what I hear be true, I have cause for my fears. A friend called on us the other day, and told us that you had left our Society and become a Socinian. I don't know much about Socinians, but I understand they say that Jesus Christ is nothing more than a man, and that we must not expect 'redemption through his blood, or the forgiveness of sins through the riches of his grace,' but from our own good works. And have you, my Henry, forsaken that Saviour whom, unseen, you loved when you lived at home with us? and have you made a shipwreck of that precious faith which once filled you with so much joy and peace in believing? and have you departed from the ways of the Lord for the pleasures of sin, which are only for a season? We have had no rest since we received these awful tidings, and the spirit of your poor dear father is so broken with sorrow, that he has not had a smile upon his countenance since. And can you, my dear Henry, leave the Saviour who once had compassion on you, and did such great things for you, as you so often told us of? If you leave him now, how will you be able to stand before him, when he comes with 'ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all; and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him?' O let me entreat you to return to the Lord with weeping and supplication, and he will yet have mercy upon you, and heal all your backslidings; he will accept you graciously, and love you freely. I cannot give you up, no, I cannot! You are my child, and I cannot endure the thought of living separated from you in another world. Let me hear from you directly, and tell me if you are as happy, and as holy, and as spiritually-minded now, as when you first believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Your father joins me in love to you and dear Sophia, and in beseeching both of you to consider the error of your ways ere it be too late. —Your affectionate mother,

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AMELIA BEAUFOY."

This letter shook the unhallowed purpose of his soul, and neither he nor his wife could venture on their excursion up the river. It brought over their imagination the scenes of departed bliss—revived recollections which were sacred and subduing—and plunged Mr. Beaufoy into deep mental agony. Mrs. Beaufoy, however, was of a more heedless turn of mind, and endeavoured to assuage her husband's grief by saying, "You know you still believe the gospel;" but she had no

power over the anguish which was consuming his happiness. "Yes," said he, "I do believe it, or this letter would not disquiet me. I have departed from the Lord, and I am gone past recovery. Mine is no common apostasy. My doom is fixed. My end will be awful. Where, ah! where can I go when he cometh 'to execute judgment upon all?' Yes, I do believe the gospel. I feel I do. I believe it, and tremble. Its terrors are upon me. The piercing language of the prophet has been following me ever since the death of that holy man, whose warning voice I despised, and now they enter as fire into my bones: 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.'"

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The Lord employs various means to recover his people from a backsliding state; and though for a season he compels them to feel the evil and the bitterness of their sin, yet he finally restores unto them the joy of his salvation. When, however, an apostate has been given up to the hardness of his heart, neither the language of mercy, nor the terrors of judgment will produce any other effect than that of accelerating the dreadful catastrophe. He goes on from bad to worse, till at length he comes to the fearful end of his career. Thus it was with Mr. Beaufoy. The extreme agony into which he was thrown by the simple appeals of his mother's letter gradually abated; but he felt it necessary to adopt some new and extraordinary expedients, to gain some small degree of tranquillity. His attachment to his wife was strong, and it had gained such ascendancy over him that he refused to leave his home except she accompanied him; but now a melancholy gloom was cast over all his pleasant things, and those from which he had extracted the sweetest comforts of life became as bitter as wormwood to his taste. Though he forbore, at this early stage of his mental anguish, to reproach her as the cause of his apostasy, yet he secretly laid the sin to her charge, and began occasionally to feel that her society aggravated the evil, which her kindness prompted her to attempt to alleviate. He became reserved, refused to attend any place of worship, and often stayed from home to a very late hour. At first Mrs. Beaufoy hoped that another sudden change would take place, and bring back the domestic happiness of former times; but at length she was awakened to a full discovery of the extent of the misery by which she was surrounded. Her husband was no more the interesting and affectionate companion of her retired hours—no more the attentive and fond lover. He became now a thoroughly dissipated character, rarely returned home till long after his wife's eyes had become heavy by watching for him; and when he did, it was only to exhibit his own disgrace, and torture her feelings. She would sometimes venture to remonstrate with him, and hang over him with all the affection of former days, when he would relent, and pledge himself to change his course; but he had lost the power of self-control, and felt compelled to seek for ease from the anguish of his spirit amidst scenes of convivial mirth and folly.

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The whirl of dissipation and the riot of intemperance are expedients to which many resort when trouble comes upon them; but they increase the evils sought to be removed; for though a temporary exhilaration of the spirits may be produced, and the fearful forebodings of future woe driven away for a short season, it is only to make them return with redoubled force to inflict keener anguish. A voice is sometimes heard speaking from the celestial glory, saying, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee;" but that voice cannot be heard amidst the revelling and excitement of a theatre or tavern. It speaks to the penitent sinner when he is alone—bowed down beneath his burden and despairing of help. Retire then, thou poor backslider, from the haunts of evil—and yet hope for mercy. Thy guilt is great, thy wound is deep, but there is virtue in the balm of Gilead when applied by the great Physician. Go, then, into thy closet, shut the door, confess thy sins, shed the penitential tear, and implore forgiveness. Here others have acknowledged their iniquities, and here they have obtained consolation. Your case may be desperate, but it is not hopeless; and though you may be tempted to despair, yet resist those whisperings of Satan, which, if listened to, would seal your final doom.



JAMES GODWIN      W. L. THOMAS.  
MR. BEAUFOY'S EMOTION ON RECEIVING HIS MOTHER'S

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**THE FRUITS OF APOSTASY.**

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As many months had now elapsed since either Mr. or Mrs. Beaufoy had been to any place of worship, the latter availed herself of an opportunity which occurred to allude to it, when her husband replied, "I wish you to go, Sophia, for it is enough that one of us perish." Dreading the return of his paroxysm of agony, she diverted his attention from the subject, and endeavoured to soothe and cheer his spirits. She so far succeeded as to bring over his countenance the pleasant smile of former times, but little did she imagine that this pleasing sign was so soon to be obliterated. The servant entered the parlour with a letter, which she gave to her master. He placed it on the table and sat musing for some minutes. He wept, though unconscious of the tear that involuntarily trickled down his cheek, and sighed, as if unconscious that any ear was listening. He again took the letter—pressed it to his lips, and wept, and sighed again, as though he thought himself alone. "Yes, my mother, I know thy hand, and if thou knewest the agony of my heart, thou wouldst pity me." He opened it; but he had not read many words before he started from his seat, as if wounded by an invisible hand, then, with firmly pressed lips, perused the letter, threw it on the floor, and was retiring abruptly from the room, when he recognized his wife. "What's the matter, Henry?" she exclaimed, as she attempted to follow him. "Read that," he sternly replied, pointing to the letter, and, suddenly, walking to the door, left the house. Mrs. Beaufoy, with trembling hand, picked up the letter and read as follows:—

"MY DEAR HENRY,—Your father is no more: he died last night, just as the clock was striking eleven. He ne'er smiled on us after he heard that you had forsaken the Lord, and he went to the grave mourning. He said just before he died, 'Tell my dear boy, for he is still my son, that my last tear was shed on his account.' When I wiped off the big tear that was rolling down his cheek, he became composed for a few minutes, and then prayed, 'O Lord God, heal the backslidings of thine Ephraim,' and died before he could finish the supplication.

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"And now, my son, you have broken your father's heart, I grieve to say it, and, I believe, will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. O! consider your dreadful state, and how fearful to think of, should you be suddenly cut off in it! Remember your dear father's last words.

"I feel quite unable to write you a longer letter to-day. If you can come down to the funeral, I need not say how glad I should be to see you; if not, may the Lord reclaim and bless you.

"I know you love Sophia, and I wish you to love her; for she has been a kind wife to you, and a most attentive daughter to your father and myself, but I fear she has been a snare to you. If she had feared the Lord she would have kept you from evil. May the Lord bless and reclaim you both.—Your bereaved mother,

"AMELIA BEAUFOY."

On reading this communication, Mrs. Beaufoy's conscience smote her, and she wept long and bitterly. Then perusing it anew, she exclaimed, "Cruel charge! A snare to my husband! the cause of his being led astray! cruel charge! Is it not enough for me to bear his unkindness, without having to endure such reproaches?" She threw the letter from her, and rose, endeavouring to cast off the load of sorrow which oppressed her spirit. "I cannot endure it. I am of all women the most miserable. I have no one to share my grief. Oh death!—no!—I am not prepared to die." She resumed her seat, and though the letter possessed a sting sharper than that of a scorpion, she took it, read it again, and again it wounded her. "If she had feared the Lord she would have kept you from evil." "Cruel charge! I have tried to keep him, but could not." She paused, then could only ejaculate, "Woe is me!"

The ringing of the bell announced the return of Mr. Beaufoy; but his dark, lowering look bespoke the inward conflict. On taking his seat his eye caught sight of the letter near the place where he had thrown it down a few hours before. Moving back, as if from an adder, he said, "Have you been reading it?"

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"Yes, Henry, I have."

"And what do you think of the charges?"

"They are cruel."

"Rather say, they are just, though severe."

"You know that I have often attempted to reclaim you."

"But did you not first lead me astray? Till I knew you I was a happy, because a religious man; but from that ill-fated hour when, enticed by your influence and example to abandon the house of prayer for the theatre and ball-room, I have had no mental peace. I have forsaken God, and he, in anger, has forsaken me."

"But why recriminate on me the guilt of your own sin? You have withdrawn from me your love and your society, and will you now in exchange give me your reproaches? If we have sinned together, and provoked the Lord to anger, let us now kneel together before his mercy-seat, and together confess our sins, and implore forgiveness."

"You may pray and obtain mercy, but I cannot; no, I cannot."

"The Lord waits to be gracious."

"Yes, to the penitent, but my heart is too hard to feel penitential sorrow."

"But is not the Redeemer exalted to give repentance?"

"To *you* he will give it, but not to *me*. I have fallen away, and incensed justice renders it impossible to renew me again to repentance, for I have crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

"But justice relents when a sinner prays, and mercy"—

"Oh! speak not of mercy."

"But mercy rejoiceth over judgment."

"Yes, but when mercy is rejected, as in my case, justice avenges the insult in a terrible form. Let us change the theme, Sophia. I am too full of agony to dwell on it. It awakens recollections that I wish to banish for ever. It is like handling the deadly weapon which is to extinguish life." [264]

"The blood of Christ, dear Henry, cleanseth from all sin."

"But I have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing."

"But, Henry, is He not still able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; and have you sinned beyond his recovering grace?"

"I know my doom," he curtly replied.

It is not always in our power to ascertain the precise moment when the Divine Spirit begins the good work of grace in the heart, nor yet to say what specific means he employs to effect it, but sometimes an unpremeditated effort to convey instruction, or warning, or consolation to another, is made to re-act on the speaker to produce the great change. Thus it was in the experience of Mrs. Beaufoy. She felt the force of her own remarks, and when reflecting on them, at a subsequent period, she could not but yield to their influence. The charge brought against her, of having led her husband astray, she *now* admitted to be just. But what an admission! to be not merely accessory to his apostasy, but the primary cause of it—not merely a partaker of his guilt, but the means of its contraction and its accumulation. Her sin, which had been concealed from her, *now* started up in all its aggravated form and appalling aspect. "Yes, 'tis true; if I had feared the Lord, I might have kept him from going astray, and we might have been walking in his commandments and ordinances blameless. I enticed him from the paths of righteousness, and into what an abyss of misery are we both plunged! I remember the night when I first induced him to leave the house of prayer to accompany me to the theatre, and I remember the anguish of his spirit after our return. I then told him that he would not injure his principles by yielding sometimes to the customs of the world, but alas, I was deceived! I alone am to blame, and if I could suffer alone, I would patiently endure the terrible inflictions of justice I have merited. But alas! I have raised the storm which has long since laid waste all our domestic felicity, and which is now threatening a deluge of wrath! Where, O where, can we take refuge from the impending evil!" [265]

As she was thus bemoaning her unhappy state, she thought of her long-neglected Bible, and taking it from the book-case, she pressed it to her lips and prayed for grace to understand and feel its instructive and consolatory truths. On turning over its pages, her eye caught the following passage, which in a few moments mitigated in a slight degree the agitation of her mind—"And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." But as there are

"No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels,"

so there is

"No cure for such, till God, who makes them, heals,"

and though her distressed spirit was lifted up above the overwhelming flood, yet it was still enveloped by the gloom of desponding fears. She attempted to pray, but her heart was too tightly bound by mental anguish to give vent to her grief. Hitherto she had borne her sorrows with an unbending spirit, and usually wore a placid aspect when in the company of her husband or her other friends; but now her countenance was changed, and it was evident her soul was in trouble.

"You appear unhappy," said her husband, one day, on finding her in tears; "is it on my account or your own?"

"I am unhappy on your account, Henry, and I am unhappy on my own; and I know not where to go for relief. I feel the justice of our dear mother's charge, though I deemed it cruel at the time. I have indeed led you astray, and am the guilty cause of all the misery into which we are both plunged. If I could suffer alone, it would be an alleviation of my anguish, but I cannot. O, Henry, return with me to the Lord, from whom we have departed, and as we have sinned together, and now suffer together, let us enter his presence, and confess our guilt; and then his anger will be turned away, and he will comfort us." [266]



"You may obtain mercy, Sophia, but I cannot; yours have been the sins of ignorance, but mine have been committed against the clearest light and the deepest conviction of their aggravated guilt. You may plead the promises of the Bible, as a sinner under the first convictions of sin; but I bear upon me the reproach of having forsaken the God of my mercies; and while there are no obstructions in the way of your access to the throne of grace, that throne is guarded by a flaming sword which turneth every way to keep me off from touching the sceptre of mercy. I know my doom, and I deserve it."

He continued in this frame of mind for many months; and though he abandoned the society of his former companions, and the haunts of evil which he had been accustomed to frequent, yet no arguments, however weighty, or entreaties, however urgent, could induce him to revisit a place of worship, or resume his practice of family devotion. At length an insidious disease, which had long been undermining his constitution, began to manifest itself, and it was evident that his course in this world was fast coming to an end. He was urged to try change of air; and with this view he proceeded with his wife to the pleasant village of Parkdale, from which I was somewhat surprised, shortly after my return from Fairmount, to receive a letter written by Mrs. Beaufoy, earnestly beseeching me to come and see her husband, as she feared he had not long to live, and had expressed a wish to see me. My intercourse with Mr. Beaufoy had been completely suspended for some years past. As already mentioned, his letters first became shorter and more reserved, and at length ceased altogether. On one occasion that I called on him in London, his manner was so dry, and expressed so little cordiality, that I felt convinced my visit was disagreeable, and, consequently, never repeated it. On hearing, however, of his lamentable defection from the path of truth, I deemed it my duty to address two or three letters to him on the subject; but to none of these did I receive any answer. When at Fairmount, Mr. Lewellin informed me that he had seen nothing of Mr. Beaufoy for a long time, as latterly he had become quite estranged from his early friends, and established himself in the midst of gay and irreligious society. On receiving the above communication, I at once resolved to proceed to Parkdale, about forty miles distant, in the earnest hope that I might be of some benefit to Mr. Beaufoy, whom, notwithstanding all the past coolness between us, I still continued to regard with considerable interest. On my arrival, I found that I had been anxiously expected by his wife, who appeared to be much relieved at seeing me, and after a short conversation, led me to her husband's room. He received me with strong expressions of affection, and regret for his past rudeness and neglect. "O! Mr. —," he exclaimed, "this is indeed kindness to come and see a poor dying wretch, whose conduct has been so deserving of censure. I have been a wicked man, an undutiful son, and a renegade from the faith; and now I feel a dagger thrust through my heart, which can never be removed."

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"Dear Sir," I replied, "there is one Physician who can remove it, and one specific that can heal the wound."

"I know it. I do not doubt his power, as that would be an insult to his omnipotence; but I cannot believe in his willingness. No, I cannot!"

"But which is the greatest insult, to doubt his ability to save to the uttermost, or his willingness? Has he not said, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out?'"

"But, Sir, the passage which you have now quoted, is addressed to sinners under the first convictions of sin, and not to apostates who have fallen from their former steadfastness. My doom is fixed, and you have only to read the words of the prophet to know its nature. 'Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.'"

"But why, my friend, should you appropriate that awful passage to your condemnation, when you live under a dispensation of grace, which has made provision for the salvation of the chief of sinners?"

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"I do it, Sir, because I know and feel that it is a debt of justice which I owe to the insulted grace of Heaven. That passage is the only one in the Bible on which I can dwell with any degree of ease."

"But can you derive any mental ease from reflecting on a passage which denounces indignation and wrath?"

"Yes, Sir, because then I sink to the level of my condition, and silently approve the equity of the sentence; but when a promise of mercy recurs to my mind, its involuntary stirrings to embrace it throw me into a more agonized state of feeling. But I do not complain. I deserve all I suffer, and all I have to suffer, and I will submissively bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him."

"May you not hope, that this spirit of submission to the righteous manifestations of the Divine displeasure, is a proof that you are not totally abandoned by him; for if that were the case, you would feel disposed, either to impeach the goodness, or murmur against the justice of God?"

"No, Sir, I am not abandoned by him! If I were, I should enjoy the fatal ease of *unfelt* guilt. I am held in bondage, I am alive to the peril of my state, and am compelled by the irresistible convictions of my conscience to admit the equity of my condemnation, but I dare not hope for any symptoms of returning mercy. Returning mercy! No, mercy is clean gone for ever."

"Nay, my friend, the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever; he delights in it, and I have no doubt but the Sun of Righteousness will break in upon the midnight darkness of your soul, and cheer you with the returning light and bliss of hope."

"O! speak not to me of mercy or of hope! You do but agonize me with fresh tortures."

"But will you not admit that God *can* turn away his anger from you, and comfort you?"

"I admit, Sir, that all things are possible with God, which are in accordance with his purity and his justice; but I do not think that he can renew me again unto repentance, because I have crucified to myself the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. I wish, therefore, you would allow me to remain undisturbed by any allusions to mercy, as such allusions bring to my recollection joys that are past, never to be recalled, and plunge me deeper and deeper in the abyss of mental agony. O that I had passed from the nuptial altar to a premature grave! then I should have been resting in peace; but I will not reproach. May my sad doom operate as a warning to others against a departure from God."

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I was much distressed at this scene, but still did not abandon hope; and, therefore, at the urgent solicitation of Mrs. Beaufoy, consented to remain with them for a few days. His disorder continued to increase, and on the morning after my arrival, he consented that his mother should be sent for—a proposal which he had hitherto always rejected, as his attachment to her, which was sincere, made him averse to occasioning her any alarm. On receiving the intelligence of his illness, which had hitherto been concealed from her, she hastened to Parkdale. Her son, on hearing of her arrival, said to his wife, "Conceal from my dear mother the state of my mind; she cannot help me, and if she knows that I die in despair, she will never taste another drop of comfort in this vale of tears." As she entered the room, he raised himself on his bed and embraced her, and they wept in silence together for some minutes.

"And why, my son," she remonstrated, "did you not let me know of your illness before now? I would have come and nursed you as I used to do long ago."

"I hoped that I should recover, mother, and I was unwilling to alarm you."

"Well, my son, I hope the Lord is dealing graciously with your soul now you are in the dark valley?"

"He is dealing righteously."

"Yes, my child, he always deals righteously; but is he dealing graciously?" A long pause ensued.

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"But why are you silent, my son? Tell your mother how the Lord is dealing with you."

"He is dealing righteously with me, and it is our duty to bow in submission to His will."

"I am happy to hear that you are resigned to His will; that is a proof that He is dealing graciously. May the Lord continue to bless you, my dear child, and may He lift upon you the light of his countenance and give you peace."

On resuming her inquiries next day, she asked him, "Have you a good hope through grace, of being presented faultless before the presence of the Lord with exceeding joy?"

"To throw off the veil of concealment which I wished to rest over the state of my mind, I confess, my dear mother, that I have no hope."

"No hope, my child! Not one cheerful beam of hope! Is the Lord's arm shortened, that he cannot save? or is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear?"

"No; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and it is his immutability that plunges me into despair."

"How so, my dear son?"

"He is immutable in his threatenings against those who depart from him."

"And is He not immutable in his promises of mercy to those who *wish* to return?"

"But there are no promises of mercy that suit my case."

"No promises! Why, don't you recollect what our blessed Lord said, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out?' And don't you recollect what Paul says, 'Wherefore he is able also to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them?'"

"Oh, mother, I have gone away from Him who hath the words of eternal life."

"Then come back; He will not cast you out. Does the shepherd refuse to take back the lamb into his fold, which has happened to stray from him?"

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"But I have no strength to return."

"But you can pray; and as the shepherd goes to look after the strayed lamb, when he hears his bleating, so our blessed Lord will have compassion on you who may be out of the way, and will not suffer you to perish, if you wish to return to him. Don't despair of mercy, my son, while our blessed Lord lives to intercede for the chief of sinners."

These tender appeals coming from the lips of his mother, reduced his spirit to a more composed state, and for the first time he wept. When she saw his tears, she wept with him, and said, "I am glad to see you weep; it is the first sign of returning mercy."

"Mercy! no!" he replied; "mercy, I fear, will return no more! I have despised and insulted mercy, and am consigned over to the offended justice of Heaven. It must be a miracle of mercy to recover me from the ruin I have brought upon myself."

"Very true, my child; and mercy often performs a miracle of grace; and if you look by faith to

Christ, he will recover you, and he will put a new song into your mouth, 'even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.'

On the evening of the day following his mother's arrival, as we were all standing round his bedside, she asked him if he yet felt more composed, or if he could indulge a good hope of future happiness.

"Composed, mother! No, I am in perfect anguish, and expect to be lost."

"But he who raiseth the whirlwind, and directeth the storm, is the God of salvation; and though he allow all his waves and his billows to go over you, yet he will command his loving-kindness in the daytime; and when the thickest darkness of the night comes upon you, then his song shall be with you, and your prayer shall be unto the God of your life."

"O mother, I am about to leave you, and you, my wife; and I leave you with a full conviction that we shall never meet again. A few hours will decide the long-agitated question—

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'Am I his, or am I not?'

I wish you would retire and leave me, nor suffer any one to disturb me, as I wish to be alone for a little. I shall ring the bell when I am prepared to see you again."

We withdrew to an adjoining room, when his mother said to his afflicted wife, "This is a solemn moment. You are about to lose a husband, and I a son; but if it should please the Lord to visit him with the light of his reconciled countenance, I trust we should then be enabled to bow down in submission to his sovereign will." I then, at their request, knelt down and prayed, as Elijah prayed when he besought the Lord to send forth the rain of heaven to refresh the parched lands of Israel. When I had finished, old Mrs. Beaufoy said, "Let us go and see if there be yet any signs of returning mercy." "But," said her daughter-in-law, "perhaps he is now wrestling with the Lord, and if we go we may disturb him and ruffle his spirits." Such, however, was the yearning of his mother's heart, that she could not refrain from going to listen, if, peradventure, she might hear something to comfort her. She heard him repeat again and again, "Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me! Lord, save, or I perish!"

Just as she was returning to inform us that the silence of despondency was broken by the voice of prayer, the bell rang, and we entered the room together. "Well, my child," said his mother, "I hope the Lord is now dealing graciously with you." "He is dealing righteously; and against the equity of his conduct I can raise no objection. He is just when he takes vengeance."

After a long pause, during which time the terror of unabated agony was depicted in every countenance, he raised his down-cast eyes towards heaven, and, with a feeble voice modulated to the subduing tenderness of the expression, he said—

"Yet save a trembling sinner, Lord,  
Whose hope, still hovering round thy word,  
Would light on some sweet promise there,  
Some sure support against despair."

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He now became exhausted, and reclining his head on the pillow, fell asleep, and slept several hours. When he awoke, he was composed and calm, and said, "My sleep has been refreshing to me."

"I hope," said his mother, "that your soul is refreshed, as well as your body."

"I am more composed than I ever expected to be, but I am not happy. My composure is no less a source of terror than my former agitation, as I know that the cessation of pain is sometimes an indication that the disorder is approaching a fatal termination, even when the patient may be anticipating his recovery."

"But, my friend," said I, "the terror you feel under your composure, is a proof that you are unwilling to seize a premature hope; and may be regarded as an evidence, that the Lord who refused to appear in the whirlwind, in the earthquake, or in the fire, is graciously appearing in the still small voice of love."

"Oh, my old and tried friend, my sins appear too great and too aggravated to be forgiven."

"But, Henry, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; and He is sent, not only to proclaim liberty to the captive soul, but to heal the broken-hearted."

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "I would believe. Lord, help my unbelief."

Death was now rapidly approaching; and having pressed the hands of each of us, he reclined his head on his wife's bosom, and fainted away. On recovering from this fit, which lasted several minutes, he once more opened his eyes, and casting a mournful look on us, said, "I die an unworthy and guilty sinner at the foot of the cross; but will He permit me to perish when crying to Him to save me? Impossible!" he exclaimed; and then, as if having exhausted all his strength by this last effort, his head fell back on the pillow, and he expired.

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Thus died Henry Beaufoy, who, in his youthful days, bade fair to exhibit, in after life, an example of the beauty and consistency of the Christian character; but having been seduced from the paths of wisdom and of piety, he entered upon a career of evil, which at length brought him to a premature grave. His submission at the last to the visitations of Providence, as an infliction

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which he deserved; and the avowal he made, when yielding up the ghost, gave to his surviving friends a *hope* that he died in the Lord, and is at rest from his sorrows; but still gloomy shadows would sometimes fall upon their spirits, and they often sighed and wept over his memory, as of one who had come short of the kingdom of heaven.

As female influence is so powerful, and has often been employed to seduce the man who fears the Lord, from the paths of righteousness and the ways of peace, let him be on his guard when about to form a connection for life, and not suffer beauty and accomplishments to become a substitute for decided piety. He may think that he shall be able to withstand every ensnaring art, and every fond entreaty, and that he shall ultimately gain over his wife to the obedience of faith; but in this he may be deceived, and have cause to mourn over the consequences of his imprudence, when it is too late. But if a man should violate the sanctity of the Divine law, and marry a woman who is not decidedly pious, let her be on her guard, lest she become the cause of his moral ruin. Let her beware of enticing him to a theatre, or an evening party, when his inclinations would take him to the house of prayer—let her beware of manifesting a spirit of indifference or hostility to the practice of family devotion, which his conscience constrains him to observe. She may not regard such proceedings as wrong, or likely to prove injurious to the reputation or the happiness of her husband, but she may be mistaken; and if her persuasions or her indifference should prove successful, as is too often the case, she may be called to feel the bitter consequences of her folly and her guilt, amidst the wreck of domestic happiness. She may suppose, that the religion of her husband, like her own, has nought to do with the inner man of the heart, and that it may be thrown aside, and resumed, as caprice may dictate, but she is mistaken; and if she should induce him to abandon it for a season, she may live to be stung by his reproaches, and tortured by her own, when he is brought to suffer the due reward of his deeds.

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From the preceding sketch, which has been taken, not from the conceptions of my own fancy, but the facts of real life, we may see that it is an evil thing to forsake the Lord God; and though his tender mercy may stoop to recover the backslider just as he is sinking into despair, yet he seldom throws the light of his countenance over the death-bed of such an individual. I am aware that some employ the partial and the final apostasy of professors, as an argument to prove that our perseverance in religion is quite precarious and uncertain, depending solely on ourselves, without any regard to the counsel of Jehovah. That it does depend on ourselves, I admit—but not solely. We are to walk in the ways of the Lord; but he has promised to uphold our goings, that our footsteps slip not. We are to cleave to him with full purpose of heart; but he has promised never to leave us, nor forsake us. We are commanded to keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life; but he has promised to keep us by his power through faith unto salvation. We know that the beginning of the work of grace in the heart, is to be ascribed to the immediate operations of his power; and it is to be viewed as the commencement of a continued series of operations, which will ultimately issue in the salvation of the soul. And though the faith of some may be overthrown, "nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." His designs will be accomplished, but accomplished in a natural way. They do not supersede the necessity of our exertions. They do not suppose that we are passive machines, acted on by some supernatural power; but living agents, endowed with a Divine principle, which works within us "both to will and to do." They do not relax our obligations to watchfulness—to prayer—to an avoidance of evil—and to the cultivation of the spirit and habits of devotion, but increase them; and the reciprocal influence of our exertions, and of the concurrence of Divine strength, is so nicely balanced in the purpose of grace, that while we are compelled to ascribe to God the honour of our preservation and final salvation, yet we are made responsible for every act of transgression and disobedience. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12).

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One of the chief causes of decay in religion, is our forgetting that the means necessary for first bringing us to God, are no less essential for retaining us steadily in a close walk with him. To watch and pray was no less the duty of the disciples, when they had left all for Christ, than when they first approached his presence, and sought his pardon and love. He has prayed that we may be kept from the evil of the world; but we must look for an answer to this prayer—in our choice of good, and rejection of evil—in the control of our passions—and in the integrity and uprightness of our conduct.

It has been observed, that apostasy begins in the closet; secret prayer is at first carelessly performed—then occasionally omitted—and then entirely neglected. When this is the case, the religious taste becomes fastidious—a roving habit is often indulged—the customs of the world are yielded to, and the principle of sin, which once lay dormant in the heart, rises up with renewed strength, and breaks forth in open manifestations of evil. This process in moral degeneracy may be slow or rapid, according to the degree of influence which circumstances may be permitted to supply, but when it has once begun, it is always going on; and though it may not be in our power to assign the *primary* cause, yet too much secular prosperity is generally one of the most operative. The more a Christian is indulged with temporal blessings—the higher he or his family rises in the world—the more he ought to have his heart glowing with love and gratitude to God. But so inveterate is the depravity of human nature, that uninterrupted prosperity imperceptibly deadens the best affections of the soul, which becomes so completely engrossed in worldly objects and pursuits, that religion is rarely thought of but on Sabbath, and even then it is entangled and mixed up with the things of time and sense. When prosperity comes thus to act on a person who possesses only the form of godliness, while destitute of its power, its fatal effects may be looked for with almost perfect certainty.

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Another cause of the evil which we are so often called to deplore is the indulgence of a speculative turn of mind in matters of religion. We are commanded to search the Scriptures—to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. When this investigation is pursued from a pure motive, and a spirit of prayer attends it—keeping the mind in a teachable and devotional frame—the greatest benefit will be the result. But when once the Word of God is treated with levity—when liberties are taken with it—when one part of it is impugned as mysterious, another rejected as apparently contradictory—when its doctrines are denounced, as incomprehensible, and its precepts objected to, because they are too unaccommodating to the habits of the age—an evil spirit enters into the heart, which first corrupts it and then entangles it in a labyrinth of error. This spirit of unbelief commences its operation by reducing the magnitude of the evil of sin; the necessity and then the reality of the atonement is rejected; prayer is considered useless; the influence of the Holy Spirit in the renovation and sanctification of the heart is denied; and then the apostasy becomes complete.

But one of the most prevalent causes of this evil is an adoption of the principles and a compliance with the customs of the world. There are some customs which exist amongst us to which we must conform; but there are others from which we are commanded to abstain. We may mingle with the men of the world in business, and also in social life; but we are to have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." We may, in common with others, have our social enjoyments, and partake of the innocent recreations of life, without sustaining injury to our morals or our Christian reputation; but if we venture to cross the line which separates the lawful from forbidden ground—if we form habits which the spirit of the gospel condemns, and venture into those places of amusement to which the children of folly are so much attached—though we may not immediately feel their corrupting influence, yet we shall become bitterly sensible of it at last, when the evil is beyond our control. We may silence the remonstrances of conscience, by resolving not to depart from the ways of righteousness, and may affect to treat with contempt the kind admonitions of our more pious friends; but by no species of artifice shall we be able to form a junction between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world; or retain the fervour of devotion within the walls of an assembly-room or a theatre. The experiment has been often made, and the result always proves morally disastrous. In some instances the professor has passed from all connection with pure spiritual religion, into a state of confirmed indifference or avowed hostility; in others, he has retained the form, while he has lost the spirit of devotion, and the closing scene of his life has been occupied by the most heart-rending reproaches and the bitterest lamentations of misery and woe.

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As apostasy from the faith and purity of the gospel, from whatever causes it may proceed, invariably inflicts on the apostate, when awakened to a clear perception of his sin and danger, the most awful and agonizing mental sufferings, I wish to do all that is in my power to arrest his progress ere it be too late, and lead him back to the source of pure felicity, which he has forsaken. I would ask him if the gaieties, the follies, and the amusements of the world, afford him such substantial happiness as he once enjoyed, when he walked in the light of God's countenance? I would ask him if he does not often regret the exchange he has made? and as often condemn himself for his folly and ingratitude in having made it? I would ask him if he does not wish to return once more to taste that the Lord is gracious—once more to feel that Christ is precious—once more to partake of the peace which passeth all understanding—and to live, as in the early days of his profession, in the sublime anticipations of eternal glory? I would ask, Have you never made the attempt? As time advances, are you not gradually sinking into a state of mental dejection, from which you see no chance of being delivered? I do not propose these questions to inflict fresh torment, or increase the anguish which presses upon your guilty conscience, but to induce you to return to the Lord from whom you have departed, that you may again experience his loving-kindness, and that your prayers, mingled with songs of praise, may again ascend to the God of your salvation.

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In illustration of this subject, I shall here conclude by quoting the following from a deceased divine:—"If you ask, But how am I to return? how am I to regain my long-lost peace? I answer, In the same way in which you first found rest to your soul, namely, by repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

"In general, I may observe, the Scriptures assure us of the exceeding great and tender mercy of God, and of his willingness to forgive all those who return to him in the name of his Son. It is necessary that we be well persuaded of this truth, lest instead of applying as supplicants, we sink into despair. If a sinner, newly awakened, be in danger of this species of despondency, a backslider is still more so. His transgressions are much more heinous in their circumstances than those of the other, having been committed under greater light and against greater obligations; and when to this is added the treatment which his conduct must necessarily draw upon him from his religious connections, he may be tempted to relinquish all hopes of recovery, and consider himself as an outcast, both from God and man. Unhappy man! Thy sin may be great, and the language of an awakened conscience may suggest, Who can heal me? Yet do not despair. 'Hear what God the Lord will speak. He will speak peace unto his people and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.'

"There are circumstances which may render it almost impossible for forgiveness to be exercised amongst men; and therefore men are ready to think it must be so with respect to God. 'But with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption.' He will not only pardon, but pardon abundantly: 'for his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.—The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin.—If we

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confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' The threatenings against the unpardonable sin itself do not affect the truth of these merciful declarations: for that sin is all along described as excluding repentance, as well as forgiveness. The party is supposed to be given up to hardness of heart. If, therefore, we confess our sin with contrition, we may be certain it is not unpardonable, and that we shall obtain mercy through the blood of the cross.

"But the great question is, How we shall repent of our sins, and return to God by Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly it is much easier to get out of the way, than to get in again; to lose the peace of our minds, than to recover it. Sin is of a hardening nature; and the farther we have proceeded in it, the more inextricable are its entanglements. But, however this be, we either do desire to return, or we do not.

"If my reader be in such a state of mind, it is with a mixture of hope and tenderness that I attempt to point out to him the means of recovery.

"I would recommend you to embrace every possible season of retirement for reading the Holy Scriptures, especially those parts which are suited to your case, and accompany your reading with prayer. God's Word hid in the heart is not only a preservative against sin, but a restorative from its evil effects. It both wounds and heals; if it rebukes, it is with the faithfulness of a friend, or if it consoles, its consolations will melt us into contrition.

"Read especially those parts of Scripture which are addressed to persons in your situation, as the second chapter of Jeremiah; or those which express the desires of a returning sinner, as the twenty-fifth, thirty-second, thirty-eighth, fifty-first, and hundred and thirtieth Psalms. You may not be able to adopt all this language as your own; but, nevertheless, it may be useful. To read the genuine expressions of a contrite heart, may produce at least a conviction of the disparity between the frame of mind possessed by the writer and yourself; and such a conviction may be accompanied with a sensation of shame and grief.

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"It is also of importance that you read the Scriptures *by yourself*. To read a portion of them in your families is right, and ought not to be neglected; but there is a great difference, as to personal advantage, between this and reading them alone. Your mind may then be more at liberty for reflection; you can read, and pause, and think, and apply the subject to your case.

"It is of still greater importance to unite prayer with it. Reading the Word of God and prayer are duties which mutually assist each other: the one furnishes us with confessions, pleas, and arguments, while the other promotes solemnity and spirituality of mind, which goes farther towards our understanding of the Scriptures than a library of expositions.

"It was in one of these seasons of retirement that David put up this petition, 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.' He seems to have had in his thoughts the condition of a poor wandering sheep, that had left the flock and the rich pastures where it was wont to be led, ranging rather like a native of the woods, than one who had been used to be led, and fed, and protected by an owner. Bewildered by its own wanderings, entangled in the thorns and briars of the wilderness, and exposed to beasts of prey, it feels its forlorn condition, and bleats after the shepherd and the flock! Is there nothing in this that may suit your case? Yes, thou art the man! Thou hast gone astray like a lost sheep, got entangled in thine own corruptions, and knowest not how to find the way back; yet it may be thou hast not utterly lost the remembrance of those happy days before thou wert led to deviate from the right path. Let thy prayer then be directed, like that of the psalmist, to the good Shepherd of the sheep: 'Seek thy servant.'

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"Prayer is a religious exercise which is necessary to accompany all others. 'In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' Solemn approaches to God are adapted to impress the mind with a sense of sin, and to inspire us with self-abhorrence on account of it. It was by a view of the holiness of God that Isaiah felt himself to be a 'man of unclean lips;' and it was by conversing with the Lord that Job was brought to abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes. The very exercise of prayer carries in it an implication that 'our help must come from above;' a truth which in all cases it is absolutely necessary for us to know, and with which, in this case especially, we cannot be too deeply impressed. We easily get out of the way; but if ever we return to it, it must be by His influence, who restoreth our souls and leadeth us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"To tell a person who is out of the way, that he has no help in himself, and that if ever he get in again it must be by the restoring grace of God, may seem to some people paradoxical and disheartening; but it is a truth, and a truth which, if properly understood and felt, would go farther towards our recovery than we at first may apprehend. Paul found that 'when he was weak then was he strong,' and many others have found the same. The more we are emptied of self-sufficiency, the more sensibly shall we feel our weakness, and the more importunately implore that the Lord would save us, and restore us.

"This was the way in which we at first found rest for our souls, and this must be the way in which we recover it. An awakened sinner frequently labours hard after peace, without being able to obtain it. Wherefore? 'Because he seeks it not by faith, but by the works of the law.' In all his labours there is a large portion of self-righteous hope, or an idea that God will pity him on account of his endeavours to please him. But if ever he obtain peace, it must be by utterly despairing of all help from himself; and falling, as a sinner entirely lost, into the arms of sovereign mercy. This is walking in the good old way, which brings rest to the soul; and the same sense of our insufficiency which is necessary to find rest in the first instance, is equally necessary

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to find it on all future occasions.

"We may pray from year to year, and all without effect. It is only the 'prayer of faith' that succeeds; the distinguishing characteristic of which is a sense of there being no help in us, and a laying hold of the mercy and faithfulness of God, as revealed in the gospel. David for a time *groaned*, and even *roared*, 'by reason of the disquietness of his heart;' but he obtained no relief from this. On the contrary, he sunk deeper and deeper into despondency. At length he betook him to another manner of praying: 'Out of the depths cried I unto thee—and thou heardest my voice!' We find him here pleading the exceeding greatness of God's mercy, and the plenteousness of his redemption. Here he found rest for his soul! Jonah also for a time was in much the same state. With a conscience so far awakened as to deprive him of all enjoyment, he retired to the bottom of the ship; and, wearied with the load of his guilt, slept away his time. Even the horrors of a tempest did not awaken him. At length being roused and reproved by heathens, and marked out by lot as the guilty person, he confesses who he is, and what he had done, and advises them to cast him into the sea. Humanity struggles for a time with the elements, but in vain; he must be cast away. Think what must have been his state of mind at this time! He is thrown into the deep, is swallowed by a fish, and retains his reason even in that situation; but no light shines upon his soul. Conceiving himself to be on the point of death, his heart sighed within him, 'I am cast out of thy sight!' But ere the thought had well passed through his mind, another struck him, 'Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple!' He looked, and was lightened: 'Out of the belly of hell cried I unto thee, and thou heardest my voice! When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.'"<sup>[21]</sup>

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## THE FARM-HOUSE KITCHEN.



In the parish of Woodford, about twenty miles from the town where I resided, there were a few cottages, pleasantly situated on an eminence which commanded a beautiful and extensive view of the surrounding country. They were principally occupied by the peasantry who were employed on the neighbouring farms. No less than five church spires could be seen rising in the distance, from amongst the trees, of different parishes; but they were too remote for the aged and the infirm to visit, and the more robust and healthy were also very ready to plead the length of the way as an excuse for their non-attendance at public worship.

Mr. Annesley, a Dissenting minister in the village of Woodford, on passing this hamlet one summer evening, had his attention arrested by an interesting looking young man, about the age of four and twenty, who appeared to be in the last stage of a decline. He presented to him a few religious tracts, which the young man received with an air of indifference; but when informed that they were intended to prepare him for that world into which he was likely soon to enter, he seemed pleased, and said, "That is what I want, Sir." This young man, who was the son of a respectable farmer, lived about two months after the first interview Mr. Annesley had with him; and died avowing his entire dependence on the death of Jesus Christ for eternal life: blessing God in the most simple and ardent terms, for his goodness in sending to him at the eleventh hour a knowledge of the way of salvation.

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**BRINGING IN THE LAST LOAD OF CORN.**  
THE REAPERS' HYMN OF PRAISE.

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After his death, the old farmer, his father, when lamenting that they enjoyed no religious advantages in that remote part of the parish, very readily consented to have his large kitchen

licensed for preaching; and Mr. Annesley engaged to give them a sermon on Tuesdays every week. When he commenced his labours he had to pass through the ordeal of mockery and contempt. Sometimes he was insulted by the poor rustics, when attempting to explain to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but by visiting them in their own cottages, and displaying a kind and affectionate disposition, he gained their confidence and esteem, and they pressed to hear him with devout and earnest attention.

Having resolved to make an excursion to Woodford, and pay a visit to this rural place of worship, of which I had often heard, I took my seat in the coach, one afternoon in the month of September, as far as the village of Woodford, from which it was a walk of three miles to the farm-house. The weather was unusually hot for the season of the year; but towards the evening, the cool breezes which sprung up made me enjoy my journey exceedingly.

After getting down from the coach, I quitted the village by a cross road, and then turned aside into a fine shady lane. On passing by a farm-yard, I observed an extraordinary rush of men, women, and children, and being anxious to know the cause of it, I advanced into the yard, where I saw a group marching before the last load of com, which they were bringing from the field, and singing the following, as a harvest hymn of praise:—

"But now his hand hath crown'd our toil,  
We joy like those that share the spoil,  
The harvest home to bear:  
With shouts the laughing pastures ring;  
With grateful hearts we reapers sing  
The praise of heaven's eternal King,  
Through whose paternal care we bring  
The produce of the year."

I tarried some time, intermingling my feelings with those of the enraptured swains, and participating with them in this feast of innocent delight; but on looking at my watch I found that I must hasten onwards, or I should be deprived of the higher gratification of witnessing a more interesting and a more important sight. On proceeding up the lane that led to the rural temple of devotion, I occasionally heard the harmony of Zion's strains, which became more distinct and impressive as I drew nearer, till at length I was enabled to catch the following words which the congregation were singing:—

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"Shall I beneath thy gospel stay,  
And hear the call of grace;  
And at the awful judgment-day,  
Be banish'd from thy face?"

I got into the passage just as Mr. Annesley arose to pray, but I did not choose to advance, lest I should disturb the devotions of the little assembly. While standing there, two ladies approached towards the door, and, like myself, waited in silence till the prayer was ended, when we all entered together. Our appearance excited considerable attention, but whenever we had taken our seats, every eye was attentively directed towards the minister. To one who has been accustomed to offer up his prayers and his praises, in the fixed and appropriate language of our national liturgy—and to listen to the enunciation of life and immortality within the walls of a church—the scene of rustic simplicity exhibited in this farm-house kitchen must have appeared very singular. Mr. Annesley stood in a corner of the room, his Bible lying open before him on a small round deal table, the family clock ticking behind him; his rustic audience was variously disposed of—some sitting on the dresser to his right, others in the chimney-corner to the left, the majority on forms in front of him, and a few bending forwards from the passage, being incapable of gaining admission. As they were singing the hymn which intervenes between the prayer and sermon, an expression which I had recently met with came to my mind, and with such force, that no external decoration was wanted to render either the place or the truth more acceptable to my taste—"A religion without a Saviour, is the temple without its glory, and its worshippers will all desert it." Just as the minister read his text, the countenances of several changed; all were attentive, and appeared to have forgotten the toils and the fatigues of labour, while listening to the discourse, which was founded on the following words of Jesus Christ:—"But there are some of you that believe not" (John vi. 64). He had not been speaking long, before my spirit involuntarily said, "Here is religion with a Saviour, and wherever his truth is preached, there he condescends to dwell."

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THE FARM-HOUSE KITCHEN.

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The sermon delivered was simple, perspicuous, and well calculated to fix the attention of the audience. The figures of illustration and description were selected from the rural scenes and occupations with which the congregation were familiar; and from the looks, the tones, and the actions of the speaker, it was evident that he was really in earnest, and desired to impress his hearers with his own views and feelings. When expostulating with those who did not believe, he suddenly paused, his eyes, more than half suffused with tears, told more forcibly than language could express, how deeply he felt; while his lips, quivering with tremulous anxiety, gave utterance to the interrogation—"Why won't you come to Jesus Christ, and be saved? Do you think you need no Saviour? Impossible! Do you imagine that he is unable to save you? Do you suppose he is unwilling to save you? Impossible! Do you think you are in no danger of being lost? Do you imagine that the misery of a lost soul is less terrible than the Scriptures represent it? or that the happiness of a redeemed spirit is less joyous? Impossible! *Why then won't you come to Jesus Christ, and be saved?*" No profound arguments were employed in pressing on the attention of his rustic audience these pointed questions, and yet they came with an almost irresistible force. As the people were retiring, I heard some of them saying to one another, "Ah! why don't we come to Jesus Christ, and be saved?"

Being seated nearly opposite the two ladies who entered along with me, I could not avoid noticing the behaviour of one of them, which contrasted strongly with the simple and devout attention of the cottagers. Sometimes she listened with apparent seriousness, but more than once the smile of contempt and the look of scorn seemed to gather on her countenance; and at one part of the sermon, when the preacher was speaking of the entire depravity of the human heart, she made an effort to leave, but was apparently prevented from doing so by her friend. When, however, this simple question fell from Mr. Annesley's lips, she became still and thoughtful, and I observed tears fall from her eyes, an unconscious response to the earnest appeals of the preacher.

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After service I introduced myself to Mr. Annesley, who insisted on my spending the night at his house. On our talking over the occurrences of the evening, I mentioned what I had noticed in the conduct of one of the ladies, and expressed my belief that her heart was penetrated by what she had heard. "If, Sir," he remarked, "that lady should be converted, she will be a living witness of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and afford a strong corroborative testimony of its Divine origin. I have," he added, "no personal acquaintance with her; nor was I aware that she was present this evening, till I saw her leaving at the conclusion of the service, but I have long known her character; she resides at Hollyton, a village about a mile and a half distant, and, I believe, is one of the most agreeable women you could meet with in society, but she is a professed infidel; and though most of her relatives and friends are religious, she will rarely consent to attend any place of worship with them. She says that the scheme of salvation is a cunningly devised fable, got up by the priesthood, and palmed upon our hopes and fears by the policy of our rulers; and

unhesitatingly avows that it is the duty of every person, who feels a proper respect for the dignity of the human species, to employ all his influence to dissipate the delusion. She will not, I understand, enter into any discussion on the Christian religion, because, she says, no evidence could induce her to believe it—no, not if she had seen the miracles performed which are ascribed to Christ and his apostles—and often quotes the inconsistent conduct of its professors, to show that its moral tendency is unfavourable to the growth of virtue. The lady who accompanied her is of a very different stamp, and a pious member of the church. I presume her influence has induced Mrs. Farrington to attend our meeting this evening. I trust that she may yet be led to see and repent of her errors."

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"I am mistaken," I remarked, "if her scepticism has not received its death-blow to-night. She will be thinking soon about coming to Jesus Christ to be saved."

"Amen. The Lord grant that it may be so."

I then referred to the interesting scene I had witnessed on my way to the farm-house, and was informed by Mr. Annesley that the labourers whose festivities I had witnessed, belonged for the most part to his regular congregation at Woodford, and were in the employment of Farmer Hopkins, one of the most esteemed and influential members of his church.

The next morning, as we were sitting at breakfast, a note was handed to Mr. Annesley from Mrs. Farrington, requesting that he would be so kind as call on her in the course of the forenoon. She added, that she understood he had a clerical friend with him at present, whom she had observed at the meeting on the previous evening, and that she would feel much gratified if he would accompany him.

"Your discourse," I observed, "has already borne fruit."

"I trust so," he replied. "You will of course go with me on this visit to Mrs. Farrington's. I have never been in her house, and I should like to have a friend with me, more especially as she seems anxious for it herself."

I would have excused myself, on the ground that I had already been longer absent from home than I had intended; but my objections were overruled, and I consented to remain another night with Mr. Annesley, and return to town next morning. In the course of the forenoon, we proceeded to Mrs. Farrington's, and were received by her with the utmost courtesy. She mentioned that she had recognized me the previous evening as a clergyman in —, whom she had once heard preach, and on her way home she had learned that I was to be the guest of Mr. Annesley for the night. She endeavoured to assume her accustomed ease and sprightliness of manner; but still I felt persuaded that she was labouring under strong mental depression, which she was anxious to conceal. The conversation turned on the scenery around us, which had now assumed the beautiful autumnal tinge; and when Mrs. Farrington pointed to a double row of fine elm trees, whose thick and extended branches overshadowed a lovely walk in the front of her cottage, I could not refrain from repeating the following lines of Cowper:—

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"Meditations here,  
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart  
May give a useful lesson to the head;  
And learning wiser grow, without his books."

"But," said Mrs. Farrington, "to quote from the same author—

'Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,  
Have oftentimes no connection. *Knowledge* dwells  
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;  
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.'

"Very true," said Mr. Annesley, "and hence we sometimes see those who are endowed with the greatest intellectual talents, and enriched with the largest stores of knowledge, acting the most foolish parts in the drama of life, and terminating their career without any hope of a blissful immortality." This allusion to a future world, threw a shade over the countenance of Mrs. Farrington, and more than once she endeavoured with difficulty to suppress a sigh.

"We have high authority for saying," I remarked, "that it is not good for the soul to be without knowledge; but considering the relation in which we stand to God, and our condition as sinners against his righteous government, there is no knowledge so essential to our happiness, as a knowledge of his character, and the way in which his favour is to be conciliated. Without this, we are left in absolute uncertainty respecting our final destiny, which must be perplexing and alarming, in proportion as we seriously meditate on the capabilities of the human soul to suffer or enjoy in a future state of existence. Hence arises the desirableness of a revelation of the will of God; and the advantage of having such a revelation, when made, committed to writing, that it may be preserved from the corruption and uncertainty to which oral tradition is necessarily exposed. This revelation we have in the sacred Scriptures; its purity and adaptation to our moral condition are strong internal evidences of its genuineness; and I am at a loss to conceive how any one can reject it, without destroying his own peace of mind. It delineates our character, as guilty, depraved, and unhappy, with the most perfect accuracy; and points our attention to a Saviour, who came to save and to bless us, and to fit us for a nobler life than we can ever live on earth."

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Mrs. Farrington became deeply affected, burst into tears, and left the room, but soon after returned, offering as an apology for her weakness and her rudeness, as she termed it, an

excessive nervous irritability under which she was then labouring. After a moment's pause, Mr. Annesley said:—"Pray, Madam, is not your mind now powerfully affected by those religious truths which you once rejected as the fallacious opinions of man?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied, "it is, and has been since I heard you preach last night in Farmer Rogers' kitchen. I have hitherto rejected the gospel as a cunningly devised fable, and generally looked with pity or contempt on those who embraced it, but then I was convinced of its divinity, and by the force of an evidence which I had not previously examined."

"What fresh evidence of the divinity of the gospel," said Mr. Annesley, "did you receive last night, for I do not recollect advancing any?"

"The evidence of experience," she replied, "for the gospel came not in word only, but in power, and I could no longer resist it. Curiosity led me to that sequestered house of prayer; and at first I was disposed to treat the whole affair with contempt. The pride of my heart rose up against the statement which you gave us of the entire depravity of our nature, and I should have left in disgust, had not my friend prevented me; but when you proposed that simple yet important question, '*Why won't you come to Jesus Christ, and be saved?*' I felt as though an arrow had pierced my soul, and from that hour till now, I have been suffering the agonies of a wounded spirit. I could get no sleep last night, reflecting on my condition; and early this morning I despatched a messenger to your house, with the note which you received. I feel deeply obliged for the promptness with which you and Mr. — have responded to my request, in coming to see me."

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"But," inquired Mr. Annesley, "as the interrogation you refer to was no direct proof of the Divine origin of the gospel, how came it to produce such a conviction in your mind?"

"I have been revolving that question, and it has created some strong doubts of the correctness of my present belief; but yet now I can no more reject the gospel as false, than I could before receive it as true. That interrogation came with a power which was superhuman, and its impressions on my heart bore the stamp of the same agency; and now, Sir, the only question which I wish resolved is this: May I be permitted to hope that that Saviour whom I have so long rejected, and so often and so grossly insulted, will ever condescend to cast one tender look of compassion on me?"

"In the conversion of a sinner," said Mr. Annesley, "it pleases God to display his sovereignty, no less than his power and his grace; and hence he generally accomplishes it in a way which compels us to acknowledge his direct and immediate agency. Had he chosen to convince you of the Divine origin of that system of truth, which you have so long rejected, by the slow and rational process of a logical argument, your judgment might have been convinced, while your heart remained unaffected by its awful and sublime communications; but by convincing you of your guilt, and of your danger, and of the necessity of a Mediator and a Saviour, he has rendered that argumentative process unnecessary, in compelling you at once to seek the consolations of mercy as essential to your happiness."

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"Oh! yes, Sir, they are essential to my happiness, indeed they are, but I fear they will be withheld. What plea can I urge for mercy? On what basis can I rest a hope of acceptance?"

"It is usual," Mr. Annesley replied, "for a person who is just awakened to a belief of the gospel of Christ, to suppose that its consolations are far beyond his reach, whilst he stands in dread of its awful denunciations; but this is a delusion which fear practises on the imagination. In the operations of Divine truth on the heart, there is a natural process observed on the part of the great invisible Agent who conducts it; the convictions of personal guilt, connected with an apprehension of merited punishment, prepare the way for the reception of pardon and salvation, as the free gifts of God."

"Am I then to consider what I suffer and what I dread as preparatory visitations of Divine grace, to compel me to take refuge in Christ from the wrath to come?"

"Yes, Madam. The feelings which you now experience, and which excite so much alarm, are intended to prepare you for the manifestations of the Divine favour and love. You have now to fix your attention on Jesus Christ, who is able and willing to save all who come unto God by him. And hear the encouraging and consolatory language he employs—'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John vi. 37)."

"But what reason have I to believe that such gracious words relate to myself?"

"Their insertion in the Bible is your authority for so applying them to yourself. But lest you should suppose that this gracious declaration was designed, in any sense, for the exclusive relief of those to whom it was originally given, the revelation of mercy and grace concludes with language equally encouraging:—'And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Rev. xxii. 17). Why then should you doubt? Why should you pause? Why should you continue to linger around the promises of salvation, and not embrace them as the source of your comfort?"

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"I do not hesitate to plead the promise of salvation from any doubt of its necessity, or of its truthfulness. I feel, however, such a burden of guilt on my conscience, for having uttered so many hard things against the Redeemer and his great salvation, and feel so oppressed by a sense of unparalleled unworthiness, that I seem more inclined to endure the chastening of the Lord, than venture to implore the exercise of his pardoning love and mercy."

"You are, it is true, unworthy, but not unwelcome; unworthy, but not unfit: for

'All the fitness he requireth,  
Is to *feel* your need of him.

How simple! Believe, and be saved; come to me, and I will give you rest."

"Yes, Sir, the plan of salvation is both simple and suited; but these attributes of its character stagger and perplex me."

"How so, Madam?"

"It appears more consonant to the awful majesty of Divine justice to demand from me some costly sacrifice—to call upon me to endure some severe privations and sufferings, as the condition of pardon and acceptance, rather than to offer them freely and gratuitously. I ought, I think, to suffer some extreme and prolonged infliction, before I ought to cherish a hope of salvation."

"That is true; but, as the apostle says, 'By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast' (Eph. ii. 8, 9)."

"I feel thankful that I am not now what I was yesterday—a proud and haughty sceptic; looking with scornful contempt on the Bible—on the Sabbath, and its public services—and on all who make a profession of love to Jesus Christ; but I dare not lay claim to the spiritual blessings which God graciously bestows on his redeemed and renovated people. I hope in his mercy, and pray for its manifestations to my guilty conscience, but I cannot do more; indeed, at times, I tremble while cherishing a hope in his mercy, lest I should add the sin of presumption, to the many other sins I have committed against him."

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We now closed the interview by reading the Scriptures and prayer; and then returned, devoutly thankful to the God of salvation for what we had seen and heard.

In this state of agitating uncertainty, as to the final issue of her hopes and her fears, Mrs. Farrington continued, as Mr. Annesley afterwards informed me, for several months, suffering at times intense remorse, and often strongly tempted to abandon herself to despair. But by a patient continuance in the study of the Bible and listening to the ministry of the Word, in meditation and in prayer, she felt in process of time the sacred power of the promise of mercy and grace; tasted that the Lord is gracious, and eventually had hope and peace in believing; living through life in the fear of God, and giving a practical exemplification of the truth of the apostolic declaration, that "the grace of God that bringeth salvation, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 11-14).

The conversion of this lady to the Christian faith, after having signalized herself for many years by her unceasing hostility to it, is a very strong evidence in confirmation of its Divine origin. What human power could have effected such a moral renovation as that which was produced while she was listening to this sermon by Mr. Annesley? She anticipated no such a change, nor did she desire it. In the sermon, which curiosity prompted her to hear, there was no concentration of argument to carry conviction to her judgment—no outbursts of eloquence—nor any decorations of style, to impress her feelings or attract her taste, but merely an interrogation, and that one of the most simple. From whence, then, came the all-powerful energy by which her haughty spirit was made to quail before the truth, which she had so long stigmatized as a cunningly devised fable? Whence, unless from Him who can easily subdue all things to himself; and whose spiritual triumphs are often graced by the spontaneous submission of his most malignant enemies; thus turning a prophetic announcement into an historic fact—"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

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## A PARTY AT THE ELMS.



U must now request the courteous reader to return with me to Mr. Holmes and his family, at the Elms, where, as it will be recollected, we left Louisa, the eldest daughter, in a state of great mental perplexity, though somewhat soothed by the judicious letter of her worthy friend Mrs. Loader. It will also be remembered that Louisa had addressed a second letter to the latter, detailing further her career of Christian experience, and asking additional advice and assistance as to her future course.<sup>[22]</sup>

According to annual custom, a large party dined at the Elms, consisting principally of Mr. Holmes' old city friends, who came to enjoy a day in the country, and have a talk over the events of former times. They had all sprung from an obscure origin—had commenced to push their fortunes in London about the same time—and were now in the possession of considerable wealth. The party dined early. When the cloth was removed, the worthy host said he would give a toast, which he hoped the ladies would respond to as well as the gentlemen, though he admitted he ought to apologize for attempting to revive a practice which was now becoming obsolete—"Prosperity to the citizens of London; and may they ever express their gratitude to God, by supporting the institutions of benevolence." This toast having been duly honoured, the ladies withdrew, leaving the gentlemen to their debates and discussions.

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Miss Holmes proposed a walk—a proposal which the ladies and young people gladly fell in with. It was a fine tranquil evening, at the close of one of those beautiful days which frequently occur in this country in the month of October. The sun was sinking in a sea of crimson and gold, behind a finely wooded hill to the west, and throwing his rich amber light through the foliage of the pleasure ground in which the party was now sauntering. Everything tended to soothe and tranquillize the mind, while not a sound could be heard, but the rustling of the autumn leaves beneath the feet, or their fall as the branches vibrated in the almost imperceptible evening breeze.

Among the young people composing the party that day at the Elms, was Miss Martin, an intimate friend of Miss Holmes, and decidedly religious, but between whom and Louisa there had hitherto been but little sympathy on this subject. Without possessing the years and experience of Mrs. Loader, she nevertheless possessed an affectionate disposition, with a fund of sterling good sense, and was thus well qualified to impart consolation to the agitated and distressed mind of her friend. Louisa felt her heart gradually lightened as she conversed with Miss Martin; and the two ladies, walking on together a little in advance, got engaged in so interesting a discussion, that they soon lost sight of the younger members of the party, who had set off to amuse themselves in another direction. Louisa now recollected that she had promised a Bible the day before to an old woman in the neighbourhood, and invited Miss Martin to accompany her with it there—a proposal to which her friend gladly acceded. They accordingly proceeded down a narrow path which led from the shrubbery to a retired country road. They then walked along a short distance till they came to a neat cottage, at the door of which they gently tapped. It was opened by the old woman, Mrs. Kent, who invited them to walk in and sit down. They readily consented, and spent there a most interesting hour.

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"I feel deeply obliged, ladies," said Mrs. Kent, "by your kindness in fetching me this Bible. It is indeed a treasure. A large printed Bible like this is just what I have long been wishing to procure, as my eyes are become so dim I cannot see to read this small print" (exhibiting a Bible which bore the marks of age).

"I am very glad, indeed, that you are pleased with it," replied Louisa, "and I trust you may long be spared in health to enjoy its stores."

"I have great reason to be thankful to God for the health he has given me. I am in his hand—he doeth all things well."

"You have really a pretty cottage here," said Miss Martin, "and it is very tastefully adorned. Have you lived here many years?"

"About twenty years. I was turned out of the cottage I lived in before, by Lord Harwood's steward, because I would not give up my religion; but the Lord opened the heart of a good man who lives in the village, and he built this little cottage for me, and I have lived here rent free ever since."

"How long may it be since you first knew the Lord?"

"More than forty years. I was, when young, a very thoughtless girl, and took great delight in vain pleasures; but the Lord was pleased, blessed be his name, to call me to a knowledge of the truth, and to love and serve him, when I was about your age."

"And you are not weary of his service?"

"Weary of his service!" said the venerable matron, her eyes sparkling as with youthful ardour—"no, Miss, though I often wonder that the Lord is not weary of me, as I am such an unprofitable servant."

"Then after forty years' experience, you can bear testimony to the truth of what Solomon says of religion: 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace?'"

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"That I can. I have been a widow five and twenty years. I have outlived all my children but one, and I have not seen him for more than sixteen years. I have had many troubles, but the Lord has brought me through them all. He has given me a spirit of resignation and contentment, and I can say, Let him do with me as seemeth good in his sight. He is too wise to err."

"Then you don't envy the rich and the noble?"

"No, Miss, I envy no one. If the rich have comforts that I have not, they have cares and temptations, from which I am protected. May the Lord incline you, my young friends, to seek him in your youth, and then you will find a treasure which is of more value than thousands of gold and silver."

"I hope he has inclined us to seek him," said Miss Holmes; "and as you have known him so many years, I shall be happy to come and visit you, that you may teach me the way of the Lord more perfectly."

"I shall be glad to see you at any time, if you will condescend to come and see me; but it is not in my power to teach you. The prophet says, 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.'"

"I will soon come back again and have a long chat. Good night."

"Good night, ladies. May the Lord bless you."

"She is a dear old woman," said Miss Martin. "I have quite fallen in love with her."

"Yes, my dear Mary, she is one of the Lord's hidden jewels, set apart for himself. I am very glad to have made her acquaintance, but I confess that I neglected to do this till the other day, though I had often seen her knitting on the seat in front of her cottage as I passed by."

The two friends now re-entered the avenue, and, taking a by-path, ascended a little rising ground, which commanded a fine view of the surrounding country. "How delightful it is, Louisa," said Miss Martin, "to get a day's excursion away from the bustle and smoke of London. What a beautiful landscape you have here—that venerable church tower rising in the distance among the trees, and that fine old mansion at the foot of the hill, with the deer feeding in the park in front; and see what a pretty object Mrs. Kent's cottage makes, when seen through this vista in the trees." [300]

"It is certainly a beautiful prospect, Mary. I often come here to contemplate it. I made a sketch the other day of Mrs. Kent's cottage, which I shall show you when we get into the house. It is both a picturesque object when viewed from a distance, and loses none of its attractions on a near approach. She has displayed great taste in the way she has disposed the evergreens and flowers around it. But its chief glory is within."

"Very true, my dear Louisa. It is a sacred spot—often visited by unseen messengers, when they come to earth on errands of mercy. Strangers would pass by, and admire only the neatness of its external appearance, but we have seen its concealed beauties."

"I was quite delighted," said Miss Holmes, "with the first visit I paid her. She certainly possesses a very cultivated mind for a person in her station. She has been a great reader in her time, but now her favourite study is divinity, and the Bible is her text-book. She gave me some particulars of her history. Her life has been a chequered one. I was quite taken with the artless simplicity of her conversation, and with the ease, I may almost say elegance, of her manners. I shall certainly often stroll to her cottage for a chat; and you must come here again soon, and pay her another visit along with me."

"I am glad, my dear, that you are partial to her," replied Miss Martin. "I shall be delighted to accompany you again to Mrs. Kent's. I hope you will often visit her. You will derive, I have no doubt, much spiritual benefit from her conversation. There is nothing which so polishes and refines the character as the influence of religion. It improves the taste, without making it fastidious; enlarges the intellect, without engendering vanity; softens and sweetens the temper; and inspires a consciousness of individual worth and importance, while at the same time it pays a respectful regard to the laws and customs which prevail in society. Hence a Christian appears as dignified in a cottage as in a mansion; and living comparatively disengaged from the temptations of the world, he is more at liberty to commune with the Redeemer, by which he imperceptibly receives a more perfect impression of his image." [301]

"But do you think, Mary, that every Christian exemplifies the correctness of your remarks?"

"No, my dear. Some do not feel the influence of religion till late in life, when their taste has been vitiated, their habits formed, and their tempers set; and though it will correct some of the evils which they may have contracted, yet it rarely happens that their character receives such an amount of refinement as it would have done, had they felt its transforming power at an earlier period."

Just at this moment they were startled by a deep groan, that came from the wood near which they were standing, and on running to afford some assistance to the supposed sufferer, Miss Holmes beheld her facetious sister Emma, with a group of young friends, attempting to conceal themselves, but who burst out into loud laughter when they were discovered.

"What's the matter, girls?"

"Nothing, ladies; O nothing!" said Lucy Cooper, with a suppressed smile.

"We were afraid, from the groan we heard, that some one had been hurt, or was suddenly taken ill."

"It was only Emma, feigning illness, to disturb you in your grave musings."

"O! Emma, I wonder how you could be so foolish! I am glad, however, that there is nothing the matter; and I do not regret having been disturbed, as it appears to have contributed to your mirth."

"We have just been seeing Mrs. Kent," said Emma, "and she told us that you, and I suppose Miss Martin, had been there."

"O what a lovely place!" exclaimed several voices.

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"How I should like to live in that beautiful cottage!" said a little girl; "I wish grandpapa would buy such a one for me."

"The old lady," said another, "was looking over the Bible you gave her when we tapped at the door, and she rose and received us with as much grace and ease as though she had been a duchess. She appears to be a very contented, nice old woman, and seems to be very religious in her way. Is she not, Emma?"

"Yes, she is."

"Aye, she is at a good age to become religious, and she has nothing else to engage her attention. I should like to have another talk with her."

"We shall be happy to see you, Lucy, at any time," said Miss Holmes; "and I think both you and Emma would be all the better for a few lessons of staidness and sobriety from Mrs. Kent."

"O yes, I know I should; but as my propensity is to be religious, I must check it, or I shall get quite unhappy. It won't do for me to associate much with such devout people. I shall be sure to catch the infection, from my natural habit of imitation."

Miss Holmes would have made some reply, but the appearance of her brothers, and some of the gentlemen from the house, put a stop to further conversation.

"Come, ladies," one of them exclaimed, "where have you been rambling to all this time? We thought we had lost you. You have forgotten how late it is, and we must be off for town in an hour or two."

The youthful party, thus summoned, hastened to the house, where, after partaking of tea, the guests prepared to depart, just as the moon began to rise. The family then being left alone, drew their seats round the fire for a few minutes before they retired to rest, and began to talk over the incidents of the day.

"This has been a very happy day," said Mr. Holmes; "for though our friends are not all religious people, yet they are very worthy, excellent persons."

"It must be a high gratification to you, father," said his eldest son, "to see the companions of your youth sitting around your table, with your children, and, by mutual intercourse, recalling the early scenes and incidents of your career."

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"Indeed it is, William; and I hope God has reserved the same enjoyment for you all; and that, when I am resting in the grave with my fathers, you will think and talk of these gone-by times."

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A few days after this, Miss Holmes received the following letter from her esteemed friend, Mrs. Loader, which she had been anxiously expecting for some time:—

*29th Oct., 18—.*

"MY DEAR LOUISA,—I received your letter of —, and was glad to find that you were so far restored as to be able to occupy yourself in the service of Christian benevolence. The duties which now devolve upon you are no less novel than they are important; and while you may provoke others to scorn by the activity of your zeal, you may sometimes likewise involve yourself in perplexity and mortification. You already begin to feel the loss of the spiritual enjoyments which you so largely participated in when "first you knew the Lord," and you suppose that this is a conclusive evidence of the declining influence of religious principle over your mind; but you ought not to draw such a conclusion. If, dear Louisa, you expect that the realities of the unseen world will always retain that ascendancy over your affections which they acquired when you first felt their power, you proceed in your calculations on mistaken data. When you were first impressed by the truth, you were a prisoner—confined in the solitary chamber; you held but little intercourse with the world around you, and your feelings were rendered more susceptible of strong excitement, from the influence which a protracted affliction had imperceptibly acquired over them; but now you are out and abroad—your spirits are braced up by the pressure of calls and engagements, which demand your attention; and you are compelled to engage in the duties and pursuits of social life. Can such a change in your habits take place without having some powerful effect on the state of your

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affections? Impossible! An active life is less favourable to devotional feeling than a contemplative one; and though I would not throw out a remark which should operate as a discouragement to exertion in the cause of Him who became obedient unto death for us, yet I assure you, that in proportion as the number of your employments increase, you will be deprived of the pleasures of retired devotion, even though the truths of religion retain their ascendancy over your judgment, and its holy principles reign in your heart.

"I have thought it right to make these observations, to guard you against the common error into which young Christians often fall, in supposing that their faith is not genuine, because it does not uniformly act with the same degree of activity and power.

"That you should, at times, admit the possibility of the entire passing away of your religious convictions and impressions, and should look forward with shuddering dread to the consequences and final issue of such a calamitous event, does not surprise me, neither does it give me any alarm. This is usually one of the earliest mental trials a young disciple has to endure. You say that, notwithstanding the ceaseless terror which agitates your heart, you are moving forward, though slowly, between hope and fear: and if so, you are safe in the right way to the city of habitation, as fear will keep you from presumption, and hope from despair. Yes, my dear Louisa, the harmonious blending of these affections of the soul, will ever prove, in their restraining and sustaining influence, a shield of defence against the subtle temptations of the great adversary, and a well-spring of consolation in the season of gloom and depression. We read, 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy' (Psal. cxlvii. 11). But you are unconsciously guilty of a capital error—you think, and feel, and write, as if there were no being in existence who is able to keep you from falling, and who, at the same time, has no personal interest in doing it. Has a father no personal interest in the preservation of the life and happiness of his child? Hear what your heavenly Father says, when speaking to you from the celestial glory—'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands' (Isa. xlix. 15, 16). Can you suppose that Jesus Christ, after dying to redeem you, will abandon you and leave you to perish, when you are praying—'Lord save me!' He loves his own; and all who come to him to be saved are his own, and none else will come; and when they come, he will in no wise neglect them or cast them out. Meditate often on the following words, which he spoke when on earth to his disciples, and which he has had recorded in the sacred volume, for the consolation of his disciples of all future times—'I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil' (John xvii. 15). You may have great and sore trials in your Christian course—you may be exposed to severe temptations and great moral dangers, but you are safe; He will not overlook you, or leave you, who gave his life as a ransom for your redemption. Your final salvation depends on no doubtful contingency. It is fixed and certain. And He who gave his life for you, is now preparing a place for you in heaven—is doing something in your behalf which implies the exercise of power—getting in readiness, as I heard an eloquent preacher remark the other Sabbath, a quiet chamber for the accommodation of his beloved disciple in the house of his Father. And after preparing this mansion, he will not suffer its intended occupant to perish by the way. No; 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' (John x. 27, 28).

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"I am happy that you are intimate with the Corries, who used to be our next-door neighbours when we lived in London. They are a very excellent family, decidedly pious, and very benevolent. They are Christians of the old school—still retain their attachment to the singular phraseology which at one time was much in vogue amongst our evangelical preachers—and have imbibed a few opinions which, I think, need revision.

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"You appear to have had your peace disturbed, and your cheering prospects darkened, by your intercourse with them; but be not alarmed, as the more your faith is tried, the stronger it will grow; and instead of sustaining any injury from the conflicting elements of doubt and suspicion, which threaten to tear it up by the roots, it will strike them still deeper and deeper in that holy soil, in which it is ordained to flourish.

"Your friends are not singular in their views of the nature of faith, but I do not think that they are correct; and as you have requested me to give you my opinion, I will cheerfully do so. They confound a plenary conviction of the truth of the Christian scheme of salvation, with an assurance of a personal interest in its invaluable blessings. This is the error into which they have fallen, and on the eve of which you are now standing; but it does not require much force of reasoning to show its fallacy. Faith is an assent of the mind to some truth, or some system of truth, which is established by satisfactory evidence. As this assent becomes weaker or stronger, in proportion to the clearness and force of the evidence by which it is produced, a full assurance of faith is that high degree of it which admits of no suspicion. Hence, you are convinced that Jesus Christ came into this world—that he sojourned in the land of Judea—that he performed the miracles which are ascribed to him—that he died on the cross to expiate the guilt of sin—rose from the dead—and is now seated on the right hand of the majesty on high, receiving there the ascriptions of praise from the lips of the redeemed.



"You want no miracle wrought in your presence to induce you to believe this, because you believe it on the testimony of the inspired writers; nor is it necessary that a voice should speak to you from the celestial glory to confirm it. But though you are fully convinced of these facts, yet you are not so fully convinced that he died *for you*—or that he is gone to heaven to prepare a mansion for you, in the house of his Father. You believe that there is 'redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;' but you sometimes doubt whether *you* are redeemed and forgiven. You believe that 'he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them;' but you are not fully persuaded that he is interceding for you. You feel your need of such a Saviour; and you know that 'all that the Father giveth him shall come to him;' yet you doubt whether the Father ever gave you to Christ, or whether you have ever come unto him in a scriptural manner. You cannot believe the truth of the gospel more firmly than you do believe it—you cannot place a more entire dependence on Christ for salvation than you do place—you cannot feel more disposed to give him all the honour of your salvation than you do feel; and yet, at times, you doubt your acceptance—your safety—and your final blessedness. Does not this clearly prove that faith in Christ, and an assurance of an interest in him, are essentially distinct?"

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"Nor can we doubt the correctness of this assertion, if we attend to the order of the Spirit's operations on our mind. He inclines us to believe the truth which he exhibits; and he enables us to do it. 'For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you; all things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.' This is his *first* act; but it is a *later* act, to bear testimony with our spirit that we are born of God; and as some space of time must necessarily elapse after he has performed the first act, before he performs the second, it is evident that faith may exist in its purity, and in its power, even when there is no assurance of it. Hence it follows, that a person who relies on the atonement of Christ for salvation is as safe, though he live and die without any firm persuasion of his future blessedness, as one who is enabled to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Indeed, my dear Louisa, I should tremble to make the final happiness of my soul depend, in the slightest degree, on my personal assurance of its safety. This would be nothing less than intermingling a personal attainment with the efficacy of the Saviour's death; and placing my hope of a blissful immortality on the precarious basis of a fluctuating feeling, rather than on that immoveable foundation which God has laid in Zion. If you peruse the biographies of some of the most eminent Christians, you will perceive that during their pilgrimage on earth, they frequently complained of that alternation of feeling which you now experience; and some have been left for days, and for months, to walk in mental darkness without the light of the Divine countenance. Your favourite poet, Cowper, was a man eminently imbued with the spirit of Christ; and yet in what a dark and gloomy frame of mind did he leave this world. His biographer says, that within a few days of his decease, after a near relative had been attempting to cheer him with the prospect of exchanging a world of infirmity and sorrow, for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, he threw from him the words of peace, and exclaimed, 'Oh, spare me! spare me! You know, you *know* it to be false.' Having given utterance to this despairing language, he sunk into a state of apparent insensibility, in which state he continued for twelve hours, and then expired without moving a limb, or even uttering a moan. Thus terminated the mortal career of one of the greatest poets that ever consecrated the powers of his mind to the cause of Christ: entering death's dark vale without a ray of light to cheer him in his lonely passage.

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"But shall we say that he died without faith, because he died without an assurance that he possessed it? Would not such an opinion necessarily tend to destroy our confidence in the sufficiency of the atonement of Christ, by making our final happiness depend on the peculiar frame of our mind in that solemn hour, when some latent physical cause may bring over the spirit a gloom which no human effort can dispel? If we *trust* in Christ, we shall be saved; and though we may sometimes doubt the genuine nature of our act of faith, yet that circumstance will not endanger either our present safety or our future blessedness. Indeed, I have known some most exemplary Christians, who have trembled to speak with confidence of attaining the recompense of reward. Removed at an equal distance from the dread of perishing and an *assurance* of being saved, they have been enabled to cherish and display those dispositions and principles which have satisfied their judgment of their safety, without affording an entire relief to all their anxieties.

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"But though, my dear Louisa, an assurance of your interest in Christ is not essential to your salvation, yet it is essential to your happiness. You cannot doubt it, without feeling a deep pang; and if you should habitually doubt it, you will live in a state of perpetual dejection. I urge you, then, to attain it in the spring-time of your experience; or you may accustom yourself to feel more inclined to cherish, than to expel despondency. 'Wherefore,' says the apostle, 'give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' And that you may attain this assurance of hope, which will be as an anchor of the soul during the perils and conflicts of time, look up, by faith and prayer, to the invisible Source of all consolation and joy; ever remembering that 'the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children,

then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ' (Rom. viii. 16, 17). This witnessing testimony is as necessary to superinduce this assurance, as the precious blood of Christ is necessary to remove the guilt of sin. Never forget this.

"And if you should not immediately attain a full assurance of your interest in Christ, do not suffer your mind to be overwhelmed with anxiety; as this is an attainment which belongs to the more advanced Christian, rather than to the young disciple. It will not come at once by an overpowering force, driving away every gloomy fear, and throwing open before you a clear prospect of a blissful immortality, but gradually, at intermitting seasons, weakening the strength of your doubts, and strengthening the weakness of your faith; till at length the God of hope will fill you with all joy and peace in believing. I was much struck with a paragraph in a devotional treatise which I recently perused, and which I here quote—'Great consolation is often received at different seasons, even during the period when our general feelings are intermingled with dark and painful forebodings. Hence, the weakest believer sometimes returns from the closet, and from the sanctuary, strong in faith, though he may again relapse into his more stated frame of despondency. The clouds occasionally separate, to enable him to view the Sun of Righteousness, and feel the healing virtue of his presence, though they may again unite to obscure his vision, and leave him to grope on his 'darkling way.' These intermitting seasons of darkness and light, of high enjoyment and deep dejection, have a salutary effect, and serve to prepare him for that state of settled assurance, which, in fact, they tend in some measure to produce.'

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"As I have so far exceeded the ordinary bounds of a letter, I shall not enter on the other very important questions to which you refer in your last; but will do it at some future period. It gives us great pleasure to hear that you have such an excellent minister near you, and though he preaches in a chapel which does not belong to our Establishment, yet, if he preach Christ and him crucified, I have no doubt you will enjoy his labours. The feet of the messenger that publisheth peace, are no less beautiful on the mountains, than in the city; and his proclamation is as interesting to the self-condemned sinner, when delivered in the unconsecrated chapel, as in the majestic cathedral; and though we may retain our partialities to forms and places, yet, if we ever suffer our prejudices to deprive us of our spiritual privileges, we shall be guilty of a suicidal act against both our peace and steadfastness in the faith.

"The account which you have given me of your sisters has awakened an opposite class of feelings in my breast. Emma, I fear, is under some fatal influence which you have not yet detected, and will, unless subdued by the loving-kindness of God our Saviour, devote herself to the pleasures of the world. Her beauty has made her vain, and the versatility of her talents is a snare to her. You must watch over her with great care, and pray that He who called *you* out of darkness into his marvellous light, would be pleased to renew her in the spirit of her mind. Jane is a lovely girl. She has an elegant mind, and if the good work is begun in her heart, she will be an interesting companion to you. Let me hear from you as soon as you can spare a few moments from your numerous engagements, and believe me, yours affectionately,

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E. LOADER."

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## FAMILY SKETCHES.



In a large family we often find that some of the children discover a peculiar aversion to the religious habits which prevail amongst them. Though the primary cause of this hostility may be traced up to the depravity of our nature, yet we ought not to overlook the secondary causes which may have contributed to its growth and manifestation. For though there is an innate propensity to evil in the heart, and though that propensity is much stronger in some than in others, yet it rarely breaks through the barriers which a judicious course of instruction throws up, unless it is brought into contact with strong temptations, which *might* have been guarded against. Hence most pious parents, when mourning over the impiety of their children, have to reproach themselves for some omissions or compliances which have directly or indirectly tended to produce the evil, and which very naturally lead to a fatal indifference or open hostility to the claims of religion, which no subsequent remonstrances are able to correct or control.

This was the case in the family of the Holmes. Miss Emma was a beautiful girl. Her manners were exceedingly graceful. She was witty and satirical in her disposition, and from her childhood gave unequivocal proofs that she required more than ordinary attention in the cultivation of her mind and the formation of her character. From the superior vivacity of her spirits, the playfulness of her fancy, and her intellectual acuteness, she gained a powerful ascendancy over the affections of her parents, who, trusting too much to the maturity of her judgment for the correction of budding ills, paid less regard to the formation of her habits than they had done with their other children. The partiality for dress, which she discovered when a child, increased as she grew up, till at length she lavished nearly the whole of her attention on her external appearance. After having spent a few years in the establishment where her elder sisters had finished their education, she was sent, at the age of sixteen, to a fashionable boarding-school, in which too

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much attention was paid to mere personal graces and accomplishments. It was here that she formed an intimacy with the daughter of Colonel Orme, who resided near the Elms, and which proved a source of poignant sorrow to all the members of her family. After leaving school, she was permitted by her unsuspecting parents to exchange visits with her young friend, who was, by the influence of her sentiments and example, gradually destroying that reverence for the authority of religion, and that attachment to its practices, which they were so anxious to cherish and to strengthen. Miss Holmes saw with deep regret the fatal bias which her sister's mind was receiving; and though she availed herself of every opportunity which circumstances offered to check and subdue it, yet she constantly met with determined resistance.

"Indeed," said Emma, after her sister had been urging her to return some novels which her friend had sent for her perusal, "I shall not do it till I have read them. They are amusing and interesting; and if they contain any objectionable sentiments, I can easily reject them."

"Yes, they may amuse and may interest, but they will not improve your mind. They will give you false views of nature and the world—imperceptibly reconcile you to sentiments and opinions at which you would now shudder—induce such a love for the marvellous and romantic that you will be dissatisfied with the dull uniformity of life, and destroy all the religious impressions which our dear parents have been so anxious to produce."

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"When I feel the injury to which you allude I will give them up, but till then you must permit me to follow my own inclination without control. I am old enough to judge for myself."

Whether the varieties which are apparent in the human character are to be traced up to the different methods employed in its formation, or to some inherent peculiarity in the constitution of the mind, is a much vexed question amongst philosophers. Education and example no doubt exercise a most material influence, but they do not operate in a uniform manner, as we have known the most opposite characters rise out of the same family. To account for this, unless on the principle that there is some inherent propensity in our nature, which gives to each person an individuality of character, would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, as we should naturally expect a uniformity of result where the same means are taken to secure it, unless there be some latent cause by which this is prevented. Hence some of the most improved systems of education make provision for a difference in the style of instruction, and in the mode of treatment, to accord with the natural temper and inclination of the pupil; supposing, that by such a judicious arrangement, his moral and intellectual improvement may be more effectually advanced.

But how often does even this method fail of accomplishing its intended effect; as we see the children of a large family discovering a diversity in their taste—their disposition—and their habits—no less striking than they would have done, if no wisdom or discretion had been employed in their cultivation. Meekness and irritability—an affable demeanour, and a proud hauteur—a placidness and tenderness of disposition, and a violence and resentment of spirit—a love of display, and a native modesty which withdraws from public notice—a passion for some individual pursuit, and a restlessness which no object can fix—are the moral lights and shadows which often fall on the members of the same family, giving that variety of hue and tinge which we discover in the aspect of the natural world.

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Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, in their plan of domestic government, endeavoured to do three things—to attach their children to their own home; to encourage them to repose unlimited confidence in their parents; and to train them to cultivate pure and ardent love for each other. By the adoption of these maxims, they displayed their good sense and parental regard; as it is uniformly found, that when a child outgrows his love for his father's house, he has lost the sheet-anchor of his safety; that if he have not free and unrestricted access to his parents, he will become suspicious of, and estranged from them; and that if he feel no peculiar pleasure in the society and interest in the welfare of the other branches of the family, he will cherish a jealous and envious disposition, not more destructive of their happiness than of his own.

When speaking of the excellencies which so finely budded on the opening character of some of their children, they often expressed their regret at the unpromising appearances of others; yet indulged the hope that they would outgrow their "flaws unseemly," and ultimately display, not only the strength of reason, but the beauty of virtue. As they advanced from childhood to youth, and from youth to riper years, they gradually developed the peculiarities of their tempers and dispositions, which were so dissimilar, that no uniform mode of discipline could be adopted with any chance of proving beneficial. Mr. Holmes was too much occupied in his commercial affairs, to pay any great attention to his children while they were young, and, therefore, the chief responsibility of their education devolved on their mother, who, feeling anxious to discharge the trust reposed in her, availed herself of all the information which she could acquire. The following paragraph, which she met with in a favourite author, gave her an insight into the art of a judicious management. It inspired her with a good hope respecting those who appeared the most unpromising, because the most untractable:—"A discriminating teacher will appreciate the individual character of each pupil, in order to appropriate her management. We must strengthen the feeble, while we repel the bold. We cannot educate by a *receipt*: for after studying the best rules, and after digesting them into the best system, much must depend on contingent circumstances; for that which is good may be inapplicable. The cultivator of the human mind must, like the gardener, study diversities of soil, or he may plant diligently, and water faithfully, with little fruit. The skilful labourer knows that, even when the surface is not particularly promising, there is often a rough, strong ground, which will amply repay the trouble of breaking it up; yet we are often most taken with a soft surface, though it conceal a shallow depth, because it promises present reward and little trouble. But strong and pertinacious tempers, of which, perhaps, obstinacy is the leading vice, under skilful management, often turn out steady and

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sterling characters; while, from softer clay, a firm and vigorous virtue is but seldom produced. Pertinacity is often principle, which wants nothing but to be led to its true object; while the uniformly yielding, and universally accommodating spirit, is not seldom the result of a feeble tone of morals, of a temper eager for praise, and acting for reward."

It is often remarked, that children are men and women in miniature; and as they grow up to their full stature, we often see them exhibiting, in broader and more palpable development, the excellencies and defects of their juvenile character; but when they are subjected to the operation of extraordinary causes, they sometimes undergo an entire transformation, and become new creatures. The most hopeless turn out the most valuable—those who have inflicted the most pungent sorrow ultimately become the source of the purest delight—the prematurely promising have faded in the spring-time vigour of their virtue—and those who have been endowed with the greatest talents have brought down the gray hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave.

The eldest sons of this family, William and Edward, who succeeded to the business when the father retired, had turned out everything their parents could wish, but presented no prominent traits of character, beyond that of well-conducted, pious young men. The youngest son, John, who was devoted to the medical profession, possessed more adroitness and vivacity than his brothers; but either from the laxity of parental control, or the peculiar connections which his pursuits in life led him to form, he disappointed the high expectations which he had raised, and eventually became the source of domestic grief. He was greatly attached to his sister Emma, whom he most nearly resembled, not only in person, but in disposition; and having imbibed sceptical notions on religious subjects, soon after he commenced his professional studies, he infused them into her mind, and thus did her great injury. There was an unobtrusive modesty about Jane, which naturally induced her to retire from public notice, and rendered her fully appreciated only by her more intimate friends; while Emma's good qualities were unfortunately, to a great extent, obscured by her inordinate vanity and desire of admiration. The love of dress, as already mentioned, early took possession of her mind, and her parents injudiciously nourished this passion, by allowing her to do as she pleased in this respect, not conceiving that by such a compliance she would sustain any moral injury. But they lived to see and deplore their error.

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"It is a just remark," says an excellent writer, "that objects in their own nature innocent, and entitled to notice, may become the sources of disadvantage and of guilt; when, being raised from the rank of trifles to ideal importance, they occupy a share of attention which they do not deserve; and then they are pursued with an immoderate ardour, which at once indisposes the mind to occupations of higher concern, and clouds it with malignant emotions." Perhaps there is no subject which will more strikingly illustrate the correctness of this remark, than that passion for fashionable attire by which some are enslaved. "If, in addition to that reasonable degree of regard to propriety of dress, which insures the strictest neatness, and a modest conformity, in unobjectionable points, to the authority of custom, a young woman permits her thoughts to be frequently engaged by the subject of exterior ornaments, occupations of moment will be proportionably neglected. From the complacency natural to all human beings, when employed in contemplating objects by means of which the flattering hope of shining is presented to them, she will be in the most imminent danger of contracting a distaste to serious reflection, and of being at length absorbed in the delusions of vanity and self-love. It is, undoubtedly, a matter of indifference, whether a lady's ribands be green or blue; whether her head be decorated with flowers or with feathers; whether her gown be composed of muslin or of silk. But it is no matter of indifference, whether the time which she devotes to the determination of any of these points is to be reckoned by hours or by minutes; or whether, on discovering the elevation of her bonnet to be an inch higher or lower, and its tint a shade lighter or darker, than the model which prevails among her acquaintance, she is overwhelmed with consternation and disappointment, or bears the calamity with the apathy of a stoic."

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The love of dress, like every other improper affection, has a material influence over the formation of the character; and though it operates by a silent process, yet it is invariably found to have a pernicious tendency. It induces habits of expenditure, which are often beyond the resources of the individual; saps the foundation of morals, and involves in inextricable difficulties. Bills are left unpaid, and every excuse and apology which ingenuity and artifice can devise, is employed to silence the remonstrances of the creditor—whom the debtor avoids with an instinctive dread, no less sensitive than the child does the place supposed to be haunted by an evil spirit.

But, if the resources are sufficient to satisfy the demands of justice, has benevolence no claim on the female sex? "The fact is, that an unguarded fondness for ornament has been known, in a multitude of examples, to overpower the natural tenderness of the female mind, and to prevent the growth and establishment of dispositions pronounced in the gospel to be indispensably requisite to the Christian character. If the purse be generally kept low by the demands of milliners, of mantua-makers, dealers in trinkets, and of others who bear their part in adorning the person, little can be allotted to the applications of charity. But charity requires, in common with other virtues, the fostering influence of habit. If the custom of devoting an adequate portion of the income to the relief of distress be long intermitted, the desire of giving relief will gradually be impaired. The heart forgets, by disuse, the emotions in which it once delighted. The ear turns from solicitations now become unwelcome. In proportion as the wants and the griefs of others are disregarded, the spirit of selfishness strikes deeper and stronger roots in the breast. Let the generous exertions of kindness be tempered with discretion: but let a disposition to those exertions be encouraged on principles of duty; and confirmed, in proportion to the ability of the individual, by frequency of practice. Before the world has repressed, by its interested lessons, the

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warmth of youthful benevolence, let experience establish a conviction that the greatest of all pleasures is to do good. She who has accustomed herself to this delight, will not easily be induced to forego it. She will feel, that whatever she is able, without penuriousness or improper singularity, to withdraw from the expense of personal ornament, is not only reserved for much higher purposes, but for purposes productive of exquisite and permanent gratification.

"Another, and a very important benefit which results from fixed habits of moderation as to dress, and all points of a similar nature, will be clearly discerned by adverting to the irreparable evils into which young women are sometimes plunged by the contrary practice. The lavish indulgence in which they have learned to seek for happiness, becoming, in their estimation, essential to their comfort, is able to bias their conduct in every important step. Hence, in forming matrimonial connections, it exercises perhaps a secret, but a very powerful influence. The prospect of wealth and magnificence, of the continuance and of the increase of pleasures supposed to flow from the pomp of dress and equipage, from sumptuous mansions, showy furniture, and numerous attendants, dazzles the judgment, imposes on the affections, conceals many defects in moral character, and compensates for others. It frequently proves the decisive circumstance which leads the deluded victim to the altar, there to consign herself to splendid misery for life.

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"There are yet other consequences which attend an immoderate passion for the embellishments of dress. When the mind is fixed upon objects which derive their chief value from administering to vanity and the love of admiration, the aversion, which almost every individual of either sex is prone to feel towards a rival, is particularly called forth. And when objects attainable so easily as exterior ornaments occupy the heart, there will be rivals without number. Hence, it is not uncommon to see neighbouring young women engaged in a constant state of petty warfare with each other. To vie in ostentatiousness, in costliness, or in elegance of apparel—to be distinguished by novel inventions in personal decoration—to gain the earliest intelligence respecting changes of fashion in the metropolis—to detect, in the attire of a luckless competitor, traces of a mode which for six weeks has been obsolete in high life—these frequently are the points of excellence to which the force of female genius is directed. In the meantime, while the mask of friendship is worn, and the language of regard is on the tongue, indifference, disgust, and envy are gradually taking possession of the breast; until, at length, the unworthy contest, prolonged for years under habits of dissimulation, by which neither of the parties are deceived, terminates in the violence of an open rupture.

"The Scriptures have spoken so plainly and so strongly respecting solicitude about dress, that I cannot quit the subject without a special reference to their authority. Our Saviour, in one of his most solemn discourses, warns his followers against anxiety as to 'wherewithal they should be clothed,' in a manner particularly emphatic, classing that anxiety with the despicable pursuits of those who are studious 'what they shall eat, and what they shall drink;' and by pronouncing all such cares to be among the characteristics by which the heathens were distinguished. It ought to be observed, that these admonitions of Christ respect men no less than women. The apostle Paul speaks pointedly concerning female dress, saying—'I will, in like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety: not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but, which becometh women professing godliness, with good works.' In another passage, St. Peter also speaks expressly of the female sex: and primarily of married women, but in terms applicable with equal propriety to the single—'Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold, and of putting on of apparel. But let it be the hidden man of the heart' (the inward frame and disposition of the mind), 'in that which is not corruptible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.' It would be too much to assert, on the one hand, that it was the intention of either of the apostles, in giving these directions, to proscribe the use of the particular kinds of personal ornament which he specifies; but, on the other hand, it was unquestionably the design of both, to proscribe whatever may justly be styled solicitude respecting any kind of personal decoration; and to censure those who, instead of resting their claim to approbation solely on the tempers of the soul, in any degree, should ambitiously seek to be noticed and praised for exterior embellishments, as deviating precisely in that degree from the simplicity and the purity of the Christian character."

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The young ladies of the Holmes family, were allowed a stated income to meet their current expenditure, besides receiving occasional presents. One custom prevailed in this family, which the writer hopes will never become extinct amongst us, as it belongs so appropriately to the English character. The birthdays, especially those of the parents, were duly celebrated, and an interchange of presents made between the members of the family. On the occasion of the recurrence of Mr. Holmes' birthday, which took place a few weeks after the party referred to in the foregoing chapter, the usual compliment of presents was made in the morning; and in the afternoon, after the old gentleman's health, and many happy returns of the day, had been drunk with due honours, he presented to each of his daughters an envelope, containing a bank note for £20.

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In the evening, as the young ladies were taking their walk, their conversation turned on the unexpected liberality of their father, when Emma asked her sisters what they intended to purchase.

"I intend," said Jane, "to purchase my freedom."

"Your freedom, my dear!" said the facetious Emma; "I did not know that you were in bondage to any man; but if you are, surely you do not think of offering to pay him for your liberty?"

"I am not," replied Jane, "in bondage to *any man*."

"No! To whom then?"

"To woman kind!"

"Woman! What! Woman enslave her own sex!"

"Even so."

"What woman are you in bondage to?"

"The mantua-maker! Here are the fetters of my captivity (exhibiting the undischarged bills), which I will now go and break asunder, and hope never more to wear them."

"You are to be commended, my dear," said Miss Holmes, "and I hope Emma will follow your example; for, with our liberal allowance, and the presents we receive, we ought to have something to spare to the claims of religion and benevolence, rather than have the disgrace of unpaid bills lying in our drawers."

"Indeed," Emma replied, "I think Papa gives away quite enough to purchase our redemption from the taxes of charity. When I am settled in life, it is my intention to appropriate a regular sum to charitable purposes, but now I cannot afford it. We must be just before we are generous."

"On that maxim I shall act," said Jane; "I will discharge my debts as an act of justice, and then I shall have it in my power to be generous to the poor and needy."

"I have no doubt, Emma," remarked Miss Holmes, "that you are sincere in your proposed intentions respecting your future charities; but I suspect, if you go upon the principle of waiting till you are rich, you will never have anything to give. You must know, dear Emma, if you reflect on the subject, that you are now forming your habits for life—giving to your principles and propensities a fixed and changeless tendency; and is it not of great importance that you should begin now to cultivate the virtues of charity and self-denial?"

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"It may be so, but there is no rule without an exception; and as your habits and mine, dear sister, are so dissimilar, you cannot expect that I can follow your example in all things."

"Then, my dear, follow the example of Jane, and you will feel more at ease; and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that those you are indebted to are not distressed by the want of the money you owe them."

"Indeed, I am at ease. They charge enough, for the few articles I purchase, to allow me to take a long credit."

"That is very true. They charge in proportion to the length of credit they give; and hence, you pay such an exorbitant price for your dress. You impoverish yourself by the very method you employ in expending your money; and never have the satisfaction of being free from the pressing claims of dress-makers and milliners. Thus you deny yourself the noble gratification of relieving the necessities of others; for when an appeal is made to your benevolence, you are obliged to resist it, because you have previously exhausted your resources."

"You reason admirably, dear sister, and I shall not forget your observations; but I must get a new dress, as I have worn my old one so long. I will spare something out of the next present Papa gives me. I hope this will satisfy you, as you know I always keep my word."

It is, generally, in the more private occurrences of domestic life, that the peculiarities of the human mind are developed; and events, trivial in themselves, often acquire a degree of importance from the indications of character which they exhibit. The bestowment of a birthday present, was an expression of paternal regard, but what different dispositions and tendencies did it call forth, and what a different moral effect did it produce!—Miss Holmes devoted a portion of her present to the claims of charity and religion, and with part of the remainder, she purchased a silver snuff-box, which she presented to her father, with a few appropriate verses. Jane, who had been enticed into extravagance by following the example of her sister Emma, went and discharged her debts; while Emma, after ordering her dress, and paying a sum towards her previous account, took a fancy to a beautiful shawl, and ordered it to be sent to the Elms, and in this way got deeper in debt than she had been before.

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## AMUSEMENTS.



Miss Orme, the friend of Emma Holmes, accepted an invitation to spend a few weeks at the Elms, and being aware of the religious habits of the family, she resolved to conform to them with the most scrupulous exactness. When she played, she generally selected sacred music, as a compliment to the taste of her pious friends; and even condescended to accompany them to chapel, though she avowed her decided preference for the forms and ceremonies of the Church. She was naturally of a very pliable disposition, and had she been under a different course of moral training, she might have devoted her attention to the claims of religion; but being surrounded by the fascinations of gay life, and taught to regard the pursuit of pleasure as the chief end of her existence, she became one of the most zealous devotees that ever bowed down at the shrine of fashion. She possessed an intelligent mind; but the books she read, and the subjects on which she generally conversed, had a tendency to impair its strength, and to keep it from ranging in the

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field of useful knowledge. She was rather shrewd, and would sometimes make a reply, or give a turn to an observation with considerable effect; but her resources were soon exhausted, and she would fall back into a state of ennui, unless the conversation related to the fashions or the amusements of the day, and then she would speak with great fluency and animation. In her disposition, she was so good-natured and amiable, that she would bear reproof with the utmost degree of mildness, but never thought of amending her ways; would acknowledge herself in the wrong, when it was pointed out to her, yet persisted in its practice; and often confessed that she had no doubt but a religious life was most acceptable to our Maker, yet as often expressed her astonishment that any young person could think of becoming religious.

As Mr. Holmes could not conscientiously suffer his daughters to attend any of the public amusements to which society devotes such a considerable portion of its time, he endeavoured to compensate for the loss of such sources of gratification, by making them happy in their home; and by treating them with occasional excursions, where they might enjoy a change of air and of scenery, without running the risk of sustaining any moral injury. To gratify her friend, Emma had persuaded her father to take them to Windsor, where they were to spend one night, and return the following day; but there had been so much rain in the early part of the morning, and it continued to descend in such torrents, that they were obliged to postpone their visit. This disappointment was borne with great cheerfulness by all but Miss Orme, who felt it to be a most irksome burden, and said more than once during the day, "What a misfortune that Providence should allow it to rain to-day, when, I suppose, he knew we were going to Windsor!"

"Why, perhaps," said Mr. Holmes, "he has sent the rain to prevent some calamitous accident."

"Dear Sir, do you think he ever pays any attention to us, and such little things as a pleasure excursion?"

"Yes, most certainly. Our Saviour says—'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.'" [325]

"Then of course it is so, but it never struck me before. I always thought that God looked after other worlds and their inhabitants, and that he left us to our fate."

"You forget the first petition in the Lord's Prayer—'Our Father, who art in heaven.' A kind father—and God is love—pays great attention to his children."

"Exactly so, Sir, but it never struck me before."

As she was sauntering up and down the house, leaning on the arm of Emma, bitterly deploring the continued descent of the rain, which precluded the hope of their getting out of doors, she broke in upon Miss Holmes, busily engaged in finishing a dress for a poor woman, who was daily expecting the birth of her firstborn.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Holmes, for this act of intrusion. We are sauntering away dull time."

"Walk in, and I will give you some employment."

"Indeed, I am not fit for work. This is one of the dullest days of my life. I wish the rain was over and gone. Is it not a great misfortune that it should come to-day?"

"Perhaps, my dear Miss Orme, it is sent by our heavenly Father to prevent some greater misfortune."

"That's what your Papa has just been telling us. What a striking coincidence between his sentiments and yours! They are new ideas to me. Very devout and proper."

"Sister is Papa's living echo," remarked Emma.

"As you two idlers," said Miss Holmes, "have nothing to do but saunter away time, perhaps (addressing Miss Orme) you would have no objection to read, it may prove a little relief to your dulness."

There were several books lying on the table, which she carelessly examined and closed, when Emma said, "Here is one which you have not seen." She took it, read the title—*An Inquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*. "A learned dissertation, I have no doubt, on woman. I wonder what he says. He has, I see, a chapter on the employment of time; shall I read that, Miss Holmes?" [326]

"If you please."

"Time is a sacred trust consigned to us by the Creator of the universe. To use it well is a lesson which duty and reason concur to suggest. The duration of the period to be confided to our management, though predetermined in the counsels of Omniscience, is undisclosed to the individual concerned, and is placed beyond the reach of calculation; that uncertainty respecting the future may operate as a continual and powerful admonition wisely to employ the present hour. Would you perceive the ingratitude and folly of squandering so precious a deposit? Reflect on the gracious purposes for the accomplishment of which it is committed to you. Reflect how plainly incompatible a habit of squandering it is, with the frame of mind which is the fruit of Christianity. Reflect on the infinite importance which you will hereafter attach to time past, when the consequences flowing from the right or wrong use of it, will be discerned and felt by you in their full extent."

"This is too grave a subject for me," said Miss Orme. "It will just add to the load of melancholy on my mind, which is already oppressed beyond endurance by the horrid gloom of the weather. I am fond of reading, but I prefer the lighter productions of the press." She closed the book and

was taking up another, when Miss Holmes said, "You will oblige me by reading another paragraph in that chapter, which may prove advantageous to you, even though it may not exactly accord with your present taste."

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"To every woman, whether single or married, the habit of regularly allotting to improving books a portion of each day, and, as far as may be practicable, at stated hours, cannot be too strongly recommended. I use the term *improving* in a large sense; as comprehending all writings which may contribute to her virtue, her usefulness, and her innocent gratification—to her happiness in this world and in the next. She who believes that she is to survive in another state of being through eternity, and is duly impressed by the awful conviction, will fix, day by day, her most serious thoughts on the inheritance to which she aspires. Where the treasure is, there will her heart be also. She will not be seduced from an habitual study of the Holy Scriptures, and of other works calculated to imprint on her mind the comparatively small importance of the pains and pleasures of this period of existence; and to fill her with that knowledge, and inspire her with those views and dispositions, which may lead her to delight in the present service of her Maker, and enable her to rejoice in the contemplation of futurity. At other seasons, let history, let biography, let poetry, or some of the various branches of elegant and profitable knowledge, pay their tribute of instruction and amusement. But let whatever she peruses in her most private hours be such as she needs not to be ashamed of reading aloud to those whose good opinion she is most anxious to deserve. Let her remember that there is an all-seeing eye, which is ever fixed upon her, even in her closest retirement. Let her not indulge herself in the frequent perusal of writings, however interesting in their nature, however eminent in a literary point of view, which are likely to inflame pride, and to inspire false notions of generosity, of feeling, of spirit, or of any other quality. Such, unhappily, are the effects to be apprehended from the works even of several of our distinguished writers, in prose and in verse. And let her accustom herself regularly to bring the sentiments which she reads, and the conduct which is described in terms, more or less strong, of applause and recommendation, to the test of Christian principles. In proportion as this practice is pursued or neglected, reading will be profitable or pernicious."

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"Now, really, my dear Miss Holmes," said Miss Orme, stopping short, "I cannot go on with such reading. Have you nothing in the shape of a novel? I can take an interest in *that*. You object to such compositions, I believe?"

"Yes."

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"But why, when they display so much ingenuity, are so delightful, and have such a good moral tendency?"

"I cannot reply to your present remark in more forcible language than the writer has done, whose book you hold in your hand, and if you will permit me I will read an extract."

"Very well," replied Miss Orme, with a yawn.

"Works of this nature not unfrequently deserve the praise of ingenuity of plan and contrivance, of accurate and well-supported discrimination of character, and of force and elegance of language. Some of them have professedly been composed with a design to favour the interests of morality. And among those which are deemed to have, on the whole, a moral tendency, a very few, perhaps, might be selected, which are not liable to the disgraceful charge of being occasionally contaminated by incidents and passions unfit to be represented to the reader. This charge, however, may so very generally be alleged with justice, that even of the novels which possess high and established reputation, by far the greater number is totally improper, in consequence of such admixture, to be perused by the eye of delicacy. Poor indeed are the services rendered to virtue by a writer, however he may boast that the object of his performance is to exhibit the vicious as infamous and unhappy, who, in tracing the progress of vice to infamy and unhappiness, introduces the readers to scenes and language adapted to wear away the quick feelings of modesty, which form at once the ornament and safeguard of innocence; and, like the bloom upon a plum, if once effaced, commonly disappear for ever. To indulge in a practice of reading novels is, in several other particulars, liable to produce mischievous effects. Such compositions are, to most people, extremely engaging. That story must be singularly barren, or wretchedly told, of which, having heard the beginning, we desire not to know the end. To the pleasure of learning the ultimate fortunes of the heroes and heroines of the tale, the novel commonly adds, in a greater or less degree, that which arises from animated description, from lively dialogue, or from interesting sentiment. Hence, the perusal of one publication of this class leads, with much more frequency than is the case with respect to works of other kinds (except, perhaps, of dramatic writings, to which most of the present remarks may be transferred), to the speedy perusal of another. Thus a habit is formed—a habit at first, perhaps, of limited indulgence—but a habit that is continually found more formidable and more encroaching. The appetite becomes too keen to be denied; and in proportion as it is more urgent, grows less nice and select in its fare. What would formerly have given offence now gives none. The palate is vitiated or made dull. The produce of the book-club, and the contents of the circulating library, are devoured with indiscriminate and insatiable avidity. Hence, the mind is secretly corrupted. Let it be observed too, that in exact correspondence with the increase of a passion for reading novels, an aversion to reading of a more improving nature will gather strength. Even in the class of novels least objectionable in point of delicacy, false sentiment unfitting the mind for sober life, applause and censure distributed amiss, morality estimated by an erroneous standard, and the capricious laws and empty sanctions of honour set up in the place of religion, are the lessons usually presented. There is yet another consequence too important to be overlooked. The catastrophe

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and the incidents of these fictitious narratives commonly turn on the vicissitudes and effects of a passion, the most powerful which agitates the human heart. Hence, the study of them frequently creates a susceptibility of impression, and a premature warmth of tender emotions, which, not to speak of other possible effects, have been known to betray young women into a sudden attachment to persons unworthy of their affection, and thus to hurry them into marriages terminating in unhappiness."

"He reasons excellently well against such books; but to be candid, dear Miss Holmes, and I know you idolize candour, I must confess I am rather partial to them. They serve to beguile away the tedious hours of unoccupied time, and remove us to an enchanted land where we forget the mortifications of life. Then they often enable us to get through a day with tolerable composure, when we are prevented taking our walks or drives abroad. And what a relief do they afford us when indisposed! Indeed, I don't know what I should do, if I were interdicted from such a source of exquisite gratification."

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"I have no doubt but such reading affords you gratification, and enables you to get through the tedious hours of time with some degree of patience; but is it profitable? Does it enlarge and strengthen the intellectual faculty, or extend the boundary of our practical knowledge? Does it refine the *moral* taste, or call into action the best feelings of our nature? Does it tend to prepare us for our final destiny, as candidates for immortality?"

"Well, I don't know. Then, as you object to the novel, I presume you are equally averse to the card-table?"

"I am."

"But why, when it affords so much gratification?"

"Because it often gives rise to a passion for gaming, which has brought many to ruin."

"Well, I will admit, that it does sometimes lead to such a fatal issue; but I will suppose a case which frequently occurs in social life. A virtuous family receives a visit from a few select friends; and in the evening the card-tables are brought out, and they divide themselves into small parties, and play a few games for their own amusement, without risking more than a few shillings. Now, what evil can result from such a method of passing away the evening?"

"In the first place, there is a great sacrifice of time, without any adequate compensation. If the time thus devoted to an unprofitable amusement were employed in instructive conversation, some moral benefit would result from it. Then important and interesting questions might be discussed and answered—the events of the day would pass under review—enlivening anecdotes might be told—and every one would have an opportunity of displaying and increasing the resources of his mind."

"But, begging pardon for interrupting you, does not the introduction of cards, by occupying the attention of a party, prevent the conversation from degenerating into gossip and scandal? This advantage you have overlooked, but I have no doubt, on reflection, you will admit it to be a very important one."

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"Why not, dear Miss Orme, allow a sense of honour and strict integrity to impose restraint on the tongue of scandal, without requiring the charm of the card-table to do it? This principle, when inwrought in the mind, will be always present, and vigilant in the exercise of its restraining power; but you cannot always have the card-table with you. But now to advert to the hypothetical case of the virtuous family receiving a visit from a few select friends. I admit, that they may sustain no positive injury, either moral or social, by spending the evening together in such a way; but if we advert to some facts which have come within our own knowledge, we must admit, that some of the party may sustain great, if not irreparable injury. I know a lady who never touched a pack of cards till after her marriage, but as soon as she did touch them, she became passionately fond of them. She first played with her husband—then a few select friends were invited to the game—then larger parties thronged her drawing-room—till at length, the passion became so inveterate in its influence over her, that she neglected all her domestic duties, involved her husband in pecuniary embarrassments by the sums she lost; and eventually abandoned her home and children, with a worthless wretch, who, after degrading her, threw her off on the merciless contempt of the world! In a conversation which I lately had with her, when endeavouring to point her to Him who came to save sinners (for she is now in the last stage of a decline), she owned that her ruin was owing to her passion for cards, which became so strong that she was unable to control it."

"This is a most painful case," observed Miss Orme: "happily an extreme one!"

"I admit this; but there is no disputing this fact, that card-playing very frequently kindles in the female breast, no less than in the breast of the other sex, a passion for gaming. Yes, many a husband would have been saved from ruin, if his wife had employed that influence to subdue his passion for the card-table, which she has employed to keep it alive and vigorous. She has lived to deplore the evil, when it has become irreparable."

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"Both the novel and the card-table," remarked Emma, "are the forbidden fruit of our Eden."

"I have no doubt, my dear," replied Miss Orme, "that your parents act conscientiously in prohibiting novels and cards; but you know that religious people, in general, do so: though I have known some rather conspicuous professors who have not objected to play a game at whist after family prayer in the evening."

"Yes, and so have I. I was on a visit at Mr. Ridout's, some few months since, when the card-

table was brought out for our amusement; and I don't know when I have spent a more pleasant evening."

"And who is Mr. Ridout, my dear? Is he a pious man, or does he belong to the world?"

"He professes to be a pious man; and I should suppose he is one, for he has prayer in his family morning and evening."

"Had he family prayer, the evening you refer to, *before* or *after* the games were introduced?"

"O! it was omitted that evening."

"And why, Emma," here interposed Miss Holmes, "was it omitted? Was it not because he was ashamed to place the Bible on the same table with the cards; and because, after enticing others to a conformity to the customs of the world, he could not, in their presence, go and pray, that they might be renewed in the spirit of their mind? Do you recollect the remark which you made on your return home?"

"It has escaped my recollection."

"That he wanted only one thing to finish his character."

"And did I say what that one thing was?"

"Yes; you said, and said very justly, it was consistency."

"O! I recollect, that was the opinion I then entertained."

"And have you changed your opinion? Do you not think that religious people ought to abstain from the appearance of evil? Does your moral sense, dear Emma, receive no offence, when you see a person, who makes a profession of personal piety, acting like a worldling?"

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"Yes, it does. I remember that droll creature, Bessie Lane, came and whispered in my ear, just as we began a fresh game,—'Make haste, as Mr. Ridout has just rung the bell for prayers!' This remark was heard by all our party; and I must confess that I was hurt by some of the observations which were made."

"I don't know," said Miss Orme, "why the most religious people may not indulge themselves in these amusements as well as others; but certainly we think it strange when they do so."

"I love consistency," replied Miss Holmes. "If a family have prayer, they ought not, in my opinion, to spend the evenings in games which certainly have not a religious tendency; and if they have these games, they had better leave off prayer, as they cannot be prepared for it. I knew a young friend, the daughter of pious parents, who once had her mind very deeply impressed by a sense of the vanity of the world and the importance of religion; but in consequence of paying a visit to the house of a professor, who in the temple was grave, and in the parlour gay—who alternately played and prayed, sang songs or psalms, as fancy dictated—she lost all her pious impressions, and from that time she became inveterately averse to religion; and in a conversation which passed between us only a few days since, a reference being made to it, she frankly said she could not conquer her aversion, and she thought she never should. Example has a powerful influence, especially in doing moral injury; but the most pernicious and dangerous, is the example of a religious man who acts in opposition to the obligations of his profession—who, while he professes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, displays a spirit that is at variance with the sacredness of that character—and retains his religious habits, even while he conforms to the customs of the world."

"Well, my dear Miss Holmes, no one will impeach your consistency; for you are, without exception, one of the most decidedly religious I ever knew."

"Yes," said Emma, "my sister goes rather too far; and I sometimes tell her that she is in danger of becoming a Pharisee. She sees, or think she sees, a dangerous moral tendency in almost every amusement; and such is the influence she possesses over the fears of our parents, that they are kept in a state of constant terror lest I should read a novel or dance a polka."

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"And is it possible, my dear Miss Holmes, that either you or your parents can object to dancing!—an exercise so conducive to health—so calculated to give elegance to the form, to the walk, and to the action—an accomplishment of so much importance, that no female can be fit to move in polished society who has not attained it? I believe you learned at school, dear Emma; did you not?"

"Yes; but now I am not permitted to go out to parties, which I consider very mortifying. My parents allowed me to learn; and now I have learned, and am fond of the amusement, they will not suffer me to practise, except at home, where we never have any dancing parties."

"This is sadly mortifying."

"They permitted you to learn dancing," replied her sister, "that you might derive from it those personal accomplishments which Miss Orme has so well described; but as they are aware of its dangerous moral tendency, they very properly object to your going into large mixed parties."

"Then ought they not to have refused letting me learn to dance, if they intended to deny me the pleasure of it?<sup>[23]</sup> This is like a father teaching his son the art of engraving, and then taking away his tools lest he should be transported for coining."

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"You may dance for the purposes for which you were permitted to learn; but I appeal to your good sense, if it be not an act of kindness, on the part of our parents, in withholding their consent from your visiting the ball-room, when they apprehend you will sustain some moral injury?"

"But you know, dear Miss Holmes," remarked Miss Orme, "that the chief gratification which we derive from any attainment or accomplishment, is the opportunity of displaying it. What pleasure would there be in learning to paint, unless we had the liberty of exhibiting our drawings—or who would submit to the labour of learning the notes of the gamut, if, after she has succeeded, she is to be prohibited from playing?"

"We certainly ought to acquire the accomplishments which are necessary to fit us to act our parts in refined society; but to acquire them for the purpose of mere display, will be productive of two evils: in the first place, it will injure the moral tone of our mind; and, in the next place, it will expose us to the severe satire of the opposite sex, who have little charity for female vanity."

"I am sure the gentlemen admire a lady who can sing well, and play well, and dance well, and move with grace as she enters or leaves a room."

"Yes, my dear Miss Orme; but if she have no higher accomplishments, though she may be admired, she will not be respected; she may have her name mentioned with *eclat* in the circles of fashion, but she will not be held in esteem among the wise and the good; and she may do very well as a partner for a quadrille, but no man of sense would think of her as his companion for life. The bee is an insect of more value than the butterfly."

"But do you wish the assembly-rooms deserted? If so, I fear you will never have your wishes realized. But, to come to the point, what are the evils which you think result from such scenes of amusement?"

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"I do not expect to see such places deserted, as they hold out so many attractions; but they are productive of so many evils, that I consider them essentially injurious to the morals of society. There is the expense which they incur, and the long train of evils which often follow. What costly dresses! What a profusion of useless ornaments must be purchased, beside the incidental items of expense in going and returning, and paying for the admission ticket! If the whole expense of one evening's gratification were accurately calculated, it would astonish us. And what is the consequence of this? The bills of tradesmen are often left undischarged—the claims of benevolence are rejected—and a habit of useless extravagance is formed, which extends its destructive influence to other branches of domestic expenditure. But I have a still more serious objection to urge against such scenes of amusement: the perilous risk which a female often runs. She goes clad in a light attire—moves about in a warm room—and then suddenly exposes herself, without any adequate increase of clothing, to a cold and damp atmosphere, by which she often sacrifices her health, and sometimes her life."

"But you know, Miss Holmes, that this objection will apply with equal force against our attending a crowded place of worship."

"Not with equal force; because in a place of worship we remain still during the time of service, and usually go in warmer, not to say in more decent attire. The moral influence which such public amusements have over the mind, is another very powerful objection against them. By your permission I will read a paragraph from a good writer, who expresses himself in very correct and forcible language:—"The objects which, during the season of youth, most easily excite vanity and envy in the female breast, are those which are presented in the ball-room. This is deemed the stage for displaying the attractions, by the possession of which a young woman is apt to be most elated; and they are here displayed under circumstances most calculated to call forth the triumph and the animosities of personal competition. This triumph and these animosities betray themselves occasionally to the least discerning eye. But were the recesses of the heart laid open, how often would the sight of a stranger, of an acquaintance, even of a friend, superior for the evening in the attractions of dress, or enjoying the supposed advantage of having secured a wealthier, a more lively, a more graceful, or a more fashionable partner, be found to excite feelings of disgust and of aversion, not always stopping short of malevolence! How often would the passions be seen inflamed, and every nerve agitated, by a thirst for precedence; and invention be observed labouring to mortify a rival by the affectation of indifference or of contempt!"

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"But do you not think it possible for a female to attend a ball without having her breast inflated with vanity, or surcharged with envy?"

"I certainly admit that it is possible, but not probable. If she excel others in the richness or the elegance of her dress, or if she receive any peculiar marks of attention, will she not feel the flush of vain-glory? And if others excel her, or receive more marked attentions, will she not retire from the company stung with envy? And can either of these passions be excited without producing some demoralizing effect? If she become devoted to her personal decoration, she will be under a strong temptation to neglect the improvement of her mind; and while this passion enslaves and governs her, the more amiable and lovely graces will be neglected. And if she become envious of the superior attainments or honours of others, she will be restless—mortified, consume her time and expend her money in making useless efforts to equal or surpass them, and may be induced to invent or to circulate tales of calumny to their injury."

"But you do not mean to say that these effects are invariably produced?"

"Not invariably; because there are some females who merely visit these places as a passing compliment to the fashion of the age. They attend as spectators of the scene, rather than as actors<sup>[24]</sup>—to oblige a friend, rather than gratify themselves; and having accomplished the design of their visit, they retire uninjured, because they felt no desire to be seen or heard, alike indifferent whether they have been the objects of attention or have remained unnoticed."

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"You have stated the evils which you think often result from such public amusements, but you have made no allusion to the advantages which attend them; amongst which I reckon, the introduction which they give to the best society. You know that we are confined within the precincts of home—our duties and pursuits are of the more retired order—and though we may take our walks, and occasionally go to Bath or Cheltenham, or some other fashionable resort, yet, if it were not for these public amusements, we should have no opportunity of being introduced to the company of the other sex. Here we are brought together; and you know, dear Miss Holmes, that the most important consequences often follow."

"Very true; but these important consequences are not always the most beneficial. The writer to whom I have previously referred, has made some good remarks on this subject, which, by your permission, I will read to you:—

"An evil of great moment, which is too frequently known to occur at the places of amusement now under notice, is the introduction of women to undesirable and improper acquaintance among the other sex; undesirable and improper, as I would now be understood to mean, in a moral point of view. Men of this description commonly abound at all scenes of public resort and entertainment, who are distinguished by fortune and birth—gay and conciliating manners—and every qualification which is needful to procure a favourable reception in polite company. Hence, when they propose themselves as partners in an assembly-room, a lady does not always find it easy, according to the rules of decorum, to decline the offer; and she is sometimes enticed, by their external appearance, and by having seen other ladies ambitious of dancing with them, into a reprehensible inclination not to decline it.

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"Women, in various occurrences of life, are betrayed by a dread of appearing ungenteelly bashful, and by a desire of rendering themselves agreeable, into an indiscreet freedom of manners and conversation with men of whom they know perhaps but little; and still more frequently, into a greater degree of freedom with those of whom they have more knowledge than can fitly be indulged, except towards persons with whom they are connected by particular ties. The temptation is in no place more powerful than in a ball-room. Let not indiscriminate familiarity be shown towards all partners, nor injudicious familiarity towards any. To reject every boisterous and unbecoming mode of dancing, and to observe, in every point, the strictest modesty in attire, are cautions on which, in addressing women of delicacy, it is surely needless to insist."

"Well, I assure you, my dear Miss Holmes, I think both you and the writer you have just quoted, overrate the dangers to which we are exposed by attending such scenes of amusement; for I have never known a friend injured by them, nor have I ever heard of such a thing."

"You forget what befell Miss Moss."<sup>[25]</sup>

"I beg pardon. I do. Ah! that was a tragical event."

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"And how many tragical events have risen out of these scenes of amusement! You have read, I have no doubt, the following account of one which befell a very holy man:—'When Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised, with an oath, to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless, for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.' How this damsel could so far subdue the common feelings of human nature, and still more the natural tenderness of her own sex, as not only to endure so disgusting a spectacle, but even to carry the bleeding trophy in triumph to her mother, is not easy to imagine; but it shows, that a life of fashionable gaiety and dissipation not only prevents the growth of the more amiable and useful virtues, but sometimes calls into action those feelings and passions which lead to rapine and murder."

The late excellent Bishop Horne closes his life of St. John in such a forcible and beautiful manner, that the author does not conceive it necessary to offer any apology to his readers for its insertion on the present occasion:—

"The Baptist's fate being determined, 'immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went, and beheaded him in the prison.' This deed of darkness must have been done in the season proper for it—the middle of the night; and St. John was probably awakened, to receive his sentence, out of that sleep which truth and innocence can secure to their possessor in any situation. The generality of mankind have reason enough to deprecate a sudden death, lest it should surprise them in one of their many unguarded hours. But to St. John no hour could be such. He had finished the work which God had given him to do. He had kept the faith, and preserved a conscience void of offence. He had done his duty, and waited daily and hourly, we may be sure, for his departure. He was now, therefore, called off from his station with honour—to quit the well-fought field for the palace of the Great King—to refresh himself, after the dust, and toil, and heat of the day, by bathing in the fountain of life and immortality—to exchange his blood-stained armour for a robe of glory—and to have his temporary labours rewarded with eternal rest—to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God—and as the friend of the Bridegroom, to enter into the joy of his Lord. From the darkness and confinement of a prison, he passed to the liberty and light of heaven; and while malice was gratified with a sight of his head, and his body was carried by a few friends in silence to the grave, his immortal spirit repaired to a court, where no Herod desires to have his brother's wife—where no Herodias thirsts after the blood of a prophet—where he who hath laboured with sincerity and diligence in the work of reformation is sure to be well received—

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where holiness, zeal, and constancy are crowned, and receive palms from the Son of God, whom they confessed in the world.

'So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,  
And yet anon uprears his drooping head,  
And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore,  
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky—  
He hears the unexpressive nuptial song  
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.  
There entertain him all the saints above,  
In solemn troops and sweet societies;  
That sing, and singing in their glory move,  
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.'"—MILTON.

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## THE UNHAPPY ATTACHMENT.

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he institution of marriage is a provision made by Divine Providence to promote human happiness; but owing to the imprudence and haste with which it is sometimes contracted, it not unfrequently becomes a source of extreme wretchedness. This union should never be formed, except by those who have a strong affection for each other; and even then, the utmost degree of prudence should regulate their conduct, both in the appointment of the time when it should take place, and the adjustment of the various interests which it involves. When persons marry mainly for the purpose of adding to their worldly estate, or obtaining a higher position in society, it rarely happens that an alliance entered into from such motives can be productive of domestic happiness. And even when the purest feelings of affection and love influence the youthful pair, inspiring them with the determination to sacrifice the esteem of friends, and the attractions of this world's wealth, rather than break the solemn vow and separate for life, they should beware of rashness and headlong impetuosity, pondering well the desirableness of the connection they are about to form, and feeling well assured that it is really a step which must conduce to their welfare.

When persons, who have no parents or judicious friends whom they can consult, are making arrangements for marriage, they should exercise more than ordinary discretion, lest they plunge themselves into difficulties from which no one can rescue them. But when parents are living, not to consult them, and pay some degree of deference to their opinion, is an offence against the law of propriety, and generally productive of the most fatal evils. Parents are more deeply interested in the marriage of their children than any other persons, and no pledges ought to be given between the contracting parties till they have been spoken to on the subject. This is a mark of respect to which they are justly entitled. And are they not, from their age, and experience, and affection, qualified to give advice? How far it is binding on a young person to obey his or her parents, who may disapprove of a proposed marriage, is a question which I shall not presume to decide; but that no young person ought to give or receive any inviolable pledge, till they have been solicited to give their opinion and sanction, is a point too obvious to the dictates of good sense and filial attachment, to need any lengthened discussion. But how very rarely is this the case! An affection is formed and cherished—it grows up into ardent and romantic attachment—interviews take place—letters and presents are exchanged—and after the imagination has been captivated with bright visions of future happiness, the parents are requested to give their permission, not their advice. If, now, they object, either from caprice, or from a full conviction that the proposed union is improper or unsuitable, what direful consequences often result! Their objections, in some cases, are treated with scorn, and the marriage takes place in defiance of their authority; and, in some instances, when their objections are admitted to be valid, they are still doomed to see the fairest flower of their family fade and die under the slow, yet fatal influence of a passion, which is too strong to be quenched, and too baneful to be cherished. These evils, which are so often springing up within the domestic circle—destroying the peace and the happiness of parents and of children, and setting at variance the members of the same household—might be avoided, if, before adopting any decisive measures, the parents—who have a right to expect such a mark of respect, who have so much of their own respectability and happiness at issue, and who are, in general, so well qualified to give judicious counsel—were consulted.

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But do not parents sometimes bring upon themselves, and upon their children, the very evils which they are anxious to avoid? Do they not, by their reserve—by their sternness—by their positive unwillingness to admit their children into familiar intercourse, and by their uniform habit of neglecting to encourage them to ask their advice in their different pursuits in life, indirectly compel them to concealment, from the dread of a furious outbreak of passion? How many a dutiful son has been known to say, "I would consult my father, but he will not listen to my solicitation!" How many an amiable daughter has said, on an offer being made her, "I should like to take counsel from my parents, but they will not give it. They will condemn my attachment without inquiry—without respecting my feelings, and without assigning any reasons for their decision!" Thus, the inexperienced child is often thrown on her own resources, in reference to the most momentous step in life, in consequence of being unable to apply for the advice of her parents; and dire necessity compels her to profound secrecy, till the fact of her attachment,

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having been discovered by some accident, is heard with indignation. An order to discontinue all further correspondence with the object of her affection is now peremptorily issued, which merely serves to increase the ardour of her attachment, and make her resolute in her choice, without regard to consequences. Let parents, then, if they wish to guide and control their children on these important occasions, induce them to repose in them an implicit confidence—to consult them, as friends, on every occasion of difficulty; and by the avoidance of dictation, imperative command, or stern, unexplained prohibition, endeavour to rule over them by a mild authority, tempered with the purest affection; and, by a course of practical wisdom, in assigning plain, palpable, and important reasons for the advice they give, make it evident that they are influenced by a regard for their children's welfare, rather than by mere caprice or an arbitrary will. And though instances may occur in the history of human life, in which such a wise method of procedure may fail in the accomplishment of its object; and a perverse or reserved disposition may lead the son or daughter to set at naught the kindest and best advice, when given in the most unexceptionable manner; yet there is reason to believe, that where parents have acted towards their children as they ought to act, such a disastrous result will be of rare occurrence.

As we are commanded by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make known all our requests unto God, I cannot conceive of any matter in which we ought to seek his direction more earnestly, than in the choice of the person who is to be our companion for life. He knows our tempers, our dispositions, and our propensities; the future temptations and trials to which we shall be subjected, and all the various ills that will intersect our path in life; and he has promised, that if we acknowledge him in *all* our ways, he will direct our steps. Ought we not to implore his guidance in the selection of a suitable partner, to share our sorrows, and enhance our joys?—one who will soothe us, under the agitations of distress, tranquillize the irritation of passion, assist us by judicious counsel, and who will give a higher tone to our character, by inducing us to add to "virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." But how rarely is this duty attended to, even by those who make a profession of religion, till they see one who captivates their heart; and then the sanction of God is requested, rather than his counsel; and he is importuned to remove the obstructions which impede the gratification of our wishes, instead of being solicited to keep us from forming an alliance which will be injurious to our happiness, our usefulness, and our honour!

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And are not Christian parents, in general, too inattentive to this branch of their duty? Are they not, in the case of the marriage of their children, apt to depend too much on their own judgment to decide on its fitness? And are they not more frequently influenced in their decision by the love of wealth, and of worldly respectability, than by those moral and religious considerations, which ought ever to maintain an absolute authority over them? As their own peace, and the present and eternal happiness of their children, and their children's children, depend so much on this important measure, they ought often to pray, as their children are rising to maturity, that he who fixes the bounds of our habitation, and determines for us the number of our years on earth, would be pleased to form their connections, and sanctify their marriage by his blessing? Is it not by the adoption of such a course of practical devotion, that parents are encouraged to expect that their sons and their daughters will be preserved "from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood:" and be induced to form those alliances which will be no less a source of happiness than of honour—handing down not only their names, but their principles, their example, and their influence to bless and adorn the succeeding generation.

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The intimacy which subsisted between Emma Holmes and her young friend Miss Orme proved essentially injurious to the moral tone and feelings of her mind; and eventually brought on the family a series of trials which overwhelmed them in the deepest sorrow. This intimacy commenced at school, just as her character began to receive its complexion and its tendencies; and when she stood most in need of those checks and restraints, and that salutary advice, which she would have received, if her companion had been imbued with the grace of pure religion. From the cast of her mind, which bore no resemblance to that of either of her sisters, she imbibed, at an early age, strong prejudices against evangelical piety; and though at one period she felt the reproaches of an evil conscience, and the terrors of the law falling upon her, yet she soon cast them off, and became still more volatile and gay. The inconsistent conduct of some professors was the immediate cause of effacing her deep and solemn impressions of the vanity of the world and the importance of religion; and though she would readily admit that this circumstance was no valid argument against the reality of personal piety, yet she could never conquer that painful aversion which it had excited in her mind against the love of the truth.

This strong aversion was strengthened and increased by many accidental circumstances, from which at the time no bad effects were apprehended. Her sister Louisa had established a periodical interchange of visits between her own family and the Corries, and their uncouth phraseology of speech was no less offensive to Emma's taste, than their dogmatic opinions were revolting to her moral feelings. Their intellectual weakness imperceptibly destroyed that reverence for the Christian faith which she had felt, when contemplating it as associated with minds of a higher order, and greater degree of refinement. Their perpetual recurrence to a few favourite opinions—the tenacity with which they held them, even when fairly refuted by sound argument—the self-complacency which they discovered in their assumed superior illumination, after an unsuccessful effort to support the dogmas of their belief—and the sang-froid with which

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they condemned as unenlightened and unconverted every one who professed sentiments differing from their own—excited in her mind a great dislike to evangelical religion. While these good people required from the chosen few a more entire renunciation of the world than is compatible with its claims on our attention; and while they visited with severe censures the slightest degree of conformity to its style of dress or of living—condemning even a taste for music, poetry, or art, as a proof of a carnal mind; they gave to the unconverted the utmost latitude, and maintained that pious parents should not attempt to impose any restrictions on their children, assigning as a reason that if they were not elected to eternal life, this was the only state in which they could enjoy happiness, and that to deprive them of it by prohibiting them from "walking in the ways of their own heart, and in the sight of their own eyes," would be an act of cruelty and folly. In vain did Mr. Holmes argue, that secret things belong to God, and the revealed promises and prohibitions to us and to our children; they invariably met his arguments by saying, that the mysteries of the kingdom were concealed from the wise and the prudent, being revealed only to babes.

These speculative notions, if confined within their own pious circle, would have done but little injury, but being introduced as the theme of frequent discussion and debate in Emma's presence, they supplied her with a powerful argument in justification of her own predilections.

It was at this period, when her mind was vacillating between a lingering reverence and a positive aversion to evangelical religion, that she happened to pay a visit to Redhill, the seat of Colonel Orme, her friend's father. Here she passed at once from the chastened seriousness and fervent devotion of domestic order and piety, to the levity and gaiety of fashionable life; and being removed from the control of her parents, she devoted herself to worldly pleasures and amusements with an ardour of feeling which bespoke the energy of her ruling passion. The Colonel was a good-natured, pleasant man; he had been gay in his younger days, but was now become very domestic in his habits. He was a professed infidel; and though he had too much politeness to make a direct attack upon religion in Emma's presence, he nevertheless availed himself of every favourable opportunity to lower it in her estimation. He related facetious stories which had been got up for the purpose of burlesquing the doctrines of the new birth, and salvation by grace—introduced some grave tales to calumniate the conduct of the evangelical clergy, and gave it as his decided opinion, that the fanaticism of the country would destroy the energy and glory of the English character.

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Mrs. Orme was quite the lady of fashion, fond of dress and cards, operas and balls; and as for Sunday, she was sometimes seen at church, but then it was principally to show a mark of respect to the clergyman, who was a particular friend of the Colonel's.

The Colonel had three daughters by his present wife, and one son by a former marriage. As it required all his income to support the style in which he lived, he could make no provision for his son beyond the commission he had obtained for him in the army, yet he flattered himself on being able to form for him some good alliance; and understanding that Mr. Holmes was possessed of great wealth, he resolved, if possible, to secure Emma as a partner for his son. He broached the subject to his wife and eldest daughter, and both agreed that the idea was most excellent.

"Indeed, Papa," said Miss Orme, "I think she is the very woman for Charles. I am sure he will be captivated with her. Such beauty, such elegance of manners, so much wit; and I should suppose, from the style in which the Holmeses live, such a handsome fortune."

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"I don't look at beauty," said Mrs. Orme, "for that will fade; nor at elegance of manners, for that obtains no distinction in the present day; nor yet at wit, for that often brings people into trouble; but I look at the fortune. Can you form any idea how much she is likely to have? Have you ever spoken to her on the subject?"

"O dear, yes, Mamma; I said to her one day, as we were walking down the Green Lanes, just when we came opposite that beautiful house, with the lawn and carriage sweep before it: 'I suppose, Emma, nothing less than a carriage and four will please you,' at which she smiled. I do think she expects a very handsome fortune."

"Ay, ay," said the Colonel, "these London citizens never retire from business till they have feathered their nest very comfortably; but they are, like old birds, rather wary, and we must be cautious how we set the nets, or we shall not be able to catch the game. This business requires management, and as I understand how to manœuvre you must leave it to me. You women are too hasty in your movements."

"Well, well," said Mrs. Orme, "I don't care who takes the management of the business, so that it is managed properly. But I must suggest one idea before I have done, and that is, Emma herself had better be asked the question, whether she is engaged, or has any objection to the army."

"Yes, exactly so, Mamma. That idea struck me just now; and I think it a most excellent one; and as we are to walk out in the evening, I will propose it. I have no doubt but she will tell me; and if, Papa, she feels any reluctance, I could argue the case with her, and I have no doubt I should succeed. I am so delighted the idea ever entered your mind."

"You will each keep at your posts," said the Colonel, "and not move or speak in this business till I give the word of command. The first thing to be done is to ascertain if Charles will put off his present engagement with Miss Collingwood, and the next is to see whether he will take a fancy to Miss Holmes."

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"Why, Colonel," said his wife, "I am surprised to hear you talk so irrationally! Do you think he would hesitate breaking off that engagement a single moment? Why, he said to me just before he

left home, 'I am apprehensive, from what I heard at the mess, that Collingwood is not the man of wealth I thought he was when my intimacy with his family commenced, and I must make more particular inquiries.'"

"Perhaps he won't object," said the Colonel, "though you know it is a point of honour which every man can't pass; but as he has passed it once, he may again."

In the evening, just before they sat down to cards, the Colonel opened the campaign, by saying, "It is natural for every man to give a decided preference to his own profession; but for my part, if I were to begin life again, and had my choice, I would enter the army. There it is a man acquires glory."

"And there it is," said Emma, "he is exposed to danger."

"Why, very true, Miss Holmes, but you know that the field of danger is where the crown of honour is won!"

"Yes, but what sacrifice of feeling does it require?"

"Why, very true, but you know feeling is rather sentimental!"

"Sentimental, Sir!" said the lively young lady, "and did you think so when you received your wound in the head? It was then, I suspect, felt to be real."

"Why, yes," said the Colonel, somewhat embarrassed, "very true; but we don't pay much regard to feeling when engaged in the conflict."

"So I suppose; nor much regard to feeling in prospect of the conflict, and still less when it is over."

"There you are mistaken; for before the battle begins, a death-like horror comes over the most courageous spirit; but when it is over, the shout of victory gives an ecstasy of delight." [351]

"But how is it changed when you look round on the mangled bodies of the slain—on your friends and comrades weltering in their blood—or think of the wives and children whom the sword makes widows and orphans!"

"Ah, true, that's the worst of it: but you know that wars and fightings have been from the beginning, and will be to the end; and some must engage in them."

"I presume," said Emma, addressing herself to Mrs. Orme, "you must have felt intense agony of mind, every time the Colonel left you for actual service!"

"At first I did, but after I got used to it, I did not regard it, for use, you know, my dear, is second nature; and then there was so much pleasure on his return."

"There is, certainly," said the Colonel, "some danger attending the profession of arms; but it is the most honourable profession in which a gentleman can be engaged; and though humanity may shudder at sight of the evils attending it, yet a true soldier is one of the most tender-hearted men living."

"Your eloquence, Sir," said Miss Emma, "brings to my recollection what I once read:—'One murder makes a villain—a thousand a hero;' and though you descant most feelingly on the tenderness of a soldier's heart, you no doubt refer to it, when touched by the point of the sword."

"Or," said the Colonel gallantly, "when pierced by a woman's eye!"

Here the conversation ended, and they passed the evening at their favourite game. "I fear," said Mrs. Orme, as soon as she found herself alone with her husband, "she has no predilection for the profession; and if so, our hopes are blasted."

"Yes, yes, she has, only she has thrown up a masked battery in her own defence; but when Charles comes, you will see with what ease he will destroy it."

A few days after this conversation, Colonel and Mrs. Orme entertained a large party at dinner, at which a brilliant company of fashionable friends and acquaintances was present. As this was the first party that had been invited during her visit, Emma bestowed a more than ordinary attention on her personal appearance. Her dress, if not expensive, was elegant, and though there were other ladies who surpassed her in the richness of their attire, there was no one who equalled her in the beauty of her figure, or the grace and elegance of her movements. She now felt herself, for the first time in her life, in a position which gave her an opportunity of displaying her attractions, which she did with so much grace, that she excited the envy and admiration of the company, who were astonished when they heard that this was the daughter of Mr. Holmes. In the course of the evening the rumble of wheels was heard at the door, and soon after a handsome young man entered the drawing-room, whom Emma at once perceived to be Charles Orme, on his parents and sister hastening forward to meet him. He had just got leave of absence, he said, for a few weeks, and sooner than he expected, which had brought him to Redhill, without previously sending any notice. Emma was quite charmed with his appearance, and still more so when the Colonel, walking up to her, said, "Allow me, Miss Holmes, to introduce to you my son Charles—Charles, Miss Emma Holmes." [352]

"This is an unlooked-for pleasure, Miss Holmes," said Captain Orme, performing his part in the ceremony of the introduction with the most polished gallantry; "I have often heard of you from my sister in her letters. What charming weather this is! Pray, may I have you as a partner, as I see they are getting up a quadrille?"

Emma gracefully consented; and from that moment her destiny in life was fixed. On the other



hand, Captain Orme was quite struck with her beauty; and though the apparent heartiness of his manner, at his first introduction, was merely the result of that vanity which seeks to engross for itself the company of the most elegant woman present, he could not help experiencing, even in his cold and selfish heart, a somewhat deeper and more serious feeling, as he conversed with this young and beautiful girl. Colonel and Mrs. Orme viewed, with great satisfaction, the evident impression made on their son by Emma's beauty; and, accordingly, after their guests had departed, they communicated to him the matrimonial speculation they had in view for him.

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**FIRST MEETING OF CAPTAIN ORME AND EMMA HOLMES.**

**Vol. ii. p. 352.**

"I am sure, Charles," said his father, "there could not be a more desirable match: youth, beauty, and last, not least (with a significant leer), a very handsome fortune."

"Has she her fortune at her own command?" asked his son.

"Why, no, the wealth of the Holmes family has all been accumulated by the old man; and I should suppose the amount of this girl's fortune must be dependent on his will. But he will, doubtless, give her a handsome portion, if he is satisfied with the match."

"Now, that is just the difficulty," said Mrs. Orme. "The family, always strong Evangelicals, have lately turned Dissenters, because, forsooth, Mr. Vaughan's sermons are not sufficiently methodistical to please them. Mr. Holmes has a great prejudice against the military profession, as one both of a questionable nature in itself, and beset with numerous temptations. We must, then, play our cards well, and act with caution."

"The first thing," said the Colonel, "is for you, Charles, to pay your addresses to Miss Holmes. I do not think there will be much difficulty with *her*."

"Well, I should rather suppose there would not," replied the modest youth, contemplating, with considerable satisfaction, his elegant figure in the mirror over the drawing-room chimney-piece; "it shall not be my fault if she does not become Mrs. Orme. But good night. I was up all last night at Lady Fortescue's ball, and must be off to bed."

"One word, Charles," said his mother, "what are you going to do with Miss Collingwood?"

"O, that has all been over for some time. I learned that her father has nothing to depend on but his pay, and that his daughter's fortune, left her by an aunt, amounts only to three thousand pounds, and is so tied up, that I should never be able to touch a shilling of it. So I am well out of that affair."

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The Captain was a young man about the age of twenty-five. He had inherited from his mother a handsome fortune, which he received on coming of age; but such had been his profuse extravagance, before and after he entered the army, that when he had paid his so-called debts of honour, and the Jew brokers who had advanced him money, he found himself unable to defray the bills of his tradesmen, who were clamorous for the settlement of their accounts. Various were the expedients which he employed to keep them from carrying their threats into execution; and at length he resolved on marriage, as the only alternative he could devise, to extricate himself from his embarrassments. He first paid his addresses to the eldest daughter of a country gentleman, but soon quitted her on ascertaining the small amount of fortune which she possessed. A similar reason, as above-mentioned, induced him to desert Miss Collingwood, the daughter of a retired major in the Indian army; and now he prepared to pay his addresses to the more accomplished and the more wealthy daughter of Mr. Holmes. He, of course, concealed from the latter the history of his former life, spoke of the fortune which fell to him by the death of his mother, as though it were still in his possession, and assured her that he had no other motive in view than the honour and felicity of being permitted to call her his wife. Unaccustomed to the duplicity of the world, and fudging of others, from the integrity of her own heart, she listened to his overtures with pleasure, and though she proposed speaking to her parents before she ventured to give any

decisive reply, yet this was overruled by Mrs. Orme, who suggested the expediency of deferring it for the present. "You know, my dear," said the intriguing woman, "your Papa and Mamma, from their peculiar sentiments on religion, may feel some objection to Charles's profession, and it will be necessary to adopt some plan to reconcile them to it; and, as an opening has now been made, the Colonel and I both think that we had better establish a close intimacy with the Elms, before anything is said on the subject."

On her return home, she intermingled with the family as usual, preserved the same degree of decorum in her attention to religious duties, and at times appeared thoughtful and sedate, which induced her unsuspecting sister to imagine that she was beginning to feel the deep impressions of religion on her heart. Amidst all her gaiety, and sprightliness, and aversion to decided piety, she had always displayed an honest frankness when speaking on the subject, but now she had a part to act which required duplicity; and having been tutored to this vice at the Colonel's, she soon became a proficient. As her sister Louisa had made some reference to her comparative sedateness, and expressed, in very delicate terms, her hope that it was the beginning of the great change, she resolved to assume a more uniform gravity of manner, that she might more effectually conceal the passion which had taken such strong hold of her feelings. She made no allusion to the scenes of gaiety she had recently witnessed, and in which she moved as one of the most admired figures; nor did she express any wish to repeat her visit, which rather tended to confirm the hopes of her sister.

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"Jane and I," said Miss Holmes, as they were all rising from the dinner table, "are going to see Mrs. Kent; will you accompany us, Emma?"

"Certainly. I long to see the old lady. She is a real Christian, I have no doubt; and if her mind had received the same degree of cultivation as her heart, she would have exhibited the majesty and force no less than the amiable traits of religion."

"I was not aware," replied Miss Holmes, with a smile of pleasure, "that you ever associated such qualities with the pure religion of Jesus Christ."

"O yes, I do; and I am delighted when I see them embodied in a living character; but they must be blended to produce their full effect."

"But is not the beauty of religion more attractive than its grandeur?"

"It may be so to some persons, but not to me. I prefer a mind that can discourse on the doctrines of Christianity in a style of speech which bears some analogy to their sublime greatness."

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"I hope, dear Emma," said Miss Holmes, "you do not now feel that strong antipathy to the Corries which you have heretofore manifested; for though they are weak Christians, yet you must acknowledge they are pious."

"Yes, they may be pious," replied Emma, with some sarcastic warmth of manner; "but who that has any feeling of respect for the honour of Christianity does not regret that their piety is not confined to a cloister? Mrs. Kent exhibits the beauty of religion, the Corries its deformity: Mrs. Kent would make an infidel believe, but the Corries would make a Christian doubt; she, by the artless simplicity of her instructions, would

... 'rear the tender thought,  
And teach the young idea how to shoot;'

till the principle of grace grows up laden with the fruits of righteousness; they, by their vanity and self-conceit, their dogmatism, and perverse obstinacy of opinion, would shake the strongest faith. Or, to speak in plain terms, such Christians as the Corries should never speak on religious subjects in the presence of the irreligious; for if they do, they will confirm the enmity which they wish to subdue, and give a degree of encouragement to sin which they do not intend."

The old woman had just finished reading a letter when the young ladies entered her cottage; and though she received them with her usual kind manner, yet she could not conceal the powerful agitation of her feelings.

"I hope," said Miss Holmes, "we are not intruding."

"No, Miss, I am very glad to see you; and I hope you will not allow my distress to give you any trouble."

"O," said Emma, "if you are in trouble let us know the cause of it; though I ought to apologize for having asked such an impertinent question."

"The question is not impertinent, and therefore I beg you will say nothing about an apology. I have just received a letter from my dear boy, who has been absent from me these fourteen years, and as I had not heard from him for many months I thought he was dead."

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"Where is he?"

"He is with his regiment at the Cape of Good Hope, very ill in the hospital, and says he does not expect that I shall ever hear from him again. He was once a good, obedient son, much attached to his mother, but he fell into evil company, and was enticed to enlist as a soldier. He said nothing to me about it for many days after he had done it, or I could have got him off by speaking to Squire Ridgeway; but I did not know anything about it till the night before he was marched off, and since then I have never seen him; and now he is confined in the hospital so far off that I can't go to nurse him, nor speak to him about the Saviour who came into the world to save sinners. I

hope you will excuse me, ladies, but a mother can't help weeping."

While the poor old woman was telling this affecting tale, the countenance of Emma underwent very perceptible changes, from the deep crimson blush to a deathlike paleness, till, overpowered by her feelings, she fainted in the arms of her sister. She was taken into the open air, and various expedients were adopted to restore her, which after a short time proved successful. "Dear creature," said Mrs. Kent, fanning her, "she has a tender heart, and can't bear to hear of another's sorrows. I am grieved that I said anything about my affliction, it has proved too much for her."

"She has," Miss Holmes remarked, "a great esteem for you, which is the cause of her having felt so great an interest in your calamity; but she will soon be better."

On recovering, she expressed her regret that the weakness of her nerves should occasion so much trouble; and having taken a draught of water, she rose, and leaning on the arms of her sisters, soon after walked home. During the evening she endeavoured to resume her usual cheerfulness, but she could not, and dreading a recurrence of the fit, she complained of indisposition, and retired to rest. In the morning, when her sister Louisa went into her room, she found her in a sweet sleep; and, as she was stealing away, she saw a miniature lying on her dressing-table, and on looking at it thought it bore a strong resemblance to Captain Orme, who, after Emma's return home, had one day called with his sister. [358]

The following day Mr. and Mrs. Holmes were surprised by a call from the Colonel and Miss Orme, who came to invite them to meet a select dinner party; and, though they had resolved not to intermix with the gay world, yet they knew not how to refuse such an expression of politeness, especially as they had been so kind to Emma. They therefore consented.

"Mamma requested me," said Miss Orme to her young friend, "to offer you the loan of this book, which she thinks you will like. *It is a very religious one. You may open it at your leisure.*"

The emphasis which was placed on this sentence, viewed in connection with the miniature painting, awakened the suspicion of Miss Holmes, who now believed that some secret correspondence was going on between her sister and Captain Orme; and an accidental occurrence took place in the course of the day, which removed every doubt from her mind. Emma on taking her handkerchief out of her reticule, as she was retiring from the parlour after dinner, dropped a letter, which her mother picked up, and read. She immediately presented it to Mr. Holmes, who also read it. This was a letter which Mrs. Orme had inclosed between the leaves of the book she had sent to Emma, informing her that Charles was well, and wanted to meet her that evening, at Mrs. Paton's. She added that she hoped she had contrived to keep all at the Elms ignorant of the affair, as the Colonel was still of opinion that they should not be spoken to on the business till everything was properly arranged.

This letter, which explained the obscure parts of Emma's conduct, involved the whole family in great perplexity; and they were at a loss to know what course to pursue, that would save her from the snares which had been laid to entrap her. At length it was resolved to replace the letter, and leave the room. This was done, and on passing through the hall, Mr. Holmes met her, and said, [359]

"I am going, my dear, to take a ride in the carriage this afternoon, will you go with me?"

"Certainly, Papa."

On entering the parlour she found her letter, and eagerly seized it, presuming that it had escaped detection.

She had given her promise to accompany her father when her feelings were strongly excited by the dread of having Mrs. Orme's letter to her discovered; but now she began to complain of indisposition, and wished to decline the proposed ride. However, her objections were overruled, and she went.

On the following morning, her father, finding her alone, took the opportunity of alluding to his anxiety for her spiritual and temporal welfare, and hoped that she would take no important step in life without the advice and approbation of her parents.

"Do you think it possible, Papa, that I could be so unwise or so undutiful as to take any important step without consulting you?"

"Tell me, my dear child," said her father, taking her by the hand, "have you not already been induced to do so, and that by the persuasion of others?"

This question, proposed in the mildest accents, and with every expression of parental tenderness, staggered and confounded her, and, after a momentary pause, she fell on her knees and implored forgiveness.

"Yes, my father, I have been induced to act a part which I sincerely regret. Forgive me, I beseech you."

She frankly confessed the whole plot; offered to return every letter and present she had received, and promised that she would never suffer herself to be again beguiled from the path of duty. These presents Mr. Holmes sent back to the Colonel's, accompanied by the following letter:

—  
"SIR,—Since your call on Thursday morning, I have detected the intimacy which has been formed between my daughter and your son; and am surprised that you and Mrs. [360]

Orme should so far forget the obligations which are due to a parent, as to dissuade my child from consulting me on a measure of so much importance to our happiness, and her own. Had the young people resolved to practise this species of deception on me without your knowledge or consent, I should blame them only; but as this plot has been got up by you, I must say, that the amount of their fault is lost in the greater magnitude of yours; and I have no doubt but your object is to repair the ruined fortune of your son at the expense of my daughter's happiness. You will therefore allow me to say, that all intimacy between our families has ceased.—Yours," &c.

After this abrupt termination of an intimacy which had opened before her the prospect of a connection for life, she appeared for a few days relieved from an oppressive burden of anxiety, and was assiduous in her attention to her parents; but her appearance and her manners soon proved that her affections were entangled, and that nothing but time and the tenderest treatment on their part could disengage them. She became low and dejected—careless of her person—unwilling to mingle in any company—the healthful bloom of her countenance passed away, succeeded by the sickly and pallid hue; she seldom took part in conversation, and endeavoured to avoid all intercourse with the other members of the family. At length her mother became much alarmed, and said it was her opinion, that unless they consented to a renewal of the intimacy with the Ormes, they must prepare to follow their daughter to the grave. "I never can give my consent to the connection," said Mr. Holmes; "and would rather follow her to the grave than see her united to such a person. Captain Orme is a man who has squandered his fortune; destroyed the strength of his constitution by dissolute habits; is involved in debt by his extravagance; and would sacrifice the happiness, and even the life of Emma, with as little remorse as he now feels for his past crimes. He is bad, but his parents, if possible, are worse; for they have not only given the sanction of their approbation to his conduct, but attempted to corrupt our child, and thus ruin our domestic happiness."

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The conduct of a female, who accepts the addresses of a gentleman without consulting her parents, or her guardians, is deserving of censure; but when she is beguiled into the measure by the entreaties and persuasion of others, and especially those who have children or wards of their own, the voice of censure should reserve its severest expressions of reprobation for her tempters and seducers. Their delinquency, it is true, does not cancel hers, but it offers some slight degree of extenuation. What evils often result from that system of manœuvring, which is so much tolerated, nay, even applauded, in society! These match-makers and busy-bodies—these common nuisances and pests—who trample on all the sacred principles of honour and of friendship, and display such indifference when detected—ought to be excluded from every family which wishes to preserve the honour and happiness of its female members. Nor ought we to hold in less detestation and abhorrence, the conduct of those who allow our children to hold secret and forbidden intercourse with each other at their houses, or consent to become the agents through whom a correspondence is carried on. Such persons may express their tender sympathy for the young people who are not permitted to meet openly and in the face of day, and may pass some heavy censures on the cruelty of their parents; but can they, on reflection, approve of their own doings, and think themselves entitled to respect? Impossible! They are acting a part over which they wish the veil of secrecy to be thrown; and, often sacrificing on the same altar the virtue and happiness of the child, with the peace and honour of the parent, can offer no other apology for their conduct, than that "they did not mean any harm."

Mr. Holmes saw, with great anxiety, the declining health of his beloved Emma; and on surprising her, in tears, one morning as he entered her room, he expressed his fears that she was unhappy.

"Yes, my father, I am unhappy; and I believe that I shall never see another happy day in this unhappy world."

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"But I understood, when I spoke to you on the subject, that it was your determination to renounce all further thoughts of Captain Orme."

"Yes, I said I would return his letters, and never suffer myself to be again beguiled from the path of duty; but I cannot subdue my feelings. I think if you knew him you would not object."

"My dear girl, I have strong objections to his profession, which is not favourable to the cultivation of those domestic virtues on which the happiness of a wife depends."

"But, Papa, he is one of the most attentive and amiable of men; and would, I have no doubt, make me happy."

"It is very rarely, indeed, that a rake ever makes a good husband."

"A rake! Papa; you are misinformed."

"Ah, my child, you are not aware of the deception which has been practised on you, by those you once thought, and perhaps still think, your friends. I have made the most minute inquiry respecting his habits, his property, and his character; and I can assure you, on evidence the most decisive, that he is dissolute in his habits—impoverished in his fortune—and his general character is the very reverse of what you imagine."

"O Papa! I think you have been deceived. He has his mother's fortune, which is very handsome. I have seen the original deeds which secured it to him."

"He had his mother's fortune, my dear, but he squandered it away before he came of age; and when it was actually transferred to him, it was not sufficient to pay all his debts."

"Are you sure, Papa, that you are not misinformed?"

"Perfectly sure, my dear Emma."

"And may I be permitted to ask, how you gained this information, which is so contrary to every statement I have received; and which, if true, must change my opinion of him?"

"I gained it, in the first instance, through the medium of your brothers; but as I was unwilling to believe such an unfavourable account, even on their testimony, I obtained a personal interview with several of his creditors, who gave me ocular proof of the correctness of their statements. Indeed, one of them arrested him last week, for the sum of twenty pounds, which had been due more than a year and a half; and others have been induced to wait a few months longer, from the representations of the Colonel, who has told them that his son is just on the eve of marrying a wealthy citizen's daughter, when every claim shall be settled."

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"Impossible! Such treachery cannot dwell in the human bosom!"

"It is true, my child."

"I am forced to believe it, Papa, and yet I cannot. Perhaps it is only a temporary embarrassment, arising from some act of generosity, or some species of fraud, that has been practised on him. And you know, Papa, a gentleman who is reduced to poverty, may rise again in society; and gaining wisdom by his experience, he may become more careful."

"Yes, my dear, if he be a man of probity and virtue; but if not, he will never rise."

"And is not Charles Orme a man of probity and virtue?"

"I am sorry to say he is not. He may appear such in your presence, and he may be described as such by his own family, but when his mode of life is inquired into, he will be found frequenting places and societies which a virtuous man would shun as offensive to his taste, and destructive of his honour."

When a forbidden passion has once gained an ascendancy over the mind of a female, it very often throws such a spell around her, that she becomes either unable or unwilling to see the inevitable ruin that lies before her; and though she will listen to the advice of her friends with apparent interest, and sometimes profess to adopt it, under a full conviction that it is such as she ought to follow, yet as soon as she comes into contact with the fatal object on which her affections are irrecoverably placed, she feels an influence which destroys all her wise resolves, and hurries her to her doom.

Thus it was with the infatuated Emma, who, after struggling with her affections for many months, and endeavouring to recover that mental peace which she formerly enjoyed, rashly determined to follow the impulse of her will, though her ruin should be the inevitable consequence.

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The family had accepted an invitation to spend a few days with an intimate friend, who resided near Tunbridge Wells, but as Emma did not wish to go into company at present, she was excused, and took leave of her parents and sisters with the tenderest expressions of attachment, and said she hoped they would enjoy the visit. On their return they were informed by the housekeeper that Miss Emma had not been home since the day after they left, but had requested her to present the following letter to her father as soon as she saw him:—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—Before you receive this, I shall have committed an act which will plunge you and every one of our family into the greatest distress; but I have been compelled to it by dire necessity. I could not conquer my passion for Captain Orme, and am therefore now his wife. Had I not consented, my life would have fallen a sacrifice to my feelings; and as I am not prepared to die, I judged it prudent to perpetuate a life, with some chance for happiness, rather than lose it, with a certain prospect of misery. I hope you and my dear mother will forgive me; and if you cannot suffer me to visit you, I hope you will pray for me. My present home is at the Colonel's, and though I do not expect to find it such a one as that which I have left, yet I trust it will not be without its comforts. With every affectionate regard to you, my dear Mamma, and sisters, and brothers, I am your undutiful, yet much attached,

"EMMA."

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## A SEQUEL TO THE FOREGOING.

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he distress into which the Holmes' family were plunged, on hearing the contents of the letter just referred to, exceeds all description; and though, during the first ebullition of their grief, they gave utterance to heavy censures and bitter reproaches, yet, on cooler reflection, they felt more disposed to pity than blame the poor deluded Emma. "A deceived heart," said her father, "hath led her astray, and she needs not the vial of our displeasure to fill up the bitter cup which she has to drink. We, as a family, have had," he continued, "a larger proportion of happiness for a long series of years than has fallen to the lot of most; and if, in the decline of life, it should please an all-wise Providence to cast over us the clouds of sorrow, we must not repine, but rather bow in submission to his righteous will, and pray for wisdom and for grace, to guide and support us,

when walking through the darkness by which we are now surrounded."

"But," said Mrs. Holmes, "this is an evil which I did not expect. I thought she had too much regard for her own honour, and too much respect for our feelings, to steal away from us in such a clandestine manner, as though her home were a prison, and her parents tyrants. She deserves all she may suffer; and if she has not become as callous as a rock, must endure a martyrdom of anguish."

"Yes, my dear, but she is still our child; and though she has torn herself away from us, we must not abandon her."

"Abandon her! no, impossible! I can never forget that I gave her birth; that I watched over her in infancy and childhood; and that she was the pride of my heart in my old age. It is the strength of my affection that gives me such intense pain when I think of her ungrateful conduct."

Her clothes, &c., were carefully packed up, and sent to Colonel Orme's, according to her own request, accompanied by the following letter, which inclosed a draft on her father's banker for £50:—

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"MY DEAR EMMA,—I shall not attempt to describe our consternation when on returning home we received your letter, which informed us of the step you have taken. To reproach you, now the deed is done, will not repair the evil, nor will it afford any alleviation to our distress. We hope you may be happy, and may meet that kindness from your new connections, which you, no doubt, have anticipated; but which we do not expect. I have inclosed a draft for your *own use*, as a token of my affection, and assure you that you will always meet with a welcome reception at the Elms, when you choose to visit us; but you must come alone. As you are now an inmate in a family which makes no profession of religion, I fear you will be exposed to temptations, which will efface every devout impression you have received; and you may be induced to treat with indifference, if not with contempt, the faith in which you have been educated. Remember, my dear child, that the fashion of this world is passing away, and that in a few years you will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and if, in that solemn and awful moment, you should be separated from us, by the impassable gulf, with what feelings will you await your sentence! We will pray for you; but our prayers will be useless unless *you* likewise pray, and repent, and believe the gospel.—I remain your affectionate father,

H. HOLMES."

Her husband took this draft to the bank and got it cashed, but he kept the money; and when his wife ventured to ask him for it, he requested her to apply to her father for more. This she refused to do, which drew from him the first unkind expression she had heard him utter. As the news of his marriage spread abroad, his creditors became very clamorous for the settlement of their accounts; and though by dexterous manœuvring, he contrived to keep them from adopting any violent measures, yet he felt conscious that the crisis was fast approaching, unless Mr. Holmes could be persuaded to assist him. He made a contrite apology to his wife for the unguarded language he had used—pledged his honour never more to wound her feelings—and assured her that nothing but dire necessity had induced him to appropriate the money to his own use, which was designed exclusively for hers. She accepted the apology, but felt startled by his allusion to pecuniary embarrassment, though she felt the subject to be too delicate to notice.

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Her husband's family treated her with the utmost degree of respect and affection, and every one strove to promote her happiness. Captain Orme was unremitting in his attentions, studied her gratification in all his arrangements, and conducted himself with so much propriety, that she flattered herself with the prospect of enjoying a large portion of conjugal felicity. Six months had now passed away without any fresh interruption to her happiness, when she began to perceive a fixed gloom on the countenance of her husband, who absented himself more frequently, and for a longer space of time than he had been accustomed to do; and she heard some ambiguous expressions from her father and mother-in-law, which she knew not how to explain; nor would her high spirit suffer her to ask an explanation. At length, one day the Colonel informed her that some application must be made to her father for a settlement, as his son's pay was not equal to the expenses of the family which he was now likely to have.

"Captain Orme informed me, Sir, when he solicited me to leave my father's house to become his wife, and you assured me that his statement was correct, that his fortune was large, and that it was quite immaterial to him whether my father gave me a fortune or left me penniless."

"I deny it, Madam, and now tell you that your husband is in embarrassed circumstances, and it is useless to conceal the fact any longer. Something must be done, or you are both ruined."

"No gentleman, Sir, ever ventured to suspect the truth of my testimony, and I am sorry that I ever gave you an opportunity to do it."

"Well, well, I beg your pardon for the abruptness of my reply. Perhaps I did say that his statement was correct; but to be frank, he is in difficulties, and we must endeavour to get him out as well as we can; and no one has so much at stake in this business as yourself."

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"If his difficulties have come upon him since our marriage I will submit to any privation, and will take upon myself any task to extricate him; but if they existed before, I do not know that it is in my power to forgive an act of deception so cruel and unjust as that which you have all practised upon me."

"You talk," said the Colonel, "like one who lived before the fall, in a state of paradisiacal innocence, rather than like one who has seen the world as it is. The world is governed by deception; in church, in state, in all the departments of social life; and if you have been deceived by any statements which might have been given to allure you to the altar, we have all been deceived since your return from it."

"Not by me, Sir."

"No, Madam, but by your father."

"My father! no! impossible! As he is too humane to reproach, he is too sincere to deceive."

"Why, we all expected, when the marriage was over, that he would provide handsomely for you."

"I have no doubt that he will, ultimately, but I never gave you any reason to expect it."

"But we *did* expect it, and I think we have a *right* to expect it. Can he suppose that my son is to meet all the expenses which you and your family may bring upon him, without receiving some assistance! If he do, he is deceived, and will entail on you and himself disgrace and misery."

"But you know, Colonel," said Mrs. Orme, "it is no use to wound the feelings of dear Emma so much. If Charles is in trouble, I know she will do what she can to assist him, without being very particular respecting the cause of his difficulties; and I would propose, without any farther remarks on this very painful question, that she write to her father on the subject, or give her consent for you to write."

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"What are his difficulties?" inquired Emma.

"O dear, only a small account which he is obliged to pay immediately."

"And cannot he pay a small account?"

"Why, my dear, he has had to settle several lately, which has taken from him all his ready money."

"How much is this small account?"

"O, only about £200."

"And do you consider this a trifling sum to owe one tradesman?"

"Certainly, my dear, for a gentleman of his profession."

"Well," said Emma, "I will have some conversation with Charles on the subject when he returns; and we will decide on the adoption of some plan."

"Why, my dear, I am sorry to inform you, that he is at present detained by the formalities of the law."

"Detained by the formalities of the law! I do not understand you."

"Perhaps not; but he cannot return home till the money is paid or some security is given that it shall be paid."

"Then, where is he?"

"Why, my dear, it will afford you no pleasure if I tell you. You had better not press the question."

"But I must press the question; and I must request to know where he is."

"Well, my dear, since you must have it, the gentleman who waited on him for the payment of the money, has very kindly given him permission to stay in his house till it is paid."

"What! is he in prison?"

"No, not exactly in prison; only the formalities of the law require that he should remain with the gentleman till the money is paid."

"Can I see him?"

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"Why, you had better not. You had better write to your father on the business, or let the Colonel write."

"Then let the Colonel write, for I can never consent to tell such a tale to my father, after having treated his remonstrances with so much contempt; and violating my most solemn pledge, that I would never suffer myself to be beguiled again from the path of duty."

The Colonel wrote to Mr. Holmes, requesting that he would give his daughter some portion of her fortune; delicately hinting at the temporary embarrassments of her husband; soliciting, at the same time, the honour of an interview, when he had no doubt, but some expedient could be devised to bring about a friendly reconciliation, by which the happiness of both families might be placed on a substantial basis. To this letter Mr. Holmes replied, that he felt it his duty to make every provision in his power for the personal comfort of his daughter; but no circumstances should induce him to pay the enormous debts which he knew her husband had contracted by a course of extravagant profligacy; and while he was willing to admit her under his roof, it was not his intention ever to form the most distant intimacy with a family who had acted with such cruel duplicity towards his child, and sacrificed her happiness for life.

On the receipt of this letter, the Ormes were thrown into the greatest degree of perplexity; and though they did not read it to Emma, because it contained some severe reflections on their

conduct, yet they judged it expedient to inform her, that Mr. Holmes refused to comply with their request. "You must now, my dear, apply for some cash," said Mrs. Orme, "as you will soon want many conveniences, which it will not be in Charles's power to procure, and I would advise you to press for a generous remittance." This application, however, was rendered unnecessary, as a few days afterwards, she received a letter from her father, inclosing a draft for £30 for her own use, and informing her, that if she preferred being confined at the Elms, everything was ready for her reception.

She now began to see the extreme delicacy of her situation, and to feel the direful consequences of her own imprudence; but she had no friend in whom she could confide or who could sympathize with her misfortunes. Her mind was in a state of perpetual anxiety, often deeply wounded by the neglect, or unkind looks and expressions of those who once professed the utmost degree of affection—with the near prospect, too, of becoming a mother, without a home, or any provision for herself or child, except by returning to her father's house—a step which she contemplated at present with extreme reluctance.

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After an absence of several days, Captain Orme returned home in high spirits, informing his wife that he had had an interview with her father, who very generously forgave him, and drew a check on his banker for £300. "Now," said the Captain, "I'll give you a proof of my honour. I'll take you to the bank, you shall receive the cash, and pay yourself the £50, which necessity compelled me to appropriate to my own use."

"No, Charles," replied his wife, "if my father has forgiven you, so will I; and still indulge the hope, that our union, which has been embittered with grief, may yet prove a source of mutual felicity. I request that no further allusion be made to the money."

"Indeed, I cannot be happy unless you allow me to redeem my honour, which stands pledged to you for it. You must consent to take it, and I'll accompany you to the bank. You will wound me if you make another objection."

She entertained no doubt of the truth of his statement; and they accordingly drove to town together the following morning. Just as they were going into the bank, he said, "There's a friend whom I have been anxious to see some months; you will step in and get the cash, and after I have seen him, I will return and meet you."

As she was well known to one of the partners in the banking firm, who had often visited at the Elms, the check was honoured without much inspection; and having the money, she gave her husband £250, and then begged his acceptance of the £50, as an expression of her attachment. With this sum he paid the debt for which he was arrested; and prevented another arrest which he had been daily expecting.

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Things now wore a brighter aspect, and the unsuspecting Emma was induced to decline accepting her father's offer; choosing to be confined at the Colonel's, where she could enjoy the society of her husband, without giving any trouble to the members of her own family. Though often pressed to pay a visit to the Elms, she had always deferred doing so; but she now proposed a visit to express the pleasure she felt in prospect of a reconciliation between the two families. On mentioning this, however, to her husband, he urged her not to do it till after her confinement, saying, "The heir will be our advocate, and heal the breach." The eventful time drew near, and everything necessary for the occasion had been sent, with a pressing invitation to spend a few weeks at home, as soon as she was capable of doing so.

"I am happy to inform you," said her husband, a few weeks after the occurrences above narrated, "that I have had another interview with your father; after expressing his good wishes for your welfare, and requesting that I would accompany you to the Elms after your convalescence, he very generously said, that as our expenses just now must be very heavy, and he wished you to have the best professional advice, and every comfort that money could procure, he would beg my acceptance of this check for £400. Now, my dear Emma, we will go to town in the morning, and you shall get the cash, and do what you like with it." This was accordingly done in the course of the following day.

At night the family retired to rest as usual; but about midnight they were disturbed, and ere day-break the birth of a fine boy was announced. The news was immediately despatched to the Elms, with a particular request from Mrs. Charles Orme, that her sister Louisa would come to see her. The interview was interesting and affecting; for though the two sisters bore no resemblance to each other in taste or in disposition, yet their attachment was mutual; and increased on this occasion by the influence of misfortune and sorrow. Miss Holmes remained at Redhill nearly three weeks; and on her return, when detailing the incidents of her visit, she referred to her father's generosity to Captain Orme.

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"Indeed, my dear," said Mr. Holmes, "I have done nothing which has not been previously agreed upon by us."

"Why, father, it is very good in you to speak so of your generosity to Captain Orme. We were rather surprised, however, at your not even mentioning to us that you had seen him."

"I have not seen Captain Orme since the day of his marriage, and I am at a loss to conceive to what acts of generosity you refer."

"Not seen him, Papa! why, have you not given him two drafts on your banker, for a considerable amount?"

"I never did anything of the kind! You must be dreaming, Louisa."



"Emma informed me that you had; and that she went, at her husband's urgent request, and got them cashed."

"Then he has forged my check; and again imposed on the credulity of our dear child."

He immediately rode off to his banker's, and found forged checks to the amount of £700. This discovery involved the family in great distress; but they resolved not to take any steps in the business till they had seen Emma, which they expected to do in the course of a few days. On the morning she left for the Elms, Captain Orme requested that she would make no allusion to her father's generosity, as he did not wish it to be known. As she had already, however, mentioned the circumstance to Louisa, the request came too late, and Mr. Holmes, as above-mentioned, had now become aware of the villainy of his son-in-law. His resolve to question Emma on the subject, after her arrival, was abandoned, on witnessing the joy which she displayed on again meeting with her parents and sisters. The family all agreed that it would be cruelty to broach the matter at present, and that it had better be deferred to some more fitting opportunity.

Mrs. Orme had been at home a month, and was preparing to return to Redhill, when her father took an opportunity of asking her who it was she saw at the bank, how often she had been there, what sums of money she had received, and what circumstances induced her to go. To all these questions she replied in very direct terms, and when she had finished, expressed her gratitude to her father for his kindness, and hoped that now he would consent to be reconciled to her husband.

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"Your husband, my child, has been pursuing one uniform plan of deception, from the time he first saw you to the present hour; and though this last instance of his duplicity is not the most fatal to your happiness, it is certainly the most hazardous for his own. I gave him no drafts, nor have I seen him since your marriage."

"Not seen him, father!"

"No."

"Nor given him any checks!"

"Never."

"How in the world did he get them then?"

"He has forged my name, Emma, and made you the innocent agent in his villainy."

"And is it possible! Am I the wife of such a man!"

"Such a man is your husband; and if the law now take its course, he will be liable to transportation for life."

"O! father, spare Charles. Have mercy on your poor Emma; though he were the most wicked man alive, he is still my husband."

"I shall refrain from prosecuting him; but it will be necessary to put a stop to such a system of fraud."

"O! my father, what will now become of me and my babe!"

"You have left your home once, my child, without my consent, but I hope you will not leave it again."

"Never, father! if you will permit me to remain, though I fear my presence will be a source of perpetual anxiety."

Mr. Holmes, after deliberating on the matter, sent the following letter to Captain Orme, unsealed, in an envelope, addressed to the Colonel:—

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"SIR,—I have seen the forged checks which you got cashed at my banker's; and on inquiry find that you induced my daughter to present them, by telling her that I had given them to you, as a token of my reconciliation. I presume you are aware of the consequences to which you have subjected yourself; though you may suppose that a regard for my daughter's feelings, and the reputation of her child, will induce me to forego a prosecution. I have, however, to warn you against the repetition of such a base and hazardous course, for there are bounds which the tenderest humanity will not suffer to be passed with impunity. I should hope, for the honour of your father's character, that he was ignorant of the crime which you have committed; but I fear you are not the only person that is involved in the guilt of its commission."

To this letter he received the following reply the next day:—

"SIR,—You say you have detected my fraud, and express your fear that I am not the only person that is involved in the guilt of it. Very true, Sir. Your own daughter suggested to me this mode of getting at some portion of her fortune—procured the blank checks—and went herself and got them cashed; and now you are at liberty to let the law take its course, if you please. She is unfortunately my wife; and as she is once more under your roof, I hope she will remain there till I send for her, which will not be till you are induced to give her a fortune equal to my rank, as I was fully entitled to expect on marrying her. My father, who feels too indignant at your base insinuation to reply to it, begs me to say, that he does not choose to admit your daughter into his house again. You will, therefore, permit me to return your own compliment, by saying,

that all intimacy between our families has ceased, and you may be assured, that I regret that any intimacy was ever formed.—Your obedient servant,

"CHARLES ORME."

This letter confirmed the suspicions which had been, for a long time, excited in the breast of Mrs. Charles Orme; and though the open avowal of her husband's baseness produced a painful impression, yet it decided the course which necessity compelled her to adopt; and she could not forbear sending him the subjoined letter:—

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"MY HUSBAND,—I cannot, in justice to myself, remain silent, after reading your letter to my father—a letter which is a very natural sequel to your perfidious conduct. That you should feel at liberty to charge upon me the baseness of suggesting the crime of which you have been guilty, is more than I could have imagined; but it has relieved me from that bitter regret which I should otherwise feel in being separated from you for life. You have betrayed me—you have reproached me—you have insulted me—but this, it appears, is not enough: you now try to disgrace me. Have you lost all sense of honour? Does no feeling of generous sensibility move in your breast? Are you become an alien from every virtuous principle? and do you wish, if possible, to sink me into contempt, after having abandoned me and your child? I feel too indignant to throw back the reproaches which you have cast on me. I have a home, and a peaceful one, and you may rely upon it, that no false professions of attachment shall ever again induce me to leave it. I am unable to judge of your state of mind; but if you have the slightest degree of remorse left, conscience must reproach you bitterly.—Your much injured

"EMMA."

I shall now anticipate my narrative a little, and conclude the history of Captain Orme. Soon after sending the preceding letter to Mr. Holmes, he obtained a military appointment in the East Indies, through the influence of Lord —; and immediately embarked, without making any communication to his wife, or expressing any wish to see his infant child. She knew not the place of his destination for nearly two years after he had left his native country, when she received a letter from him. On opening the letter she very naturally expected to find some relentions for his past unkindness, and some promises of future amendment, but she was disappointed. The influence of time, which generally softens down the asperities of temper, and brings about a cordial reconciliation between the most hostile parties, had only increased the malevolence of his disposition; and as though he had not already inflicted a wound sufficiently deep, he now proceeded to the most heartless and unmanly abuse. He accused her of infidelity; reproached her for her attachment to her own family, whom he reviled in the lowest terms; and concluded by saying, that she might now put on her weeds, as it was not his intention of ever returning to claim her as his wife, or even to acknowledge as his son the child she had borne.

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As she still cherished an attachment for him, notwithstanding his cruel treatment, and had indulged the forlorn hope of seeing him reclaimed from the paths of evil, the contents of this letter produced at first a deep melancholy; but as she had now begun to derive consolation from a source of happiness which is concealed from the eye of the gay and the dissipated, she soon regained her composure, though she ceased not to pray for her erring husband. At length the report of his death reached her through the medium of a friend. She wept when she heard of his decease, and expressed a strong anxiety to know the cause of it. Many inquiries were made, but no information could be obtained, till she received a letter from a military officer who had known him in the East. This gentleman spoke in high terms of his courage, and of the important services which he had rendered to the government of India; expressing, at the same time, his regret that he fell a victim, not to the sword, but to his habits of intemperance, which became so inveterate, that neither reason nor authority could subdue them. Thus terminated a union planned by treachery, which a perverse will led Emma Holmes to contract, but which she lived to regret with bitter and unavailing sorrow.

Her husband's cruelty, in first abandoning his wife and child, without bidding them adieu, and then insulting her by his base accusations, was not more flagrant and unjust than his perfidy in first inducing her to become his wife. Though pity could not withhold the sympathy which her sufferings excited, yet every impartial spectator was compelled to acknowledge that she had brought them on herself by her own imprudence. And though such instances of cruelty and treachery are frequently occurring in the history of human life, and though they are held up by the moralist as beacons to warn the incautious female of the danger to which she is exposed, yet how often, alas! do we see such warnings disregarded. Women are too often smitten by external appearances, and too easily imposed upon by the artful tales of the perfidious and the crafty, to listen to the advice of their best friends. Thus braving the opposition of their parents, they plunge themselves into a state of misery, without having, as a melancholy alleviation to their anguish, the solitary consolation that they were not apprized of their danger. I have seen, in my passage through life, many fine characters wrecked on this fatal rock, and wish to guard the thoughtless and inexperienced from a similar catastrophe, and though I cannot suppose that I shall be able to change the purpose, when it is once formed, yet I do not despair of exciting some degree of precaution in the unfettered and uncorrupted mind.

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As that union, which is ordained to be the source of the purest felicity, or of the bitterest anguish, and which nothing but death or guilt can dissolve, is the most important that can be formed, no one ought to propose it, or consent to it, till after the most mature deliberation. In some instances it has been known that *short* courtships have led to happy marriages; but the

instances are comparatively few. Two persons accidentally meet—strangers to each other—an offer of marriage is made, and immediately accepted; a few weeks of intercourse, or of correspondence elapse, and they are united for life. Can such a hasty union, which has taken place while the parties have been almost entirely ignorant of each other, be expected to yield much domestic felicity? It may, but the chances are against it; as the history of social life demonstrates this fact, that domestic happiness is less dependent on the agreeableness of each other's persons, than on the harmony of each other's disposition; and though a magic charm often renders us blind to the defects of the beloved object, this blissful dream is soon dissipated when the wedded pair come to seek their happiness in the amiability of each other's tempers, and the goodness of each other's principles. And considering the immense importance of this correspondence in mental taste, tendencies, and inclinations, as a source of permanent domestic happiness, and the amazing diversity of tempers and dispositions which is known to prevail amongst human beings, will a wise man, or will a prudent female, venture to risk their felicity for life by a sudden and precipitate union? What! shall we deem it necessary to institute a severe inquiry respecting the temper, and disposition, and principles of the servants we take into our dwellings, and whom we may dismiss at our pleasure; and think that no such inquiry is necessary in relation to the person to whom we are to be united for life—who is to be our comfort or our torment, the means of elevating us to honour or sinking us into contempt! Would this be an act of wisdom or of discretion?

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And is it not to be regretted that the period of courtship, which is intended to give to the parties an opportunity of judging of their fitness for each other, is usually the period in which the greatest degree of duplicity prevails? It may be justly denominated the intermediate state between the two conditions in human life, over which the evil spirit of deception presides—investing the character with imaginary charms—softening down rugged and uncouth tempers into the smoothness of the most subduing tenderness—curbing restless and ungovernable passions with the restraints of a crafty policy—and giving such a fascination to external graces, that they are received as substitutes for the most solid and substantial virtues. This is the fatal period, when suspicion is usually asleep; when a slowness of heart to believe the rumours of report becomes proverbial; and it is not till the parties emerge from this delusion, to the realities of married life, and resume their real character, that they discover the deception they have been practising on each other. Then the work of mutual recrimination and reproach commences. Then it is their eyes are opened to see their folly and their danger, but their repentance, like that of Esau's, comes too late to repair the evil which they have brought upon themselves.

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As the period of courtship is the most dangerous in the history of life, because the most deceptive, those who wish to enjoy a state of permanent domestic happiness, cannot, at this period, be too observant of each other's tempers and dispositions, or too inquisitive respecting each other's connections and manners. If they now discover a dissonance in any of these particulars, they would act a wiser part to separate by mutual consent, than to form a union which will inevitably become a fruitful source of misery, and may terminate in disgrace, if not in ruin. Some severe moralists contend, that when an offer of marriage has been given and accepted, no circumstances will justify either party in withdrawing from their pledge, but that it ought to be held as sacred and as obligatory as the marriage vow. Though the writer would not hazard an opinion which would tend to sanction a wanton inconstancy, yet he claims the privilege of differing from such casuists. For what purpose has the unanimous consent of mankind required some period of time to elapse, after the offer has been made, before it is formally, and for life decided? Is it not that the contracting parties may have an opportunity of judging of their relative fitness for each other? If not, they may pass at once to the nuptial altar, after mutually consenting to their union; but if it be, they are invested with a moral right to revise their decision, when fresh discoveries of character are made, which change their opinions, and diminish, if not alienate their affections. Suppose a gentleman makes a lady an offer, and she accepts it, under a firm conviction that he is a man of honour, of integrity, of virtue, and of prudence, whose disposition is amiable, whose circumstances are respectable, and who is capable of maintaining her in the rank in which she has been accustomed to move. Suppose that on a subsequent inquiry, she finds out that these sterling qualities do not adorn his character—that he is violent in his passions—and that his means to support a family are not adequate to its demands. If she is now convinced that by consummating the union, her happiness for life will be sacrificed, ought she to be compelled to do so? She may be censured for giving her consent too hastily; but is a consent given under false impressions, and while in a state of total or partial ignorance, to be binding, when she discovers the delusion which has been practised on her, and sees nothing but misery and wretchedness before her? I think it is not. If Emma Holmes, when she returned the letters and presents to Captain Orme, had never more consented to see him, would any wise or prudent person have passed a sentence of condemnation on her conduct? No! Why not? Because she had given her consent under false impressions of his character; but after her marriage, though that took place under the same false impressions, she was bound by the laws of God and man to remain his wife.

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But as there is always some risk of reputation, and sometimes some pecuniary risk, in breaking off an engagement which has been formed, it should not be done hastily, nor for trifling reasons. Though the mutual pledge is less binding than the nuptial vow, yet if it be treated with levity and contempt, society will resent the insult which is offered to its sense of delicacy and of honour. The faithless and inconstant will be marked out as the objects of its censure and reproaches. And no censures can be too severe, nor any reproaches be too bitter, to be directed against the man who gains the affections of a female, and then abandons her from caprice; or against that female, who acts the part of a coquette, by giving pledges she never intends to redeem, and exciting

expectations she has resolved to disappoint. And this risk ought to operate as a powerful motive to induce the utmost degree of caution when making or when accepting an offer. As the right of overture is claimed and exercised by man, he is supposed to institute every necessary inquiry before he makes his election, and to be perfectly satisfied that the female whose friendship and whose affection he courts is capable of promoting his happiness; and though on a closer intimacy he may discover some shades of imperfection which were not visible when he first knew her, yet if they are only the ordinary imperfections which belong to the human character, he would act an unwise, if not a criminal part, by making them the ostensible cause of breaking off the connection. We should ever remember, that the nuptial vow always unites two imperfect beings, whose mutual imperfections will call for the exercise of mutual candour; and when pure and ardent love glows in the breast of each, they will bear with each other's failings, and strive to promote each other's happiness.

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It is then, in the opinion of the writer, only when some radical defect is discovered in the character—some strong repulsive quality, or some untoward and ungovernable passion—that the male sex, who exercise the prerogative of choice, ought to feel at liberty to disengage themselves, unless the female give her unqualified approbation. In that case the connection may be dissolved at any time, as it cannot be supposed that a marriage between two persons who are willing to separate for life can be productive of happiness.

But without acting capriciously, or presuming to encroach on the principle of equity, I should be disposed to concede to the female sex a greater degree of liberty on this point. When an offer is made to a lady, she may feel no reluctance to it—the person who makes it may be agreeable to her, and, by the ardour of sollicitation, she may be induced to yield assent to the proposed union. She may do this before her modesty allows her to make those inquiries respecting temper, disposition, principles, and resources, which the gentleman is supposed to have made before he ventured to disclose his wishes. She may have been pressed to a compliance before she acquired that specific information which would justify and sanction it; and which, if advantage had not been taken of her amiable weakness, she would have withheld till she had obtained it. And perhaps, in addition to this, she has been induced to conceal the overture from her parents, or her guardians, till some convenient season should arrive to make it known—that convenient season being to be determined, less by the decision of her own mind, than the mind of her lover. When these circumstances occur in the history of a courtship, though I would not say that the lady is quite as free to reject the offer, as she was when it was first made, yet I think she is more at liberty to decline it, than the gentleman who made it. Yet she ought not to act capriciously, nor ought she to sport with the feelings of the person to whom she has given her promise; but slighter reasons for breaking off the connection will justify her in doing so, than those which will justify him. She may discover no radical defect in his character, yet she may perceive "the flaw unseemly"—she may behold no predominating principle of evil, yet she may see its corrupting influence—she may feel no strong repulsive qualities, yet her affections may die off, while she knows not the cause—she may witness no sallies of an ungovernable passion, yet she may strongly suspect the amiability of his temper—she may not be able to find out any fixed habits of inconsistency, or positive vice, and yet she may be convinced that her happiness would be sacrificed for life if she consented to the proposed union.

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A question now arises in which both parties are deeply interested. Ought a female to marry when she feels conscious that she cannot be happy with the person who wishes her to become his wife? or would it be an act of wisdom, or prudence, or of piety, in a man to drag a victim to the altar, who feels an abhorrence, not to the ceremony, but to its appalling consequences? No. As mutual love is the only substantial basis of the union, where that does not exist, the union ought not to be consummated; and though some evils generally result from a dissolution of the mutual pledge, yet they are fewer and less awful and destructive than those which follow a marriage without affection—or when the affection of one has to struggle against the cool indifference or positive dislike of the other.

And if circumstances should render it imperatively necessary that either party should break off the connection, this should be done in the most delicate and honourable manner. The reasons in most cases should be expressly and unequivocally stated; all vacillation should be conscientiously avoided; no words of reproach or invective should be uttered; and for their mutual credit they should speak of each other among their friends in terms of respect.

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But let no female expect that a libertine in principle, or a rake in practice, will ever make a kind and attentive husband, notwithstanding any professions he may make. Her charms may for a season operate as a spell on his passions, and he may, under their powerful influence, appear "a new creature." The company of the dissolute may be forsaken for the pleasure of her society; and the habits of vice may be broken off while he is courting the living image of virtue; but his character will remain the same. He may affect to deplore his past follies, and he may speak in praise of goodness and of religion, but, unless his *heart* is changed, he will soon give ocular proof that he is the same man as when he made an open mock of sin, and publicly contemned righteousness. That some who have been dissolute in their early days have become the ornaments of society, good husbands, kind parents, and faithful friends, is a fact too generally known to be doubted; but their reformation has usually preceded their marriage—rarely followed it. They have separated themselves from evil-doers, and they have learned to do well, before they have dared to solicit the affections of a virtuous female; and then having re-established their character, and fixed their habits of goodness and of religion, they have lived to repair the injury they have done to their own reputation and to the morals of others, by walking in a course of exemplary consistency.

But there are no females who ought to be so cautious on this subject as the children of pious parents. If they have imbibed the spirit of pure and undefiled religion, they ought to marry *only in the Lord*. No intellectual talents, no degrees of moral excellence, and no resources of wealth, should induce them to a violation of this positive injunction of the law of God. It would be, in addition to an insult offered to Divine authority, a suicidal act in regard to personal honour and happiness; uniform experience proving that the intermarrying of the pious with the unconverted is followed by the most disastrous social and spiritual consequences.

And if they are not decidedly pious, yet if they have been accustomed to habits of religion, they ought not to calculate on permanent happiness if they consent to marry a person who is an avowed infidel, or one who cannot distinguish between the form of godliness and its power. For such a marriage will separate the woman from all intimate connection with her pious friends, and she will thus become to them a source of deep and poignant sorrow. But this, though an evil which a daughter ought to guard against, out of respect to the feelings of her parents, is a minor evil, when compared with the influence it will have over her own mind. The irreligion of her husband will tolerate none of the customs with which she has been so long familiar—no family prayer—no reading of the Scripture—no reverential references to God—to Providence, or to an eternal world—the Sabbath will be employed as a day of business, or of indolence, or of pleasure—or if the husband attend a place of worship, he will go, not

"Where the violated law speaks out  
Its thunders; and where, in strains as sweet  
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace;"

but where

"The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,  
And then skip down again; pronounce a text,—  
Cry hem; and reading what they never wrote,  
Just fifteen minutes huddle up their work,  
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene."

Can this strange change take place without producing some ill effect? will she be satisfied and contented? will conscience never reproach her? will she have no misgivings? will the days of her life

"—glide softly o'er her head,  
Made up of innocence?"

Will she never institute a comparison between her present home, and that in which she drew her infant breath, and spent the years of childhood and of youth? Will she never contrast the piety of her father with the irreligion of her husband?—the devotional lessons of her mother with her present course of life? But suppose she should outlive all reverence and respect for the habits of domestic religion, which she has been accustomed to revere and observe from the days of childhood, and yield herself to the beguiling fascinations of gaiety and worldliness, what will be her reflections and feelings in the hours of sickness, and from whence can she derive consolation and hope when death approaches? Ah, it is *then* the secrets of her soul will speak out! it is *then* that her criminal folly will appear in all its aggravated forms of guilt! it is *then* she will revert to her former home, her earlier associations, her pristine impressions of religious truth. Alas! she now goes back to these scenes, not for comfort, but for torture; not to gather up the fragments of hope, but to give a keener point to her desponding fears; to call back "joys that are departed," and to increase the intensity of her mental anguish, by contrasting it with the happiness she once enjoyed. Yet, if she discloses what she feels, she is either ridiculed for her superstitious folly, or suspected of partial derangement—as no one understands her case. She lingers through the last stages of her life in sorrow and in sadness, the victim of self-consuming anxieties and grief; and may die in agonizing apprehension, if not in absolute despair.

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## THE VILLAGE CHAPEL.



he painful and prolonged excitement occasioned by Emma's unhappy marriage, and its disastrous consequences, so greatly impaired the health of Mrs. and Miss Holmes, that a change of air and scene was deemed absolutely necessary. Dawlish, their favourite retreat, was thought of, and they were making preparations for their departure thither, when a letter arrived from Mr. Newell, Mr. Holmes' son-in-law, in Warwickshire,<sup>[26]</sup> announcing that the new chapel which Mr. Holmes had been the means of rearing near his native place, was all but completed, and inviting them to spend some time with him, and be present on the opening day. This induced them to change their mind. "I certainly," said Mr. Holmes, "ought to go, to witness the accomplishment of my design." "And we," said his wife and daughter, "should very much like to accompany you; we may thus reap a spiritual benefit while endeavouring to recruit our bodily health."

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The village of Lynnbridge, Warwickshire, near which Mr. Newell resided, was delightfully situated on the slope of a hill, commanding an extensive and beautiful prospect. At the foot winded the Lynn, much renowned as an excellent trouting stream, and here crossed by a

handsome stone bridge, over which lay the highroad to London. A narrow lane, richly adorned in summer with dog-roses and other wild flowers, led to the village above, which was rather of a straggling description, without any principal street. The houses were for the most part of a humble order, few rising to the dignity of two stories, but all displaying that air of neatness and comfort which so distinguishes our English villages above those of any other country. Each had a flower garden in front, very prettily kept; and the cottages, which were generally white-washed and thatched, had their walls often adorned with vines, ivy, or honey-suckle. At the extremity of the village, looking down upon the river, stood the parish church, a venerable Gothic edifice, with its churchyard, encircled by a row of ancient yew trees. Adjoining the church was the rectory, a picturesque and comfortable-looking old English mansion, with its pointed gables, well cultivated garden, and rather extensive pleasure grounds. Shady lanes led in all directions to the surrounding country; the prospect of which, as already mentioned, was of the most charming nature, comprehending an endless variety of hill and dale, wood and corn-fields, and reminding the gazer unconsciously of Cowper's lines—

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"'Tis pleasant, through the loopholes of retreat,  
To peep at such a world."

The population was for the most part agricultural, but there were some gentlemen's seats in the neighbourhood, besides a few farm-houses, and several villas with a few acres of ground attached to each.

Whether humanity is more depraved in a city than in a village, still remains an open question; but I have uniformly found that in both, the old and the young evince the same predilection for what is evil, and the same antipathies to what is pure; and if left without any enlightening and regenerating process, will bear a striking resemblance to each other in the great outlines of their moral character. Observation proves, I think, that the city, by its more varied attractions, facilitates the broader and more marked development of the essential depravity of our common nature. Yet in the inhabitants of a village we not unfrequently discover appalling ignorance, with its consequent vices of impiety, profanity, and intemperance, associated with extreme vulgarity of manners; an abject submissiveness to their superiors, and an extreme rudeness in their intercourse with each other.

In regard to moral and social features, Lynnbridge was a very fair specimen of an English village, neither better nor worse than the average number; it had its church and its rector, its wardens to attend to ecclesiastical matters, and its overseer to look after the poor. There was no school, however, for the training of the young in the way in which they should go; nor had the pure gospel of the grace of God ever been preached to the people. In the neighbourhood of this village, Mr. Newell had taken a farm, and been settled there a few years before the date of the occurrences which I intend to narrate.

The farm rented by Mr. Holmes' father, and on which he had been born and brought up, was situated a few miles from Lynnbridge, and from old associations he naturally took an interest in the village. On one of his visits to his son-in-law, he was much shocked with the appearance which it presented on a Sabbath evening. The large green on the banks of the river was crowded by the youth of both sexes, devoting the sacred hours of the day of rest to various popular sports, while their seniors filled the public-houses. Loud bursts of laughter were heard from all quarters, and he learned that brawls and boxing matches were by no means of rare occurrence. It was while contemplating this scene of disorder that Mr. Holmes formed the praiseworthy resolution of having a chapel built, and supporting the minister till the people were able and felt disposed to do so themselves. As soon as he made known his determination, his son-in-law, and several other gentlemen, voluntarily offered to co-operate with him. One gave a piece of land, another supplied part of the timber, and others subscribed their money; and though some ridiculed the design, and a few interdicted their tenants and their labourers from assisting in its accomplishment, yet, like the Hebrew temple, the chapel gradually rose, in spite of all opposition, till at length it was finally completed.

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Having heard that the Rector of the parish was much displeased with this projected encroachment on his ecclesiastical province, Mr. Holmes called on him, to explain the reason and motives of his conduct, and though he failed in obtaining his concurrence, yet he was assured that he would offer no opposition, as he held sacred the principle of unrestricted religious liberty. He returned from this interview more gratified than he expected he should be, having found the old Rector an amiable and intelligent man, far advanced beyond many of his order in the catholic liberality of his opinions and principles.

The chapel was finished within the space of six months; and when every preparation was made for opening it, Mr. Newell, as already mentioned, sent notice to Mr. Holmes, who accordingly set out for Warwickshire, accompanied by his wife and eldest daughter. On arriving at Lynnbridge they found Mr. Newell waiting with his chaise to take them to Thornwood, about two miles distant, where they were received with the greatest joy by Mrs. Newell, the second daughter of the Holmes family, whom neither her mother nor sister had seen for a considerable time. After the first greetings were over, the conversation, as might be expected, turned on the late unhappy occurrences in the family, in connection with Emma's marriage. Then the subject of the new chapel, which was to be opened on the ensuing Sabbath, was introduced by Mr. Newell, who informed his father-in-law that the opposition raised against the measure had gradually died away, and some of the most violent and bigoted of its opponents had been brought to admit, that it was likely to prove advantageous to the morals of the people. After some discussion of this topic, which served to divert their attention from more painful matters, Mr. Newell assembled his

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household for evening worship, and shortly afterwards the family retired to rest.

The following days were employed by the ladies in visiting the dairy, the garden, the poultry-yard, and examining other objects of rural interest; and by Mr. Holmes and his son-in-law in rambling over the farm, and discussing the various agricultural operations then in progress. At length the Sabbath morning dawned on which the chapel was to be dedicated to God. Mr. Holmes rose at an early hour, but was rather disappointed to find the sky looking dark and lowering; on going, however, into the fold-yard, he met the old shepherd, who, on being asked his opinion of the weather, quietly surveyed the sky, and said, "I think, Sir, the dark clouds will blow off, and we shall have a fine day." This remark quite raised his spirits, as the shepherd was considered a sort of weather prophet, and this time at all events his words proved true, for as the morning advanced the clouds began to disperse, the bees were seen passing and repassing the parlour window; and just after the family had finished breakfast, the sun burst from the dark mantle in which he had been enveloped, and diffused his bright and enlivening rays.

"It is a pleasant thing," said Mr. Holmes, "to see the sun; but I have never gazed on it with more delight than at this moment." [391]

"A fine emblem," Miss Holmes replied, "of Him, who sometimes in an unexpected moment breaks in upon the midnight of the soul; and who, I trust, will arise and shine on the inhabitants of this benighted village, and bless them with the light of life and immortality."

The chapel, a neat plain structure, was erected on a piece of freehold land, near the bank of the river, where the villagers had been accustomed to spend the sacred hours of the Sabbath in riotous amusement. It was crowded to excess, many persons having come from a great distance to be present at the opening. The Rev. Mr. Broadley of B— commenced the service by reading a hymn, which was sung with great animation and delight. This was followed by reading the Scriptures, and prayer; and then the Rev. Mr. Wyatt, who had arrived for the occasion from London, preached a very beautiful and impressive sermon from John iii. 16—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"I am not aware," he remarked, after he had repeated his text, "that I could have selected a more important, or a more interesting passage than that which I have just read. So powerfully does it exhibit the love of God towards fallen man, that though I could speak with an eloquence equal to that of an angel, I should be incapable of doing it adequate justice. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; and yet, by many, this gift is esteemed as a thing of nought; and all references which are made to its immense value, are regarded as the sallies or excesses of a disordered imagination, or a mean and contemptible fanaticism. He has 'so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' But alas! the danger which awaits us is disbelieved; and the happiness the Son of God came to bestow is despised."

Mr. Wyatt divided his text in the following order:—

- I. The moral condition of men, of every rank, and of every description of character, is alarming. [392]
- II. To deliver them from this state of moral danger was the express design of our Lord's mission.
- III. Such is the tenderness of his compassion, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.
- IV. Saving us from the misery which we deserve, by the gift of his only begotten Son, is a most astonishing display of the love of God.

When speaking under the second division of his sermon, on the design of our Lord's mission, he delivered the following passage, which made a deep impression on the audience:—

"Had one of the highest orders of angels assumed a human form, and announced to us some scheme of redemption from evil and from ruin, it would have been on our part an act of folly and ingratitude to have treated the message of mercy with indifference. But, brethren, no angel, however exalted, could redeem man from the curse of a violated law, or conduct him to the repossession of that purity and honour, from which, by transgression, he has fallen. Therefore God gave his only begotten Son, who united in his own person every attribute of Deity, and every perfection of humanity; displaying a majesty, combined with a tenderness of character, which alternately excite our awe and confidence. With what ease did he rule the elements of nature—heal the maladies and disorders produced by sin—recall the souls of the departed from the invisible world; while, with all the familiarity and compassion of a near and beloved friend, he mingles his tears of sympathy with the suffering mourner, and diffuses the peace of heaven over the heart oppressed with sorrow.

"Suppose, my brethren, one of the elders of Israel, after having been present at the giving of the law at Sinai, and after having seen and heard the mysterious sights and sounds on that mount of awful majesty and terror, had then fallen into a trance, and continued in that state till the night before the vision of the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem. Suppose he had then awoke and been told, that the law, which had been given with so many awful accompaniments, had been broken, and that the Lawgiver was on the eve of sending his only begotten Son into the world—would he not have concluded that his mission must be one of vengeance? But no! 'God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.' He gave his only begotten Son that we might not perish, but have everlasting life. What is it for man to perish? I cannot tell—I have never seen the judgment-seat of Christ!—I have never beheld the [393]

awful glory of that scene of terror!—I have never heard the final sentence, Depart!—I have never been banished far and for ever away from bliss!—I have not endured the agonies of the worm that never dies!—the fire that is never quenched! Indeed, my brethren, I cannot tell what it is to perish! It is a state of misery which no imagery can represent—which no language can describe—which no imagination can conceive.—'But have everlasting life!' It is life which gives to every other possession its determinate value. For what is beauty without life but a fading ornament? what is wealth without life but a useless substance? what is honour without life but a bursting bubble? Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life. So much do we prize this invaluable possession, that rather than lose it, we will consent to part with one limb, and one sense after another, till all are gone. But, brethren, the period is not far distant, when, like our forefathers, we must resign it, and be numbered with the dead; yet Jesus Christ says, that he that believeth in him shall never die. This promise must be taken in a restricted sense, as his disciples are no less liable to the visitations of death than his enemies. Their faith in him does not operate as a charm to repeal the law of mortality; neither does it exempt them from the diseases and pains which usually precede its infliction. But though they die a natural death, yet they immediately enter on the full enjoyment of eternal life—when they dissolve their connection with the inhabitants of this world, they become fellow-citizens with the saints in light—when they close their eyes on this earthly scene, they open them on the visions of celestial glory—and when their bodies are committed to the tomb, their immortal spirits are enjoying that endless life, over which death has no power. This life will be a life of perfect purity—of perfect knowledge—and of perfect felicity; and will continue unimpaired by sickness, and undisturbed by care, for ever and for ever.

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"And our text says, that *whosoever* believeth in the Son of God shall have everlasting life. No one is denied the invaluable blessing on account of the obscurity of his origin, or the inferiority of his rank; for though these circumstances of distinction have a powerful effect on us, yet they have no influence over the mind of the Saviour, who looks with as much benign regard on a penitent villager as a repenting citizen; and is no less willing to save a poor neglected pauper than the rich nobleman who fares sumptuously every day. Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. The most debased, impure, and worthless, if they truly lay hold of the Saviour, come within the circle of this comprehensive promise, and have the same warrant to expect forgiveness and final salvation, as the apostles of Jesus Christ had. 'And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Rev. xxii. 17)."

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A short time after the Village Chapel had been set apart for the worship of God, and the Rev. Mr. Swinson, its minister, had commenced the discharge of his regular services, a spirit of opposition arose from a very unexpected quarter. Some of the more respectable farmers, and two magistrates, waited on the clergyman of the parish, to express their astonishment that he should give his sanction to a measure, which, in their opinion, was calculated to endanger the Church.

"Indeed, gentlemen," said the Rector, the Rev. Mr. Trevor, "I have not sanctioned it. When Mr. Holmes called on me to explain his motives for building the chapel, he said his object was to reform the village. I expressed a wish that he might succeed in that particular, but at the same time told him that I did not think he would."

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"Reform the village, Sir!" said one of the magistrates, "the village wants no reformation. The people are honest, industrious, virtuous, and happy; and what reformation do they require?"

"But they are rather remiss in their attendance at church; and they have frequently pastimes on the green on a Sunday evening, which I think ought not to be tolerated."

"Why, certainly, Sir, they do not attend the church quite so often as they ought to do; but as for the pastimes on the green, I rather think you must have received some exaggerated report of them, for I candidly confess that I never saw anything to disapprove of."

"I have heard of their dancing on a Sunday evening," replied the Rector, "and of many of them getting intoxicated, which you must allow, gentlemen, are not very reputable engagements for a Sunday evening."

"They are a cheerful, merry set of folks, Sir; and some of them may sometimes take a little more ale than is good for them; but I never saw anything in their amusements to disapprove of. Indeed, I think the scene which the green presents on a Sunday evening is one of the most picturesque which a country life can exhibit; displaying, as it does, such varied lights and shades of rustic character. The young and old intermingle together; and those who are too infirm to engage in the innocent frolics of their youthful days, look on, while others react the parts they once performed. The utmost degree of hilarity prevails amongst them; and in these relaxations they forget the toils and cares of the week."

"Well, gentlemen," replied Mr. Trevor, "I certainly think that the poor, no less than the rich, ought to be left to choose their own pleasures, without being controlled by others; and if any of them prefer worshipping their Maker on a Sunday evening, to joining in a public gambol, they ought to be permitted to do it. I cannot consent to impose any restraint on the consciences of others, as I should not like to submit to any restraint myself. Indeed, opposition on our part would be both impolitic and unjust; the spirit of an Englishman rises up in defiance against any interference with his religious opinions, and his opposition becomes more decided and more zealous in proportion to the efforts employed to restrain his liberty of conscience."

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Though these persons could not induce their amiable and intelligent Rector to unite with them in their attempt to put down what they termed *the new religion*, yet they resolved to employ all the influence they possessed to accomplish their purpose. How to do it in the most effectual way, and yet not involve themselves in any hazardous responsibility, was a question which perplexed them. After various discussions they resolved to prohibit all their tenants and servants from attending the chapel—to withhold parish pay from those paupers who went—and to refuse associating with the more independent and respectable parishioners who gave it the sanction of their presence. Having agreed on their plan of operation, they proceeded to act on it with vigour, and the effects were immediately felt; for on the following Sabbath the congregation assembling at the new chapel was reduced to less than one-half of its usual number. This determined opposition was rather discouraging; but as yet Mr. Swinson and those who adhered to him were permitted to remain unmolested. But a storm was gathering; and the evil spirits who had set themselves against the introduction of evangelical religion into the village, resolved to make one desperate effort to expel it. Some of the baser sort were selected as the agents of the plot; and everything being arranged, they came in a body on a Sunday evening, and while Mr. Swinson was preaching, they entered the chapel, and by their noise and tumultuous behaviour, compelled him to desist and the people to retire. As he was quitting this scene of confusion, he was grossly insulted, some of the rioters brandishing their sticks over his head, and threatening that if he dared enter the chapel again, he should not be permitted to escape with his life.



**MR. SWINSON ASSAULTED BY THE MOB.**

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The report of these proceedings soon spread through the neighbouring country; and while some raised the "loud laugh," and defended the conduct of the assailants, others came forward to aid in resisting the tyranny which was attempting to trample on the rights and liberties of the people. It was well known that the actors on this occasion were instigated secretly by parties behind the scenes—that they were the mere agents of "the respectable and intelligent few," who had resolved on the extermination of this so-called new religion; and though Christian sympathy wept over their ignorance, and mercy pleaded for their forgiveness, yet it was felt by Mr. Holmes and his friends, as a duty they owed to the reputation of the clergyman who had been insulted, and to the liberties of the people which had been trampled on, to bring the perpetrators of this disturbance to punishment. Warrants were immediately granted by a neighbouring magistrate for the apprehension of all the culprits, and they were bound over to appear at the next sessions, there to be tried for disturbing Mr. Swinson and his congregation, while engaged in public worship, and for threatening the life of the minister, if he attempted to continue the discharge of his pastoral duties.

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No sooner had these thoughtless and misguided young men returned from the presence of the magistrate, than they began to regret the part they had acted; and frankly confessed, that they should never have engaged in the affair, had it not been for Mr. Wingate, an extensive proprietor in the neighbourhood, and his friends. "They put us up to it," one of them said, "and promised that no harm should come to us if we would kick up a row."

There is no class of men in society who occupy a more respectable or a more enviable station than our country gentlemen. But living on their own patrimonial estates, in the midst of a thinly scattered population, consisting for the most part of poor and ignorant peasantry, they frequently display more of the domineering spirit of feudal times than any other class of men in the kingdom: and though they have made some progress in intellectual cultivation, in accordance with the spirit of the age, yet they still lag far behind the great body of their countrymen in liberality of sentiment and benevolence of disposition. They are too apt to regard the peasantry with supercilious contempt, and endeavour to keep down, by oppression, the rising spirit of freedom. They too often seem to consider those who have no riches, as beings having no rights—whose quiet complaint is to be considered as provocation, and whose mildest remonstrance is to

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be regarded as insolence. They have been in past times most active in opposing the introduction of the gospel of Jesus Christ into the villages over which they exercise an authority; and many of the popular outrages which have been committed against the ministers of the gospel, have originated in their suggestions or direct efforts. But now a change has come over the land for the better. This may be partly attributed to that spirit of independent inquiry which is spreading amongst our peasantry, who seem disposed to withstand all encroachments on their freedom of choice and action; and while they are not wanting in civility and proper subjection to their employers, how not, as their forefathers did, to the yoke of arbitrary oppression.

When the sessions came on, the friends of the accused made every possible effort to defeat the ends of justice, but they were foiled in the attempt. The case was stated in a clear and forcible manner—the evidence which supported it was full and conclusive—and though their acquittal would have given many of the spectators of their trial a triumph, yet an honest jury returned the verdict which the injured laws of the country demanded, and the rioters were found guilty. As they made, however, a handsome apology, and entered into a recognizance to keep the peace, and to come up for judgment when called on to do so, Mr. Holmes and his friends consented to stay any further proceedings, and this gave general satisfaction.

After this decision, the spirit of persecution declined, and the peasantry, finding that they were protected by the laws of the country, resolutely determined to enjoy the freedom which no man could take from them. They now pressed in greater numbers to hear the preacher, who had given such decisive proofs that he knew how to practise the forbearance which he enforced, and exercise the mercy which it was his duty and his delight to proclaim. When preaching one Sabbath evening, shortly after the trial, from 1 Tim. i. 13—"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I have obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief"—he saw two of the ring-leaders of the late riot sitting in a back seat in the gallery of the chapel. Without appearing to notice them, he took occasion, from the subject he was discussing, to make a strong appeal to their consciences. After delineating the character of Paul, as a blasphemer and a persecutor, and as one who had injured the reputation and destroyed the peace of others, he passed by a natural transition to his present audience, and thus addressed them:—"Happy would it have been for the world, if the spirit of persecution had died out of it when Saul of Tarsus was converted to the faith of Christ; but alas! my brethren, it survived that memorable event, and has continued in existence to the present day. In former times it dragged the disciples of the Redeemer to prison, confiscated their property, and then consigned them to the flames; and though its power is now restrained by the laws of our country, yet it still retains all its native rancour and malignity. It would now react the part by which it formerly disgraced our national history, and plunge us into all the horrors and sufferings which our ancestors endured; but thanks to a kind and merciful Providence, we are guarded from its violence by the majesty of the British law, and are permitted to assemble together, where and when we please, without dreading opposition or disturbance from any one.

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"Our duty in relation to our persecutors is to pity them, for they do it ignorantly in unbelief, and to pray that they may obtain mercy. And have we not encouragement to do this, seeing that God is sometimes pleased to transform the persecutor into a preacher of the gospel? Hence the apostle, when writing to the church at Galatia, says: 'But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.' What a change! What a miracle of grace! What a proof that Christ Jesus came to save the chief of sinners! And am I now addressing any one who has attempted to disturb us in the enjoyment of our religious privileges, or who has been in the habit of reviling or threatening us? You see how we are protected, and though we have not chosen to enforce the full penalties of the law, yet a repetition of the offence will render such forbearance in future absolutely impossible. But I flatter myself, that those who have opposed us, will do so no more; and that even the persecutors themselves may be induced to implore mercy. Yes, O persecutor, He against whom thou hast raised the rebellious hand, waits to be gracious—*he*, whose authority thou hast trampled on, and whose grace thou hast despised, is now looking down with an eye of compassion, more willing to pardon and to save, than to punish and destroy. If you continue in a state of rebellious impenitence, you will treasure up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath; but if you now repent and pray, and believe in him, you will be forgiven, and finally admitted into his presence in heaven, where you will enjoy a state of purity and happiness for ever. Let me then urge you to return home, and on your knees pour forth the prayer of the publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner;' and should it please God, who 'delighteth in mercy,' to answer this prayer, you will then feel a stronger attachment than you ever felt aversion to the gospel of Christ."

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It often happens that the cause of the Redeemer is promoted by the very means employed to crush it; and of the truth of this remark the above narrative furnishes a striking instance. Mr. Swinson's congregation at Lynnbridge increased so rapidly, that *it* became necessary to erect a large front gallery in the chapel; and many of the inhabitants of remoter parishes, being induced to come and hear the man who had been so unjustly treated, solicited him to visit them and preach during the evenings of the week. "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed" (Acts xix. 20).

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## VILLAGE CHARACTERS.

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A few weeks after the termination of the struggle, so successfully maintained by the managers of



the village chapel, against the encroachments of bigotry and intolerance, I received a letter from Mr. Newell informing me that Mr. and Mrs. Holmes had quitted Thornwood to return to the Elms, but had left Miss Holmes to remain a little longer with him and Mrs. Newell. He proceeded to say, that as his friends who had filled his house were now departed, he should be very happy if I would pay him a visit, and that if I could arrange to remain for a little time, I might then accompany Louisa on her return to the Elms, and thus fulfil the promise which I had formerly made to Mr. Holmes. This invitation came very opportunely, as I had just been labouring under a slight indisposition, for which change of air was strongly recommended. I had a great desire, too, to see again both Mr. Newell and Miss Holmes; and, accordingly, after arranging matters for an absence of a short period, I took my seat in the coach to Lynnbridge, where Mr. Newell was waiting to receive me with his chaise. Till then I had never before been in that part of the country, and was quite delighted with the beautiful drive from Lynnbridge to Thornwood. On arriving there I had the pleasure of meeting again Miss Holmes and Mrs. Newell, neither of whom I had seen since the marriage of the latter a few years before in London. I need not here enlarge on the kind reception which I received from all, or recount the details of the pleasant and cheerful conversation in which we spent the evening.

The following day, after an early dinner, Miss Holmes, Mrs. Newell, and myself (Mr. Newell having some business to attend to) sallied out for a walk. "Louisa shall be our cicerone," said Mrs. Newell; "I think she knows more of the country hereabouts than I, who have lived in it for several years." "Perhaps, Mr. —," she continued, addressing me, "you would like to see some of our VILLAGE CHARACTERS. They are to be found everywhere; but I think this place has rather more than its share of them. Louisa, I believe, knows them all already, as she is a most ardent student of the different phases of humanity." I, of course, expressed my readiness to accompany the ladies wherever they chose to lead me; and we, accordingly, bent our footsteps towards a homestead about a mile off, occupied by Mr. William Harris, one of the finest specimens of the old English farmer I had seen for a long time. He was a stout-built man, rather inclined to corpulency, with a fresh ruddy face and a sharp keen eye; but the best description I can give of him is that furnished me by Miss Holmes, as we walked towards his house.

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"Mr. Harris," she said, "is, as might be expected, blunt in his manners, but frank and obliging in his disposition, of an hospitable and genial nature, and as regular as clock-work in all his domestic arrangements. He lives in the house in which his grandfather was born, and which is shaded by a large oak tree, that has outlived many generations, and is likely to outlive many more. He rises in the summer about five, breakfasts at half-past six, takes his dinner exactly as the clock strikes twelve, smokes his pipe in the porch between six and seven, then takes his supper, and retires at nine, to sleep away the long and tedious hours of night. He is, upon the whole, a very worthy man, though rather pedantic in his way. He received what he calls an *edecation*, when young; his father having sent him for six months to a boarding-school about twelve miles off; besides giving the old parish clerk two guineas to teach him the rules of addition and multiplication. He farms a small property of his own, on which his modest mansion stands, and rents another farm about double the size, under Lord —; and is regarded by most of his fraternity rather clever in his profession. He is a good judge of live stock; is celebrated for the excellence of his butter and cheese; decidedly attached to his Church and his Queen; generally consulted on all parish questions; and universally admitted to be one of the best weather-tellers in the neighbourhood, though the shepherd says he has known him out in his reckonings. He has served the office of overseer eleven times, which forms one of his chief tales in all companies; has been churchwarden six times; was, when a young man, regularly enrolled amongst the yeomanry of the country at the time of the threatened invasion in the year 1804, and often expresses his regret that no opportunity ever occurred to enable him to distinguish himself in the annals of war. He goes to church with his comely dame every Sunday; repeats the responses in an audible voice; reclines his head on the top of his staff, while *appearing* to listen to the sermon; reads one chapter in the Old Testament and one in the New every Sunday afternoon; and then indulges himself with an extra glass and pipe with a few friends, either at his own house, or at the inn on the green. But he is, to quote his own language, a *mortal enemy* to the Methodists; and will not suffer any of his servants, if he knows it, to attend the chapel. He says that the old religion is the best; and he thinks that no one ought to be suffered to change it. He often says he hopes to live long enough to see the Toleration Act repealed, which he declares is a disgrace to parliament."

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He happened to be smoking his pipe, with his arms resting on the little gate in the front of his house, as we were approaching it; and in exchange for the courteous salutation we gave him, he invited us to taste his ale, which, he said, was a prime fresh tap. This offer we declined with thanks, as we preferred a glass of cold water, which excited his astonishment.

"You like water better than good ale! well, every one to his liking, I say; but give me a good tankard of prime home-brewed. You be a stranger, I think, Sir, in these parts," he continued, addressing me, "I don't remember of ever seeing you here before."

"I have never been in this part of the country before," I replied, "and have just been admiring the fine scenery which surrounds your village on all sides. There is a good proportion of hill and dale; and the parish church on the brow of the hill, looking down to the river, is a most interesting object."

"Yes, Sir, it looks very well. There were no trees about it, except the old yews, till I was appointed churchwarden, fourteen years ago, last Easter Monday, when I had them planted, and they have thriv'd very well. I have heard many gentlemen say it is a great improvement. They say it gives a kind of a finish to our church. They have often drunk my health for doing it."

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"But the inside of the church is not so neat and clean as the outside is imposing."

"No, Sir, it's sadly neglected now; but when I was warden, it was the cleanest church in our parts."

"How often have you duty performed in it?"

"Once every Sunday, when I and my dame go as regularly as the doors are opened; except when it's very wet, and then I go alone. She has a touch of the rheumatics in bad weather; worse luck: and gets deafish if she goes."

"As it is so small, I suppose it is crowded on the Sunday?"

"Why, no, not much of that; for the people go to the chapel that's built yonder on the green. People now-a-days an't satisfied with the good old religion of the Church; they must have this new religion that's springing up all over the country."

"Do you know what this new religion is?"

"No, Sir. I'm satisfied with the religion my fathers had before me, and so I don't trouble my head about it; but I understand it makes people very miserable. Now, my religion never made me miserable, and I don't think it ever will. I am for letting well alone."

"I suppose you wish to go to heaven when you die?"

"Aye, to be sure, I do. I shouldn't like to go to t'other place. They are badish off there, so the parsons tell us; and I suppose they know all about it, as they studied at the univarsaty."

"But we ought not to expect to get to a place unless we go the right way."

"That's true, and no mistake."

"Have you ever thought much about the difficulty of getting into the right way which leads to heaven? I suppose you have read what Jesus Christ says on this point? 'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it' (Matt. vii. 13, 14)."

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"Aye, I recollect reading them *varses* t'other Sunday, and I felt a bit puzzled to make out their meaning."

"But, Farmer, they have a meaning, and a very important meaning."

"So I guess, or Jesus Christ wouldn't had them put into the Bible. Can you tell me the meaning, as I should like to know?"

"Why, the meaning is just this: the many get into the broad way, that is, the wrong way, and they are lost, and perish in hell. Have you not read the verses which almost immediately follow? —'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity' (Matt. vii. 22, 23)."

"Now, Sir, allow me to ask you one question. If we go to church, and pay every one his own, and are as good as we can be, do you not think that we shall go to heaven when we die? We can't be better than that, you know, Sir; and there are not many in these parts so good as that."

"As you have asked me a question, will you allow me to ask you one?"

"Yes, Sir; twenty, if you please."

"Are you as good as you can be?"

"Why, to be sure, Sir, I might be a bit better; but you know we are all sinners: the more's the pity."

"Then, how can you expect to go to heaven on your own principle of reasoning? Now, Farmer, let me tell you, that you are under a delusion which will prove fatal unless you are undeceived. If you read the New Testament with attention, you will perceive, that two things are necessary to fit us for heaven: the first is, we must be born again; and the second is, we must repent of, and forsake all our sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."

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"Repentance: aye, that's very proper when people do wrong; but I have never done anything I am ashamed of. Why, Sir, I have been overseer eleven times; and there's ne'er a pauper in the parish but will say that I always acted with the greatest charity. I go to church—read my Bible—and pay everybody his own; and I don't think God requires anything more than this; and I suppose you will think this is very fair as times go?"

"But are you born again?"

"I don't know what that means; it puzzles my brains; but then I'm no scolar; though I know a good bit about farming, like."

"Then if you do not know what it is to be born again, that's a proof that you are not born again, for if you were, you would understand what it is."

"Well, I suppose I should. Then according to your talk, though I go to church, I am not likely after all to go to heaven. If you are right, I am on the wrong tack; but what must I do to get right? 'Tis time I looked about me, for I shall be sixty-eight next Lady-day, and that's a great age; though my father lived till he was fourscore, and my grandfather was ninety-one when he died; and I had an uncle who lived to see a hundred and three. You see we are a longish-lived set—"

about the oldest livers in these parts."

"I think you can't do a better thing than overcome your prejudices, and go and hear the preaching at the village chapel, where these things will be explained to you; and it is very likely that there you will gain in a few months more information on religious subjects than you have acquired in all your life."

At the mention of the chapel he shrugged up his shoulders and said, "Why, if I was to go there I should have half the parish laughing at me. I shouldn't be able to show my face at market. My old friends would give me the cold shoulder. No, no, it will never do for an old warden, who has been in office so often, to leave church and our old Rector, for a Methody chapel and a Methody parson."

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"One word, Farmer, and I will soon finish. Are you such a coward as to care for what others say, when you are doing a thing for your own advantage? Will you suffer the laugh of the ungodly to deter you from getting into the *narrow* way that leads to heaven; and consent to be lost with the many, rather than saved with the few?"

"These sartanly are plain questions, and I'll give them a turn over in my mind. I must confess that your talk has satisfied me—that I know but little—the more's the pity—about the good things of the Bible; and I think as how I shall take your advice, and go and hear the gentleman who preaches in the chapel. If I don't like what he says, I need not go again, and it is but right to give him a hearing before one condemns him."

"Very true."

We now wished Mr. Harris good day, and proceeded on our walk. A short distance onward we passed a neat cottage by the roadside, in the little garden in front of which we saw a lady walking up and down at a solemn pace. As Mrs. Newell was acquainted with her she stopped to ask her how she did. As she did not perceive us before Mrs. Newell spoke, being wrapped up in her own airy musings, she seemed startled, as though some spectre had suddenly made its appearance, but recovering her composure, she politely invited us to enter her modest habitation.

"I am sorry, Madam," said Mrs. Newell, in her usual kind manner, "to see you so indisposed."

"Indeed," said Miss Newnham, "I am very ill—very ill indeed. I was never worse in all my life. I have not had a wink of sleep these two nights. I sent for the doctor yesterday, but he did not come till this morning; and he says that I am not ill. But I feel that I am very ill indeed. Dr. Bland does not understand my case. I shall send for Dr. Gordon, who is more clever in his profession; so my aunt tells me, and so my old servant says."

"Have you been ill long, Madam?" I inquired.

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"O no, Sir! I was very well this day fortnight. I spent the evening at Mrs. Paul's with a party, and stayed rather later than usual; and on coming home, just as I was passing along the churchyard, I saw a very bright star shoot down from the sky."

"It did not, I suppose, fall on you?"

"O no! it didn't fall on me; but, Sir, I had such a dream! and I awoke about three o'clock in the morning in such a terror, that I have not been well since. And every night, but two, since then, the screech owl has perched itself on the ledge of my window, and kept up its hideous noises so long, that I have been obliged to have my servant sleep in the same room with me ever since, and that's a very unpleasant thing: particularly so."

"And if, Madam, it be not an impertinent question, may I be permitted to inquire into the nature of your dream?"

"O Sir! I dreamed I went to Weston to purchase a new dress; and the shopman, by mistake, took down some crape instead of printed muslin; and just at that time in came Mr. Noades, the undertaker, and said he wanted some stuff for a shroud, for a lady who had died suddenly. And I awoke in such a fright! Indeed, I have not been myself since. My nerves are so shook. My very shadow makes me tremble. I am afraid I'm going to die."

"Well, Madam, it is certain you will die, and you may die suddenly; but do you think that this dream will hasten the time of your death?"

"But, Sir, when I awoke I heard the death-watch as plainly as you now hear me speak."

"And do you suppose, Madam, that the Supreme Being has communicated to this insect a knowledge of your approaching death, and sent it, in the stillness of the night, to give you warning?"

"But, Sir, I heard the death-watch several times when my sister was ill of a decline, and she died about six months afterwards. I said she would die. I was quite sure she would."

"Very likely; and though you may trace a connection between her disorder and her death, yet what connection can you trace between the noise of this little insect and her death?"

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"But, Sir, since the screech owl left my window, our dog has done nothing but howl for the last two nights. O! it is so dismal to lie awake and hear it. It makes me tremble like an aspen leaf."

"And do you think that the howling of the dog is a prognostic of your death, any more than the death of either of your servants?"

"I remember, Sir, the dog howled most awfully just before my grandmother died: and when she heard it she said she should be sure to die, and she did die sure enough."

"And how old, Madam, was your grandmother when she died?"

"Ninety-two, all but four weeks and three days."

"And she really did hear the dog howl some short time before her death?"

"Yes, Sir, about five nights before she died; and all the servants heard it; and they were so frightened; and they all said, nothing can save her after these howlings."

"Very likely; and as most dogs occasionally howl in the night, it would be very strange if some person did not die after such howlings; but can we suppose that the Supreme Being employs shooting stars, insects, owls, and dogs, to announce to us the approach of our death?"

"And don't you believe, Sir, in such omens? Everybody does in our parish."

"I believe that ignorance and superstition have invested these sights and sounds with an ominous import, and that many allow themselves to be terrified by them; but what can be a stronger proof of the absurdity of such a habit, than the fact that the star often falls, the death-watch often ticks, and the dog often howls, when the patient recovers, and lives for years to relate the terror and alarm which these scare-crows of superstition had excited in his breast."

"I hope, Sir, I may live, and if I do, I shall then have a proof that there is nothing in it."

"And pray, Madam, have you never known a patient recover from his illness even after he has been warned of his approaching death by these omens of terror?"

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"O yes, Sir, my dear mother was once very ill, and for seven nights our dog howled as he did last night; but she lived seven years afterwards, and when she died no noises were heard."

"Now, dear Madam, excuse me, a stranger, taking the liberty of talking so to you; after what you have just mentioned, what stronger proof do you require of the folly of being alarmed by sounds which the inferior tribes of nature utter, and which you must know, on reflection, are no sure indications of any future event in the history of human life? That you will die is certain; and that you will enter the eternal world is certain; and that you will stand before the judgment-seat of Christ is certain; and that you are ignorant of the exact time when these great events will take place is equally certain; but instead of allowing your mind to be agitated by these senseless sounds, you ought to be preparing for the final issue of life."

Here our conversation ended, and we then took our leave, Miss Newnham thanking me for the interest I had taken in her welfare, and hoping that I would call again on her before I left Thornwood.

Addison has a good paper on the propensity which weak and superstitious people indulge, to give an ominous meaning to many of the casualties of life; and to allow themselves to be more terrified by the screeching of an owl, the clicking of an insect, or the howling of a dog, than the real and afflictive dispensations of Providence. As society improves in knowledge, especially the knowledge of the Scriptures, this propensity will become weaker and weaker; and though some traces of its existence may be discovered, at times, in the most cultivated minds, yet it is not invested with that magic power which it exercises over the illiterate. Many efforts have been employed to expose its absurdity, but if we intermingle with the uninformed inhabitants of a village, we shall have indubitable evidence that its influence still continues to operate. The same elegant writer to whom I have just referred, observes:—"I know but one way of fortifying my soul against these gloomy presages and terrors of mind, and that is, by securing to myself the friendship and affection of that Being who disposes of events, and governs futurity. He sees, at one view, the whole thread of my existence, not only that part of it which I have already passed through, but that which runs forward into all the depths of eternity. When I lay me down to sleep, I recommend myself to his care; when I awake, I give myself up to his direction. Amidst all the evils that threaten me, I will look up to him for help, and question not but he will either avert them, or turn them to my advantage. Though I know neither the time nor the manner of the death I am to die, I am not at all solicitous about it; because I am sure he knows them both, and that he will not fail to comfort and support me under them."<sup>[27]</sup>

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Shortly after leaving Miss Newnham, we turned aside into a fine old park; and feeling rather fatigued, seated ourselves beneath a clump of trees that stood near the foot-path. As we sat watching the hares and rabbits which came out of a neighbouring coppice, and the stately deer which fed around us, unawed by our presence, the Squire passed by, and in a most good-humoured and kindly manner invited us to take some refreshment at the Hall. The invitation was accepted; and we soon found ourselves in a large antique parlour, in which the spirit of hospitality had dwelt from time immemorial.

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The Squire, or to call him by his own name, Mr. Bradley, was a fine looking old gentleman, of about sixty years of age, but with a deep trace of melancholy imprinted on his countenance. He had one child, who was sent, when eleven years of age, to a first-rate classical school, to be prepared for Oxford. When about the age of fourteen, according to a barbarous custom which still prevails in most of our great schools, he was chosen by a senior scholar to fight another boy about his own age. After contending till his strength was nearly exhausted, he received a blow on his right temple, which sent him lifeless to the ground. At first the boys thought him only stunned, and taking him up carefully, they carried him into a shed, when, to their horror, they found that he was dead! Horror-struck at this ghastly spectacle, they knew not what to do; but at length the dismal news reached the ears of the master—medical assistance was sent for, but it came too late. This fatal catastrophe happened just before Christmas, when the fond parents were preparing to receive their child once more under their roof during the holidays. When the tidings reached them, they were frantic with grief, and resolved to punish the authors of their

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calamity; but on cool reflection they forbore doing so, and sunk down into a state of melancholy, from which they have never perfectly recovered.

This sad bereavement brought about a singular change in the habits of the Squire, who now became a very religious man. He had family prayer morning and evening, attended church regularly, and observed the fasts with a degree of monkish austerity which is rarely met with amongst Protestants. As his religion, however, contained no recognition of a living Saviour, it did not reach his heart, nor produce that exquisite taste for the enjoyment of spiritual things which is formed when the inner man is renewed in its spirit and disposition.

And here the author would remark, before he gives the sequel of this interview with the Squire, that the Christian scheme of salvation differs from every other system of religion in one very important particular—it does not admit any person to the denomination of a believer, who does not feel its influence on his heart; nor can a person discern its adaptation to the moral condition of man, till such influence is felt. Hence it discriminates between the man who holds the truth in unrighteousness, and the man who receives it with meekness and in faith; and while it imparts to the latter all its consolations and its hopes, it pronounces the sentence of condemnation on the former, although his moral character may be adorned with the varied beauties of social virtue. To the one it unveils a scene of contemplation, which displays the purity and grandeur of the Divine nature—the equity and glory of his wise, yet mysterious dispensations of providence and of grace; to the other it remains as an unconnected and unharmonious scheme of religion, which no skill can simplify, and which no labour can methodically arrange. To the one it opens a fountain of living waters, of which they who drink never thirst after a more salubrious draught of happiness; to the other it is as a stagnant lake, whose waters are bitter, like those of ancient Marah. To the one it makes known a Saviour, in the efficacy of his death, in the riches of his grace, and in the prevalence of his intercession: to the other it exhibits him as the Man of sorrows, who once fasted in the desert, and preached in the temple—who once wept on Olivet, and groaned on Calvary—and who derives all his celebrity from the records of history, rather than from the manifestation of his love in renewing and sanctifying the soul. So that while these two persons profess the same faith, bear the same denominational character, worship in the same church, and observe the same ceremonial rites and institutions; they cannot hold any communion with each other in spirit, because their perceptions, taste, and moral inclinations are as much opposed to each other as the purity of the Divine nature is opposed to the impurity of the human.

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"It is now," said the Squire, "fifteen years since I lost my son. It was a grievous affliction—one which has embittered life to me: and if I could overcome the dread of death, I should long to lie down in our family vault, to rest in peace with the dead of past generations."

"To lose a child," I replied, "in the common course of nature, must be a severe affliction to a parent; but to lose an only son, and in such a way as you lost yours, must be a trial almost too heavy to be borne."

"O, Sir, it nearly bereft us of our senses; and we have gone but little into company since. There's his likeness," pointing to a good painting hanging over the fireplace, "and it is a very correct one; and here is his favourite dog, which we have preserved; but you see, like his master, his life is gone. This is the end of man."

"Yes, Sir, it is appointed unto man once to die, and after death the judgment."

"And it is this judgment after death which makes death so dreadful. I have been preparing myself for my latter end ever since the death of my child; and the more I think of its solemnity and importance, the more I am alarmed. We know what this life is; but of the next life we have no knowledge; and we know the beings with whom we now associate; but who can form a conception of disembodied spirits?"

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"The dread of death often operates as a spell on the happiness of life; and brings down the wealthy and prosperous to a state of mental wretchedness, equally deplorable with that of the destitute and forlorn."

"Sir," said the Squire, with great emphasis, fixing his eye on myself as he spoke, "it brings us lower, because, as we have stronger temptations to the love of life, we have greater reluctance to resign it. Here we are distinguished by greater possessions, occupy a more exalted station, and have a greater variety of enjoyments at our command; but we are not sure that we shall be even admitted into the kingdom of heaven when we die; and, for aught we know, the same fate may await us which befel a certain rich man, of whom we read in the Bible."

"That fact, Sir," I replied, "is calculated to excite a high degree of terror in the breast of a rich man, because it teaches us, that God does not continue the line of distinction between the rich and the poor beyond this life."

"The distinction, Sir, may be preserved, but it may be against us, as poor Lazarus was comforted, while the rich man was tormented. I have a servant, who works for me in my garden, on whom I often look with envy; and if I could attain that composure in prospect of death which he possesses, I would gladly exchange my mansion for his cottage."

"I presume, Sir, he is a religious man?"

"Yes, he is a religious man, and so am I; but he has the art of deriving consolation from his religion, while I can derive none from mine."

"But how is that? Is he a more learned or a more virtuous man than you are?"

"No, Sir; he is virtuous, and he is intelligent for a person in his rank of life; but he says he does

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not derive any consolation from his virtue."

"I presume, Sir, he is a man of prayer?"

"Yes, and so am I, though I use a form, and he prays extempore—so I have heard."

"I presume he attends a place of worship?"

"Yes; he now goes to the chapel which has lately been built in the village. This is the only thing in his conduct I disapprove of. I think we ought to keep to the Church, and not sanction this new religion, which is overrunning the country."

"But now, suppose this new religion, as you term it, should be the very religion from which your gardener derives all his consolation against the fear of death, would it not be an act of cruelty and of injustice if you were to attempt to deprive him of it?"

"But why can't he derive his consolations from the religion of the Church of England?"

"Then, Sir," I replied, "why don't you? You say that you have attended your parish church regularly for the last fifteen years, and yet you are as much in dread of death as you were when you first entered within its doors."

"Very true; there's a mystery about it which I can't unravel."

"Shall I explain it, Sir?"

"I wish you would; and as it is a question which perplexes Mrs. Bradley no less than myself, I will fetch her, if you will excuse me for a few minutes."

The Squire soon returned, accompanied by his lady, who welcomed us to the Hall, with the greatest cordiality and politeness.

"Now, Sir," said the Squire, "if you will explain to us how it is our gardener derives that consolation against the fear of death from this new religion, which we cannot derive from the good old religion of our forefathers, you will confer a great favour, and we shall esteem your visit the most agreeable one we have ever received."

"In the first place," I observed, "you have fallen into a mistake. The religion of the chapel is not a new religion, but the religion of the Bible, exhibited in a simple and popular form, and does not differ from the doctrinal articles of the Established church." [417]

"Indeed, Sir. Why, then, my gardener and I profess the same faith. But how is it he derives so much consolation from that which gives me none?"

"Because, to quote the language of the Scripture, he has been renewed in the spirit of his mind, and has had the eyes of his understanding enlightened, so that he is enabled to trace the connection between the facts of Christianity and their application to his mind; while you, for want of this supernatural illumination, admit the facts only, without perceiving how they can, or how they do, produce the intended effect. For example: you admit that you are a guilty sinner in relation to God, and under a sentence of condemnation, which is the reason why you dread death; and you admit that Jesus Christ died for sinners; but you cannot perceive *how* it is that his death operates to remove guilt, and to inspire a hope of eternal blessedness. There is, if I may use such an expression, a palpable darkness intervening between the fact of human guilt, and the fact of the Saviour's death for its expiation, which prevents your seeing how the latter does actually become the means of removing the former. Hence your faith in the death of Christ does not give you that consolation of which you sometimes hear your pious gardener speak; because, for want of an adequate power of perception, you cannot see how to apply its moral efficacy to your heart and conscience."

"How to apply the moral efficacy of the death of Christ to my heart and conscience! Why, I was not aware that anything more was necessary, on my part, than simply admitting the fact of his death."

"Then what meaning can you affix to the language of the apostle—'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world?' But such is the spiritual darkness that rests on the human mind, that the moral design of his death cannot be perceived without the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Why, the prayers and liturgy of your own Church most unequivocally recognize the necessity of this supernatural illumination."<sup>[28]</sup> [418]

"I never felt the necessity of this spiritual illumination to which you refer, or most likely I should have sought after it."

"I presume you would; but your not feeling the necessity of it forms no valid objection against the necessity of it. It may be necessary, and yet you may not perceive it; as the natural man, according to the testimony of St. Paul—that is, the man unaided by Divine assistance—'receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'"

"You have certainly opened a new path of inquiry before me; and though I cannot at present see the need of any supernatural assistance to enable me to understand what I read in my Bible, yet, if the necessity of it be clearly stated in Holy Writ, I shall not hesitate to admit it.<sup>[29]</sup> But, to advert to the religion of this village chapel, am I to understand that the doctrines of the Church of England are preached in it?"

"Yes, Sir."



"Then they have not brought a new religion into the village?"

"No, Sir; they have brought no new religion into the village, but merely present the old religion of the Bible and of Protestantism in a new form."

"And yet when they talk on religious subjects, they employ a very different phraseology of speech from that which we have been accustomed to use."

"Very likely, because they are more familiar with the phraseology of the Scriptures than you are; and they feel the power of religious truth on their heart more forcibly than you profess to do. Your religion, if I judge from your conversation, is the religion of opinion, theirs of belief—yours of speculation, theirs of principle—yours of forms and ceremonies, theirs of knowledge and of feeling—yours of times and seasons, theirs of habitual devotion; and while you derive no consolation from the routine of duties which you perform, they have peace with God through Jesus Christ."

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"I have heard," said the Squire, "that their religion makes them happy, and raises them above the fear of dying—the great points I have been aiming to reach for fifteen years, but I am as far off as when I first began the pursuit."

"If, Sir, you had been labouring under some physical malady for the space of fifteen years, without deriving any benefit from the prescriptions of your regular family physician, I presume you would call in other advice?"

"I have no doubt of it, Sir; I should suspect his want of judgment."

"Why not, Sir, act on the same principle, on the more important question relating to your soul—its peace, and its salvation? Your attendance at the church has been in vain. Why not dismiss your prejudices, and go to the village chapel? You have ocular demonstration, that the people who worship there are happy, and live in the anticipation of future happiness. Why not make the experiment, which can subject you to no loss, and may lead to a glorious issue?"

"We are slaves, Sir, to prejudice. Yes, we create our own tyrant, and then yield to his iron sway! What fools we all are!"

"I should not object," said Mrs. Bradley, "to go to the village chapel, if I thought I could obtain any spiritual benefit. I am weary of life. I want something to bring peace to my heart."

"Make the experiment, Madam."

"I feel inclined to do it; but yet I have a strange reluctance."

"I will venture," said the Squire, "and give a proof that I am sincere in my efforts to obtain the hope of salvation."

We now left the Hall, much pleased with our visit, and bent our steps towards home. It was a beautiful evening, and as we passed along we were charmed by the varied notes of my favourite bird, the thrush, whose harmony was occasionally disturbed by the cawing of the rooks on their return from their daily pilgrimage. We returned to the public road just as the sun was setting, and while admiring the lustre which he threw around him on his departure, I remarked to Miss Holmes, what a fine emblem it presented of the dying Christian, whose pathway through life resembles the shining light, which shineth brighter and brighter, yet reserves its brightest splendour for its setting, when a halo of glory encircles him as he disappears, leaving spectators astonished and delighted more by the closing scene, than by the progressive majesty of his course.

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On ascending the slope leading to the entrance of the village, a respectable looking man stepped out of a cottage by the roadside, and on recognizing Mrs. Newell and Miss Holmes, with myself, as a clergyman, invited us to walk in. His large Bible was on the table, and the family were preparing for evening worship. After a little desultory conversation, he begged that I would lead their devotions, a request with which I gladly complied—reading a chapter of the Bible and offering up a prayer.

"I am happy, ladies," said the cottager's wife, when service was concluded, "to see you in my house; it is an honour which I have long coveted, but never expected; and we are much obliged to you, Sir, for your kindness in praying for us this evening. May the Lord reward you."

"And I am happy," I replied, "that you have an altar of devotion erected in your family; and I hope that your morning and evening sacrifices, like those of the Hebrew temple, will regularly ascend before the Lord of hosts, and be accepted by him."

I was now agreeably surprised to find myself in the cottage, and in the company of the gardener, whose religion had been the subject of discussion at the Hall.

"We have just had," I remarked, "a long and interesting conversation with the Squire on religious subjects; and we were much pleased with the seriousness of his manner, and the eagerness with which he listened to our remarks, but like many others, he has no clear perception of the nature or design of the gospel of Christ."

"He is, Sir," said the gardener, "a most singular man. Sometimes he is very devout—reads his Bible with great attention, and will often come to me in the garden, to talk about religion, and I have sometimes seen him so powerfully impressed by it, that he has shed tears when speaking of the restless state of his mind; but at other times he is equally gay and thoughtless, and disposed to turn religion and religious people into ridicule. He is very unhappy, though he is very rich; and has many good qualities, though he is not a spiritual man."

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"I suppose," I said, "you would not exchange your cottage for his mansion, if you were obliged along with the exchange to part with your consolations and hopes?"

"O, no, I would not exchange situation and state with my master; for I am happy, but he is not—I can think of death with composure, but he dreads it—I can look forward to eternity with delight, but he shrinks back from its approach, as a child would recoil in terror on seeing some hideous figure."

This pious gardener was the only son of a venerable elder of the Scotch church, who rented a small farm in the county of Stirling. He was a most industrious hard-working man; and his wife was a pattern for economy and frugality. For more than fifty years they lived together in the enjoyment of domestic happiness; but just as they reached the evening of life, they experienced a series of reverses, and poverty advanced upon them as an armed man, compelling them to give up their farm, to be cultivated by other hands. Their son took a little cottage for them near the church in which his venerable father had worshipped God for many years; and having acquired a scientific knowledge of horticulture, he obtained, through the medium of a friend, his present situation at the Squire's; and to his honour he supported his aged parents till it pleased God to take them to himself. When he came to England, he was a moral but not a pious man; nor did he feel the influence of the truth on his heart till after his marriage. His wife was the daughter of a worthy man, who gave her a superior education; and to this the God of all grace had added the ornament of a meek and a devotional spirit. By her chaste conversation, and the influence of her example, she won over her husband to the reception of the pure faith of Christ; and though, like most others, they have had the ebbings and flowings of prosperity and adversity; yet, to quote their own language, goodness and mercy have followed them all the days of their life.

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Had the gardener's father remained exempt from misfortunes, his son might have been living in the house in which he was born, and cultivating the farm his father tilled for fifty years; but then he had never seen his pious wife, and might still have possessed only the form of religion. That dispensation which came as the whirlwind and the storm, to drive him from his home and his country, led him at length to attain the blessings of contentment and peace. Thus we often see in the history of life, disastrous events proving the precursors of personal and domestic happiness, as the dark and tempestuous morning is not unfrequently followed by a serene and joyous evening; exciting gratitude and love to the wise Disposer of all human affairs, in exchange for the perplexity and sorrow which they may have occasioned.

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## THE PIOUS COTTAGER.



After staying for about a week under the hospitable roof of Mr. Newell, I quitted Thornwood, to pay my long promised visit to the Elms, and was accompanied thither by Miss Holmes. We had the gratification of finding all well on our arrival, and I spent with my old friends a few days very pleasantly; after which it was necessary for me to return home, though much urged by Mr. and Mrs. Holmes to remain with them for a little time longer. During my stay at the Elms, I more than once accompanied Louisa to call on Mrs. Kent, in whom I felt much interested, but who, for some time past, had been in a very feeble state of health, and was now evidently hastening to her end. The evening before my departure she rallied a little, and on the ensuing Sabbath felt herself so strong as to be able to walk to chapel, at about a quarter of a mile's distance. On Monday, however, she was again obliged to return to her bed, from which she never rose. She now gradually sank, and in the course of ten days peacefully expired. Her history, and some incidents connected with her death, will be found in the following letter from Miss Holmes to Mrs. Loader:—

"THE ELMS, 17th June, 18—.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have just sustained a great loss. Poor Mrs. Kent died yesterday, and I feel that I have indeed lost a friend. You have often asked me to give you some particulars of her history, and this I shall now endeavour to do.

"She was left a widow when about the age of forty, with four children, almost entirely dependent upon her for support. Her husband, who was a pious man, died of a consumption; the symptoms of which made their appearance within a few years after their marriage. But as his outward man decayed, his inner man was renewed day by day. During his protracted illness, though he had no raptures when anticipating his death, and the glory to follow, yet he was favoured with great composure; and when the hour of his departure came, he died in peace. While he lived, he and his wife had regularly attended the little Dissenting chapel in the village, and had always been allowed to do so unmolested, but shortly after his death the steward of Lord Harwood informed his widow, that unless she gave up her religious notions, and went to the parish church, she should not be allowed to remain any longer in her little cottage. Her reply to this unmanly and anti-Christian threat, at once displayed the characteristic independence and firmness of her mind:—'As I would not give up my religion to please his Lordship, you cannot suppose that I will do it to please you, Sir. You may turn me out of the cottage, but my Father, who knows that I want a dwelling for myself and children, will provide me with another, over which you will have no authority.'

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"As soon as this threat was known, a very general murmur was expressed through the

hamlet. Many, indeed, thought that it would not be carried into execution; but a pious gentleman, who felt a great respect for the memory of her husband, and who knew that she would always live in terror, while under the power of this petty tyrant, built a little cottage for her on his own estate, which she occupied, free of rent, till her death. Three of her children, one after the other, fell victims to their father's complaint, and were all buried in the same grave. She was a very industrious, frugal, and prudent woman; greatly respected by her religious friends, who, much to their honour, provided an ample maintenance for her, when she became, through infirmities, unable to support herself.

"Her cottage, which was built on a piece of rising ground, within sight of the turnpike road, was the neatest in the parish, and bore, in legible characters, the following inscription:—'A refuge from persecution.' This memorial of his cruel spirit mortified the steward, by exciting public attention; and after smarting under it for some time, he offered to make any apology to the widow, on condition that it might be effaced. She became his advocate with her landlord, and the stone was removed; but ere he had made the application, Lady Harwood, on riding past in her carriage, having seen it, was induced to stop, and ask Mrs. Kent why her cottage bore such a singular inscription. The reason was given, and when she informed his Lordship, on his return from the Continent, he felt so indignant, that he sent for his steward, and, after a severe reprimand, dismissed him from his situation.

"I have spent many pleasant, and I trust profitable hours in Mrs. Kent's company; and now she is gone, I find the remembrance of our conversations a source of great consolation. Her knowledge of the Bible was very accurate and extensive; and the remarks which she sometimes made on different passages were pertinent and striking. In her the word of Christ dwelt richly; it composed her perturbed feelings—induced a spirit of resignation to the will of God—opened before her the prospect of future bliss, and supplied her with subjects of reflection and conversation, which made her society a source of much improvement to others. She was well qualified to guide the young Christian, amidst the perplexities which are apt to entangle his faith in the early stages of his experience, and guard him from the fatal evils by which he is often surrounded in his passage through life. To her conversation my sister Jane is more indebted than to any other means of religious instruction; and even Emma would often gladly spend an hour in her society.

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"A few months ago her infirmities began to increase upon her; but we were not alarmed by any symptoms of approaching dissolution, till about a week before our visit to Lynnbridge. When sitting with her one fine spring evening, listening to the song of the blackbird and the thrush, I spoke of the bountiful provision which our heavenly Father has made for our necessities and gratifications, she replied in the beautiful language of the poet: 'Yes,

'—not content,  
With every food of life to nourish man,  
He makes all nature beauty to his eye,  
And music to his ear.'

But this is not the only provision he has made for us. He is now preparing a place for us, and soon he will come to receive us to himself.'

"On asking her if she had any fears in anticipation of the end of her faith, she said—

"I have had many, but they are all gone, and though I still have my spiritual trials, yet I can anticipate the final issue with great composure. I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'

"You long to be gone, I have no doubt?"

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"I certainly long to see HIM, whom unseen, I have loved for nearly fifty years, because then I shall be like Him; but I am not impatient. Indeed, I am not yet prepared to go, for the ties which bind me to earth are not all broken.'

"Then this earth still possesses some attractions?"

"Yes; I have enjoyed, and do enjoy a large proportion of its comforts; and though I have felt, at times, the storms of adversity, yet I can say, 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.' Here I am, in my calm retreat—far away from the noise of contention and strife—waiting patiently the great change; and if the Lord should be pleased to answer my prayers for the salvation of my dear son, I should then say, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.'

"Then you think your son is still living, notwithstanding the report of his dangerous illness in the hospital at the Cape?"

"Yes, I believe he is. As Abraham saw Isaac in a figure rising from the dead, so the Lord gave me a somewhat similar vision, the night after I received my son's letter. I saw him leaving the hospital well, though leaning on his staff, and pale and wan, as if just recovered from illness. I have now only one painful trial.'

"Presuming that she referred to the spiritual state of her son, I remarked, that

parents must feel intense agony of mind, in prospect of having their children separated from them in the eternal world.

"I have not that prospect to distress me. I have three already in heaven, and I doubt not but the grace of God will ultimately reach the heart of my prodigal son. I cannot doubt it. It would be a sin to doubt it. I have felt such a spirit of prayer come upon me at times, on his behalf, that I have wrestled for his conversion, as Jacob wrestled with the angel at Peniel; and though I have heard no voice saying to me, 'It shall be unto thee even as thou wilt,' yet I have departed from the throne of grace in peace, and found my faith strengthened with power from on high. My faith is so strong and so uniform in its exercise, that it has cast out fear from my heart; and I can rejoice in prospect of meeting all my children in my Father's house."

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"During my absence at Lynnbridge her illness continued to increase, and Jane used frequently to call on her, and take her some little comforts which her feeble state required. On my return I took Mr. —, who was paying us a short visit, to see her, and she seemed to derive great comfort from his conversation and sympathy. She now gained a little strength, and in a day or two felt herself so much better as to be able again to go about, and on Sabbath actually walked to chapel. The exertion, however, had been too much for her, and on calling at her cottage on the Monday forenoon I was grieved to learn that she had found herself so weak as to be obliged to return to bed. I left with her a little wine, which I had brought with me, and called again to see her in the evening. I perceived that I must now forego all hopes of her recovery, as her strength was evidently sinking fast. After some conversation regarding her bodily ailments, she said to me, 'I have been struggling through deep waters since your last visit, and even now the swellings of Jordan are rising higher and higher upon me; and though I have not lost my anchor, I have been tossed as upon the billows of the great deep. I trust, indeed, all will be well at last; but I now feel a terror in prospect of death, which I never felt before. I am now on the verge of eternity. I shall soon, very soon see God—the final sentence will soon be uttered; and if I have been deceiving myself and others, what will be my doom!'"

"'But, my dear Mrs. Kent,' I remarked, 'you should look back on your past life, and think of the sacrifices which you have made for the cause of the Redeemer, and the numerous indications of his approbation which you have received.'

"'I dare not look back,' she replied, with great solemnity, 'unless it be to increase the intensity of the anguish which at times weighs down my soul, for I have been an unprofitable servant, and am one of the greatest of sinners that ever indulged a hope of entering into heaven. Look back! no, my dear. I am obliged to 'lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.'

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"Two days after this visit I again called, and found her sitting up in her bed. On extending her hand, she said with great animation, 'The storm is over, and now the sun is shining upon my soul, in his full noon-tide strength. The bitterness of death is passed; and I have nothing more to suffer, except a few convulsive struggles, which nature will feel, when the moment of my departure comes.' Then raising her hands and her eyes to heaven, she burst forth into a strain of enraptured devotion. I have preserved a few of her expressions, which were principally quotations from the Bible, or Watt's Hymns; but it is not in my power to portray the calm dignity of her countenance, or the intense fervour of feeling with which she spoke. 'Blessed Saviour! thou art my Redeemer! Thou hast borne my sins, and carried my sorrows! Thou hast suffered the just for the unjust, to bring me to God! Thou art the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely! Thou art the author and finisher of my faith! To thee do I yield myself, to be redeemed from all evil—to be sanctified—to be presented faultless before thy Father's glory with exceeding joy! Yes,

'—every smile of thine,  
Does fresh endearments bring;'

and fixing her eyes, as though she saw her Lord, she extended her arms, and said,

'Haste, my Beloved, fetch my soul,  
Up to thy bless'd abode,  
Fly, for my spirit longs to see  
My Saviour and my God.'

"I happened just then to turn my head to the window, when I saw a soldier walking up the pathway in front of her cottage. Without thinking what I was saying, I exclaimed, 'Here is your son, Mrs. Kent, come back to you from the Cape!' Never shall I forget the scene which followed.

"'My son!—impossible!'"

"We heard the latch of the door lifted up, and a deep manly voice calling 'Mother!' On that word reaching her ear, his mother sprang up in her bed, and exclaimed, 'It is my son!' but her feelings were so strongly excited that she had not strength to restrain them, and before I could return to her assistance, she fell back, and for some moments we thought her gone. I felt her pulse, but it had ceased to beat—her eyes were fixed—

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and while engaged with her faithful nurse in employing the usual means to restore suspended animation, the door of her chamber was opened, and her son entered with a smile on his countenance, which was soon exchanged for the strong expressions of filial grief. He saw what was the matter, and forbore to speak, but stepping gently to her bedside, he kissed her, and let fall a tear on her face. 'How long has she been ill?' he inquired; and just as these words were uttered, we saw a slight motion of her hand, and soon after she began to breathe softly. On returning to consciousness, her first impulse was to embrace her long lost child. No words were uttered by them, but a frequent interchange of the expressions, 'My child!' 'My mother!' I withdrew to the window while they remained for many minutes locked in each other's embrace. I then handed the dying saint a glass of wine, which revived her; and after reclining on the bosom of her son for some time, giving vent to her feelings, she became sufficiently composed to converse with him.

"O mother, I am sorry to find you in this state; but you will get well soon, I trust."

"Never while I remain in this world, my dear son. But I have every reason to be thankful. God has always dealt graciously with me. Even in the midst of the greatest tribulation, He has enabled me to sing,

'Bless'd is the sorrow, kind the storm,  
That drives me nearer home.'

But this last expression of his kindness, in permitting me to see you before I die, is so unexpected, that it is like a miracle wrought in answer to prayer.'

"O mother," the soldier replied, weeping as he spoke, 'your prayers have been the means of my salvation, and I am thankful that your life has been spared till I could come and tell you of it.'

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"She sat and listened with great interest to his account of his adventures. While in hospital at the Cape he was visited by a pious missionary, to whose conversation he ascribed his conversion to God. 'Before I saw him,' he continued, 'I had many qualms of conscience; and was often terrified at the thought of death, but never *felt* that I needed a Saviour till he spoke to me. His appeals were like an arrow shot through my soul, and I could get no comfort till I prayed to Jesus Christ.' He paused to weep, and we wept with him; when he renewed his narration, and after giving us a detailed account of his recent preservation during a violent storm on his return to England, we knelt down, and he commended the soul of his dying mother into the hands of the Lord Jesus, after which I took my leave.

"Mrs. Kent remained for several days without undergoing any material change; but on the eighth day after her son's return, he called at the Elms, and said that his mother was not expected to live through the day, and wished to see me. I immediately went, accompanied by my sister Jane. We found her in a most heavenly frame of mind. After a conversation which lasted about half an hour, I observed a sudden alteration in her countenance, which convinced me that the time of her departure was drawing nigh. She now sat for several minutes in perfect silence; a death-like stillness pervaded the room, and we all felt an awe on our spirits that seemed to betoken some great event. She then raised her head, and first expressed her gratitude to her nurse for her kind attention; thanked me and Jane for the few favours we had been enabled to show her; and then taking the hand of her son, she pressed it to her lips, and said, 'Yes, thou art a faithful God! and as it hath pleased thee to bring back my long lost child, and adopt him into thy family, I will say, 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation;' then smiling, she fell back on her pillow, and with one deep sigh her gentle spirit passed away and left us.

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"Thus lived, thus suffered, and thus died, one of the Lord's '*hidden ones*,' set apart for himself, to show forth his praise first here on earth, and now for ever in the celestial world.

"I am happy to say that I can now refer, with some degree of satisfaction, to dear Emma, in whose welfare I know you take a deep interest. I speak with caution, yet I think I can say there are some appearances, which give us reason to hope, that her afflictions are beginning to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. She is now more frequently alone and with her Bible; still very reserved on the question of personal piety, but references and allusions accidentally escape her lips, which induce me to believe that the Lord is gradually drawing her to himself. Dear creature! she has passed through a sad ordeal, but I trust she will yet be enabled to say with David, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.' Pray for her, my dear friend, and also for your attached

LOUISA."

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## THE CLOSING SCENE OF THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN'S CAREER.



Miss Holmes, as the reader has already been informed, had suffered much in her health, by the unfortunate marriage of her sister Emma; but her visit to Lynnbridge had contributed greatly to her improvement, and her parents now fondly hoped that she was in a fair way of recovery. Shortly after the death of Mrs. Kent, however, she experienced a return of her former alarming symptoms, and an eminent physician was consulted, whose opinion, though rather reservedly given, was not of a very hopeful nature. Conscious herself of the extreme delicacy of her constitution, and apprehensive [432] that she had not long to live, she now prudently declined an advantageous offer of marriage which she had received. Her suitor was Mr. Alfred Reed, the only son of an intimate friend of her father's; a young man, about her own age, decidedly pious, and who was likely to come into the possession of a large fortune. He had been bred to mercantile pursuits, but eventually decided on entering the Church. His father opposed his inclination, till, being fully convinced that he was actuated by proper motives, he cordially gave his consent. He had passed through his examinations at Cambridge with great distinction, and was now spending the vacation at home, preparatory to taking orders. His person, his manners, and his profession combined to render him an acceptable suitor to Miss Holmes, who united in her character the varied excellencies which are necessary to qualify a female to fill the important station of a clergyman's wife. She was intelligent, amiable, discreet, and zealous in the cause of religion and benevolence, without the smallest tincture of ostentatious display. Her sense of duty, however, would not permit her, in her present state of health, to contract a union which might speedily be dissolved, and involve her husband in much perplexity and grief.

By the advice of her medical man, she was induced again to try a change of air as the best means of arresting the progress of her disorder. After much deliberation it was decided to go to Dawlish in Devonshire, both because they had so much enjoyed their former visits there, and Louisa preferred its retirement to the noise and gaiety of a more fashionable watering-place. Mr. Reed, who still continued faithful in his attentions to her, notwithstanding her refusal of his offer, and still cherished the hope of his proposals being accepted, on Miss Holmes' restoration to health, was allowed, at his earnest request, to form one of the party. He accordingly set out first, to secure a suitable lodging, and it was no small gratification to the family when they found he had taken the same house which they had occupied some years before. As they had travelled by easy stages, and had been favoured with pleasant weather, Miss Holmes appeared much better on her arrival at Dawlish than when she left the Elms; and she continued to improve so rapidly, that all began to anticipate her entire convalescence. Her spirits, which had at times been deeply depressed, soon rose to the level of her accustomed cheerfulness; and though the hectic flush occasionally added fresh beauty to the sweetness of her countenance, yet, as it did not return so often, nor appear so deeply tinged by the florid hue as formerly, it did not occasion any alarm. On returning from a lovely walk, as they passed the little chapel which benevolence raised for the accommodation of the Christian pilgrim, who thirsts for the pure water of life, she facetiously remarked, addressing herself to Mr. Reed, "I presume, Sir, we cannot calculate on your accompanying us to-morrow to this unadorned house of prayer."

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"Why not, Miss Holmes?"

"Of course, Sir, your clerical profession will lead you elsewhere!"

"I am happy to say, that I am not ashamed to go to offer up my sacrifice of prayer and of praise in any place in which the God of salvation will condescend to accept it. I prefer the village church to the village chapel, most certainly; but, as I have no wish to become a *dissenter*, I shall conform to the religious customs of the party during our visit."

"A clergyman in a Dissenting chapel! The last wonder! Of course, we must all be sworn to secrecy, and keep our pledge, or no bishop will ordain you."

There is no indisposition under which the human frame labours that assumes such a deceptive appearance as a consumption. In its early stages it will often work so insidiously on the constitution, that its subject is unconscious of its presence; and even, when it has advanced to a very considerable extent, there are generally those intervals of vigour and vivacity, that occasion sanguine expectations of a recovery to be entertained even to the last. And it is during these seasons, when the animal spirits return with great force—giving a degree of energy and activity which is regarded as an unequivocal proof of restored health, that exertions are made by walking and by visiting, which often accelerate the fatal issue. To confine to the house the invalid, who longs to breathe the fresh air, or to keep her out of company, when the pleasures of social intercourse relieve the spirits from languor, is a task which the kindness of friendship cannot always perform; and hence she is often permitted to run the risk of shortening her life by efforts which exhaust her strength; or by exposures to the keen night air, which give a fresh impetus to the disease. It was during one of these intervals of renewed strength that Miss Holmes was induced to pay a visit to a family, who resided about two miles off; and though her father proposed to take her in a carriage, she preferred walking. She reached her friends' house without feeling fatigued; after dinner enjoyed a ramble in the country; and then, having taken tea, returned to Dawlish. It was a pleasant evening, but the air was rather cold; and though she bore the exertions of the day with great cheerfulness, yet before she got home she began to feel exhausted. On entering the drawing-room, she threw herself on the sofa, and said, "I fear I have gone beyond my strength." After resting herself some time, she retired for the night; but when she awoke in the morning, instead of rising at her usual hour, she requested to have her breakfast in bed. At noon she made her appearance amongst the family, in apparently good spirits; but her mother, who had watched the progress of her disorder with deep anxiety, felt alarmed on seeing the hectic flush on her cheek, accompanied by an occasional cough. Towards

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the evening the height of her pulse was considerably increased; the palms of her hands became dry and hot, and she complained of being chilly. These symptoms excited fresh alarm; yet, as they came on immediately after the fatigue of a long day's excursion, her friends flattered themselves that they would go off when she had taken another night's rest; but in this they were disappointed. On the following morning they assumed a more threatening aspect; her cough became more troublesome, the pain in her side returned, and though she appeared cheerful, yet it was accompanied by an unusual gravity of look and manner. At length it was judged expedient to call in a medical man, who prescribed some medicines that afforded her a little temporary relief. When asked for his opinion, he said, "I do not despair of her recovery, though she must be very cautious. She must not exert herself beyond her strength, nor yet expose herself to the night air." The following letter, written to her friend Miss Martin, whom the reader will remember accompanying Miss Holmes to call on Mrs. Kent,<sup>[30]</sup> exhibits the state of her mind at this critical period:—

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"MY DEAR MARY,—An all-wise Providence has been pleased to guide my steps once more to Dawlish, where we expect to spend a few months. In revisiting it again, I naturally advert to that period of my life when I was living in a state of alienation from God—devoted to the pleasures and vanities of the world. Happy should I now be to ramble with you through this beautiful country, and talk of Him who lived and died for sinners; but, as that pleasure is denied me, I will converse with you through a more circuitous medium. You are aware that our journey here is mainly on my account. On my arrival I grew much better, and continued for some weeks to improve in my general health; but a short time ago I caught a severe cold, and have never been well since. Though my friends still cling to hope, as the sinking mariner hangs on the broken plank of the vessel, till the returning wave comes to drive him off, I am now very apprehensive as to the result. I know that my heavenly Father can lengthen out the thread of my life, and restore to full vigorous health the constitution which disease is gradually wasting away; but I think He is about to remove me. It costs, indeed, a hard struggle to view with composure the approach of death at my age, and nothing could reconcile me to it but the hope of immortality by which I feel animated and sustained. My Alfred is with me, and his kind attentions often depress me. He is still anticipating the day when he shall lead me to the altar; but alas! fond youth, I am marked out as a victim for the grave! Yes! and though I still feel I love him, yet I must give him up, and all the prospects which open before me on this side the tomb, to go and dwell with Him whom unseen I love! But 'thy will, O my Father, be done!'

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"Though I have received the sentence of death, I do not expect that it will be executed speedily. No! I shall not be taken till all are prepared to resign me; and till every tie is loosened which now fastens my affections to 'things seen and temporal.' This is a kind provision which our heavenly Father usually makes to afford some alleviation to the sorrow of surviving friends; and to enable his children to retire from this vale of life, without retaining any lingering desires for a longer continuance in it.

"I have hitherto concealed from the eyes of others the most alarming symptoms of my complaint, nor have I yet given them an intimation of my own opinion; as I do not feel inclined to be at present the bearer of such heavy tidings. They still try to amuse me with the visions of futurity, and talk of my marriage with Alfred, and all its attendant circumstances, as if length of days was appointed for me: and though I feel conscious that a few months, unless a miracle of mercy prevent, will change the theme of social discourse, yet I cannot bring my mind to the severe trial of attempting to banish these fond hopes and anticipations from others.

"I am happy to inform you that my dear sister Emma is become decidedly pious. Her severe afflictions have had a salutary effect; and now, being purified and softened by their influence, she exhibits the features of the Christian character in all their attractive loveliness. Her natural volatility and satirical humour are now transformed to chastened vivacity and the sportive sallies of innocent wit.

"I need not say how much I should enjoy your company at Dawlish, if you could make it convenient to pay us a visit; but as that is too great an indulgence for me to expect, you will not refuse me the gratification of hearing from you as soon as possible. All here join me in kindest love to you, and your Papa and Mamma, who, I trust, are both enjoying their usual good health.—I am, yours most affectionately,

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LOUISA."

To this letter Miss Martin returned the following reply:—

"LONDON, *15th September, 18—.*

"MY DEAR LOUISA,—I received yours of the 10th, but it is not possible for me to describe the impressions which it produced on my mind. I alternately wept tears of sorrow and of joy; and though that overpowering excitement, which its first reading produced, has somewhat subsided, yet I feel almost incapable of replying. And is the wise Disposer of all events about to remove you from amongst us? And have you, at such a comparatively early period of the spiritual contest, fought the good fight of faith, and gained the crown which fadeth not away? If so, I will say, 'Happy, thrice happy saint!' thou art highly favoured of the Lord! Yes, you will soon see the King in his beauty, and

mingle your notes of praise with the multitude around his throne! You will soon partake of the fulness of joy, in which the spirits of the just made perfect participate!

"But how can we give you up? How can we take this cup of sorrow without praying that it may pass from us? How can we offer up the prayer, 'Thy will, O Father, be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven,' without feeling it quiver on our lips as we attempt to utter it? I now find that entire resignation to the Divine will, when those objects are placed in jeopardy on which our affections are strongly fixed, is an attainment which I have not yet acquired; and though I doubt not but the grace of Christ will be found sufficient for its full display, when the day of trial comes, yet, at the present moment, I am bowed down with so much heaviness of soul that I cannot give vent to my feelings. What a contrast do you exhibit! While I am restless, under the agitations of fear, you are calm, in the anticipations of hope! While I am praying that you may still be detained amongst us, to share our joys and our sorrows, you are fluttering on the wings of eager expectation, ready to say, as you soar away from us, 'Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves.' Happy spirit!

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"Indeed, my dear Louisa, your sweet composure at this awful crisis—your bright anticipations, viewed in connection with your attachment to your friends around you, have given me such an exalted opinion of the efficacy of the Christian faith to sustain the human spirit on the great occasions of its history, that I am not so much astonished at your tranquil joy, as I am at my own timid misgivings; and though I still hope I possess the faith which is the evidence of things not seen, yet in me it is small, like the grain of mustard seed, while in you it resembles the wide-spreading tree, beneath whose branches you rest in safety.

"As you, my dear Louisa, when drawing nearer the closing scene, may be subjected to the influence of the fears which not unfrequently disturb the peace of the dying Christian, I have taken the liberty of sending you an extract from a very interesting memoir, which I have just read with great pleasure, and which, with a degree of precision we rarely meet with in theological works, points out the difference between faith and hope.

"This difference,' the writer justly observes, 'is not always sufficiently attended to; and much presumption on the one hand, and despondency on the other, have arisen from confounding them. One person considers himself a believer of high attainments, because he entertains no doubt of his being in a state of salvation; and another doubts whether he be a believer at all, because he cannot persuade himself that his sins are forgiven. But it is obvious that two distinct and very different acts of the mind are here confounded and blended together;—one, which assents to the fact of Jesus Christ being the only and all-sufficient Saviour of sinners; and which places a reliance on the atoning sacrifice, for pardon of sin and acceptance with God, which is the province of *faith*; and another, which appropriates to itself the blessings of this salvation, and confidently expects a future state of felicity, which is the province of *hope*. Now, it is clear that these persuasions of the mind may exist separately from each other; and that one of them may be very strong, whilst the other has scarcely any existence at all. St. Paul clearly recognizes this distinction, when he offers up a prayer for the Romans, that the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing. It is here implied that genuine faith may exist without either joy or peace; and by addressing his prayer to 'the God of hope,' he remarks that joy and peace are the fruits of hope, and are distinct blessings to be superadded to the grace of faith.'

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"I regret that it is not in my power to visit you at Dawlish, but I assure you that I have you in my remembrance, when bowing before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and while I pray that you may yet be spared to us, I do not forget to pray, that if you are to be removed, you may be favoured with a joyful entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. You will present my kind affection to your dear parents, and your sisters.—Your affectionate friend,

MARY."

The alarming symptoms which immediately followed this return of Miss Holmes' disorder, suddenly disappeared, and she was once more restored to comparative health, though it was evident to all her friends that the vigour of her constitution was greatly impaired. She was again permitted to resume her rambles, and to breathe the genial air of Dawlish, which once more enlivened her spirits. As she now felt able to endure the fatigues of exertion, she was induced to comply with the wishes of her kind friends in the country, to pay them another visit. She rode there and back, and cautiously avoided running any risk, either by too much exertion, or by any exposure to damps or cold.

On reaching home, she changed her dress, and soon after retired to rest; but on awakening in the morning, felt a hoarseness, accompanied by a slight fever. She remained within for several days, but on the following Sabbath, felt so much better that she ventured to go to chapel, where she commemorated the death of the Redeemer. This religious service she afterwards spoke of as one of the most impressive and the happiest of her life. When adverting to it, in a letter which she wrote to Mrs. Loader, she observed, "I have often felt a great degree of solemnity and delight when receiving the sacramental memorials of the Saviour's death; but last Sabbath, at chapel, I felt a joy which was unspeakable and full of glory. When the minister repeated the memorable words, 'This do in remembrance of me,' I could not refrain from saying, in the language of Dr.

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Watts,

'Why was I made to hear his voice,  
And enter while there's room;  
While thousands make a wretched choice,  
And rather starve than come?'

"I think I have more than once alluded, in my free correspondence with you, to my ceaseless dread of self-deception; and this makes me hesitate to ascribe to a supernatural operation, the religious impressions and tendencies of my heart; yet, on this occasion, I could respond to the following declarations with perfect composure:—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast  
That sweetly forced me in;  
Else I had still refused to taste,  
And perished in my sin.'

"Till that morning a gloomy shade always darkened my prospects of the future; but then the true light shone into me with such a bright radiance, that I abounded in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. I retired from the hallowed service refreshed and invigorated; and in the evening, when denied the privilege of returning to the house of prayer, I made a more solemn surrender of myself to God, than at any former period. What scenes of wonder opened to my view! The Lord of life and glory expiring on the cross! The high and lofty One condescending to admit a sinful creature into his presence! The Saviour making intercession for me! The gay and the thoughtless may pour contempt on the sublime pleasures of devotion, and rush for happiness into a world which abounds with evil; and under the spell of a fatal illusion, may imagine they have found it. But our joys would be ill exchanged for theirs; and though it may not be in our power, while encompassed with the infirmities of our nature, to perpetuate the vivid impressions which we sometimes receive, yet they serve to demonstrate the superlative value of the faith which originates them; and may also tend to inspire within our breast an intense longing for that fulness of joy in which the spirits of the just made perfect are allowed to participate in the heavenly world."

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A few days after Louisa's visit to the chapel, the symptoms of her complaint returned with renewed violence. The physician was again sent for, and on entering the room, she said, with a smile on her countenance, "I am happy to see you, Sir; but I am now convinced that my disorder is beyond your power to remove."

"Perhaps not."

"Yes, Sir, it is; God can restore me if he please, but I do not expect it."

He sat and conversed with her about a quarter of an hour, and then left her.

"Pray, Sir," said Mrs. Holmes, "what is your opinion?"

"She is very ill, Madam."

"Do you think it is a confirmed consumption?"

"I do. I fear the disease has made great progress."

"Do you think that a longer continuance in the country will prove beneficial to the dear sufferer?"

"To be candid, Madam, I do not think that it is in the power of human means to arrest the progress of the disease, though a judicious course of management may greatly alleviate her sufferings."

"Do you think, Sir, she can be removed without much inconvenience to herself?"

"She may, in the course of a few days, when her strength rallies; but I am clearly of opinion, that if you wait much longer, it will be impossible to remove her."

This information came as a death-blow to the hopes of all the family. Mrs. Holmes, with Jane and Emma, sobbed aloud. A more silent though not less poignant grief marked the countenances of her father and Mr. Reed. "If she must die," said her father, "she had better be taken home to die." "My Louisa die! My dear Louisa die!" said Alfred, clasping his hands in an intensity of anguish, "And must she die? and must she be taken from me?" At length he became more composed, when informed by Mrs. Holmes that Louisa had just awaked out of a sweet sleep, much revived, and wished to see him. The family sat conversing together the whole of the evening, and arranged the plan for returning to the Elms, whither they determined to proceed immediately.

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For the space of a fortnight after her return home, Miss Holmes continued to improve so rapidly in appearance that the hope of life began to beam once more upon all except herself. At this time she wrote the following letter to Miss Martin, who had now gone with her parents to Hastings for a short period:—

"MY DEAR MARY,—A kind Providence has permitted me to see the Elms once more, and once more to commune with my absent friend from my own room, a privilege which I could not have anticipated a few weeks since. After the reception of your kind letter, my disorder took a turn, and we again thought that the bitterness of death was passed;

but in the midst of our joy the symptoms reappeared, and I was brought near to the grave. I have again revived, but it is only to protract my course for a little time longer. I may live through the winter, and I may live to see another spring opening with all its beauties, but I do not expect it. The symptoms of death are upon me. The silver cord is broken, and my affections are dying off from earth. I am beginning to feel as a stranger amongst my most endeared friends and relatives; and though their sorrows excite my sympathy, yet I have no wish to remain here longer. No! I hear a voice they do not hear, and see a form of beauty they cannot see. I long to depart. I can look through my window on the walks which wind round our shrubbery, without wishing to retrace my former footsteps. I can muse on the pleasures which I have enjoyed in the social circle, without desiring to taste them again. I still feel that I am a sinner—an unworthy sinner; my perceptions of the evil of sin are more clear and affecting than at any former period of my life; and at times I am almost overwhelmed by the indescribable manifestations of the Divine purity; but it hath pleased God to impart to me corresponding views of the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ, so that I have no fears ruffling my peace. I am entering the valley, but it is not dark: nor do I hear any sounds but those of Mercy's voice. The enemy has not yet been suffered to stir up his strength against me, nor have I been once tempted to mistrust either the fidelity of the Saviour, or his willingness to save me. I thank you for the extract which you sent me. It defines the essential difference between faith and hope with great accuracy and precision; but I have now done with all human compositions. The only book I now read is the Bible. This is the fountain from whence I now draw the pure water of life; and though I feel thankful for the writings of those good men which have contributed to my spiritual improvement and consolation, yet, like withered flowers, they have lost their beauty and their fragrance.

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"I do not think that I should have preferred any other period of my existence for my departure, to the present, even if I had been permitted to choose. If I had been taken earlier, I should have left some of my relatives in the gall of bitterness; and if spared longer, I might have left some hapless children; but now I can embrace all as fellow-heirs of the grace of life, who are nearly allied to me by the ties of nature, and I can quit the world without leaving any chasm which may not soon be closed. My friends will weep over my grave, but the hope of a re-union in a better world will mitigate the violence of their sorrow; and soon the days of their mourning will be ended, and earth will be exchanged for heaven.

"Farewell, my dear friend; but only for a season. We are soon to be separated, but we shall meet again. With kind remembrance to all.—Your dying friend,

"LOUISA."

Miss Holmes had now another relapse, which destroyed all hope of her recovery. Addressing her mother, who was communicating, in a low voice, to Mr. Reed the opinion of the physician, she said, "You need not whisper, I have long known that I should not recover; and now *you* know it, let us converse together as those who are on the eve of parting."

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"I have long feared it," said Mrs. Holmes, "though I have been unable to express my fears."

"But why, my dear Mamma, should you fear it? Death has lost its sting. The grave has lost its gloom. I am merely preceding you, and preceding you under the most auspicious circumstances."

"Then has my dear Louisa no dread of death?"

"No. I have outlived that dread of dying which once bowed down my spirits; and can smile on the king of terrors, who now appears transformed into an angel of deliverance."

"But have you," said Mr. Reed, "no wish to live?"

"I had, Alfred, but now I have not. I once wished to live to share your sorrows and your joys, and animate you in the discharge of your sacred duties; but now I wish to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

On seeing her mother and sisters weep, she said, "I am not surprised by your tears, because, if either of you were in my place, I should weep. I know that nature must give vent to her feelings; but you cannot expect *me* to weep. Weep I cannot, unless I shed the tear of grateful joy. No! My days of weeping are passed away; and soon my days of suffering will be over."

Though her disease had been for some time making rapid progress towards the fatal issue, her spirits were yet buoyant, and occasionally she was as energetic and cheerful as in former days. One evening, when the family were sitting with her, she talked with a vivacity and fluency which induced them to hope that she might be spared to them for some months, if not years longer. While indulging these expectations, they were aroused from their reverie by the sudden entrance of Emma, who brought her the following letter, from her friend Mrs. Loader, which the postman had just delivered:—

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"MY DEAR FRIEND,—The affectionate letter which I have just received from dear Emma, brings the mournful intelligence of your relapse, and that now all hope of your recovery has vanished away. This intelligence, though mournful to others, is not, I am thankful to hear, a cause of sorrow to yourself. You are now on Pisgah, with the dreary wilderness behind you; and the goodly land of promise in view, overshadowed by no darkening cloud. My sympathies I reserve for others; to you, I offer my congratulations. The

contest is over; the victory is won, and ere long you will receive the fadeless crown of immortality. In a few weeks or days, you, who are now an inhabitant of earth, will be a glorified spirit, beholding the face of the Holy One, and uniting with the saints in heaven in the grand chorus of adoration and praise. What you will then feel, on looking back on the scene through which you are now passing; or how you will give expression to your thoughts and emotions, is beyond all power of conjecture; but it is sufficient to be assured that you will be perfectly happy, and released from all earthly cares and anxieties. Happy spirit!—happy, because redeemed;—happy, because brought in safety to the end of your pilgrimage;—and happy, now that the shadow of death is flitting across your path—the visible sign of the coming of your Lord, to take you to himself. Adieu, my much-loved friend, but not for ever; the hope of a re-union sustains the dying and the living. We shall weep when *you* are rejoicing with the spirits of the just amid the unfading glories of the celestial world.

"The Lord be with you. Again I say adieu, my much-loved friend; but only for a season. My love and sympathy to all the dear members of your family.—Ever yours,

E. LOADER."

Miss Holmes read this letter, shed a few tears, and then presented it to Emma, saying, "When the crisis is over, acknowledge for me receipt of it; and tell Mrs. Loader what pleasure it gave me."

The tide of life was now rapidly ebbing; and on her father entering her room, a few days after receiving Mrs. Loader's letter, she stretched forth her hand, and said, "I hope you are prepared to resign me, for I have not long to be with you."

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"I have had," he replied, "a hard struggle to do it; but the Lord has at length enabled me to say, 'Even so, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.'"

"I am glad to hear it; and I hope you will all be enabled to feel the same resignation to the Divine will. I wish you would now pray with me, that I may be strengthened in my soul to endure the last struggle." When this hallowed and deeply affecting exercise was ended, she reclined her head on the pillow, and slept for two hours. When she awoke, she rose up in her bed, and casting a smile on all around her, said, "My sleep has refreshed me." After giving a few directions respecting her funeral, she delivered the keys of her desk, &c., to her mother, with a request that she would distribute the few trifling presents she had marked for her friends, and then added, "Now I have done with earth. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" As she gave utterance to this prayer, her countenance beamed with an indescribable glow of rapture, and with a gentle bending of the neck, she bid all farewell, her lips distinctly articulating, "Precious Saviour! thou art come," as they were closing in perpetual silence.

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The sketch which I have exhibited of Miss Holmes' character and religious experience, has been taken from real life; and though on some points her experience may differ from that of the pious reader, yet that circumstance will not diminish the degree of interest which may be felt on examining it. We see what human nature is, even with all the advantages of a pious education, before the great spiritual change takes place; we see the process which is observed in the production of this change—the evidences by which it is attested—the various and the numerous conflicts which the subject of it has to encounter, while passing through this vale of tears—and the influence which a pure faith in the efficacy of the atonement has in sustaining the mind in affliction, and in the prospect of death. And who can turn away from such a scene, without wishing to be made a partaker of the like precious faith? and without exclaiming, "Let me die the death of the righteous?" Compare Miss Holmes' character with that of the devotee of fashion; compare the uniform tranquillity of her mind, after she had obtained peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, with the restless uneasiness which agitates the gay; compare her death with the death of the thoughtless and the trifling, and what will be the result? What! a firm conviction must be produced, that the religion of the Scriptures, when it is brought to operate on the human mind, does more to elevate and refine it, and prepare it for its final destiny, than all the discoveries of science, all the speculations of philosophy, or all the boasted triumphs of reason. This is a fact, which is not merely supported by opinion, but also by the evidence of experience and testimony; and though it may not excite that degree of attention which its importance demands, yet the period may not be far distant when the reader will feel the force of it. Yes, the hour may not be far distant, when you may be called away from that circle in which you are now moving, and from those scenes of pleasure which now captivate and hold you in subjection; to bid farewell to lover and to friend, and let go your hold of life. Yes, the hour may not be far distant, when you will feel yourself entering an eternal world, when the solemnities of the final judgment will open upon you in all their awful grandeur, and when conscience, roused from her long repose of guilty quietude, will speak to condemn. Yes, the hour may not be far distant, when the raptures of bliss, or the agonies of despair, will be yours, and yours for ever. And will you remain in a state of indifference, while such solemn events are at hand? Will you pass on to meet them, as though they were cunningly devised fables? Can no argument produce a conviction of your danger, and can no motive induce you to avoid it? Will you resolutely withstand all the efforts which are made to save you from going down to death unprepared to meet your God? and as resolutely devote yourselves to the follies and the amusements of the world, as though you were to live for ever? God forbid!

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But I hope that the intelligent reader has felt that moral renovation of heart, without which all the attainments of the purest morality will prove unavailing; and is looking for pardon and eternal life through faith in the death and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. If so, though you may have your occasional fears respecting your personal interest in him; though you may often dread, lest at some future period, the deep impressions under which you now labour should be effaced from your mind; and though you may even start back from the approach of death, as from the visitations of a destroying angel, yet He who has begun the good work will carry it on—He who has drawn you into fellowship with himself will perpetuate it—He who has inclined you to hope in his mercy will sustain that hope in the final hour, and give you a peaceful entrance into the joy of your Lord.

Go, then, to the footstool of the Divine throne, and there offer up the sacrifice of praise to Him who has made you alive from the dead, and yield yourself unto God, and your end will be everlasting life. You may be reproached for such an act of decision—you may be contemned—you may excite the pity of some, and the sarcasm of others; but you will not repent the course you have taken, especially when your latter end approaches. Reflecting, then, on your past career in the world you are just quitting, and directing your anticipations forward to that on which you are entering, you will feel an elevation of soul which no remembrances can depress, and without a sigh of regret, or emotion of fear, will close your eyes in peace.

And when the conflict is over, and you have gained the prize of immortality—when you have undergone the anticipated assimilation to the likeness of God, and are as perfect in purity and knowledge as in blessedness—beholding the person and the glory of the dear Redeemer—uniting with the innumerable multitude around his throne, in their anthems of adoration and praise—you will then feel, that in being a redeemed sinner, you have experienced greater manifestation of Divine favour and love, than if you had been created from the first an angel of the highest order. And in your then glorified state you will often advert to your earthly sojourn—to your sins and to your sorrows—retracing the mysterious path of your Christian course, with the ineffably joyful consciousness pervading your heart, that you have not again to suffer, or to sin; that you have not again to pass through "death's dark vale," or again to dread the possibility of perishing; but to live for ever in the full enjoyment of unmingled happiness. Then, with what emotions of gratitude will you adore and bless God for having made you, when in this world, refrain from following the example of the gay and thoughtless; who, alas! will then be where the voice of mercy is never heard, and where the light of hope never dawns!

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## THE HAPPY MARRIAGE.



During all this time that has elapsed, what has become of our friends at Fairmount?

The reader has now probably conjectured from the account of my visit to Fairmount at Christmas,<sup>[31]</sup> that a marriage would ere long take place between Mr. Lewellin and Miss Roscoe. It had been arranged in a subsequent visit paid by Mr. Lewellin at Easter, that the wedding should take place in the following June, and preparations were already made for the joyful occasion, at which I was invited to be present. On returning to London, however, to adjust some business matters, Mr. Lewellin found to his dismay, that an affair of great importance, which even threatened the stability of the mercantile house with which he was connected, required him immediately to proceed to Australia. The disappointment and vexation thus occasioned to the youthful lovers may be conceived, but there was no alternative, and the wedding was accordingly postponed to the following spring, by which time it was hoped that the bridegroom would have returned. Unfortunately, however, the business which required Mr. Lewellin's attention at the Antipodes, proved of so tedious and protracted a nature, that instead of reaching home in the spring, as he expected, nearly two years elapsed before he could return to his native country. In the interval poor Miss Holmes, Miss Roscoe's attached friend, died, as I have narrated in the foregoing chapter, and her loss was deeply felt by Sophia. During Miss Holmes' last illness, Miss Roscoe was on a tour in Italy with her father and mother; and though her friend had been suffering from a severe cold when she quitted England, Sophia had no idea of the fatal issue to which this would lead, and frequently anticipated, during her travels, the pleasure with which, on her return, she would describe to Louisa the beautiful scenery and objects of interest she had seen while abroad. As Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe and Sophia travelled much in Italy, seldom staying long in one place, their correspondence with their friends in England was very irregularly maintained, and, consequently, no tidings of Miss Holmes' illness reached them; and it was not till passing through London, on their return from the Continent, that they learned, to their grief and dismay, that Louisa had expired about a fortnight previously. Before proceeding to Watville, they paid a visit to the Elms, and did their utmost to console the bereaved family. They were also very urgent in pressing Emma and Jane to pay them a visit, which the feelings of the latter would not permit them to do at the time, but they expressed their readiness to do so as soon as their minds were somewhat more composed.

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Not long after Miss Roscoe's return home, her spirits were most unexpectedly revived by the arrival of Mr. Lewellin, who having brought his business to a satisfactory termination, had immediately thereafter stepped on board ship and reached England, a few days before the letter which he had sent to announce his return. The joy of the youthful pair at meeting again, after so long a separation, is more easily imagined than described. Preparations were now made for the

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consummation of their union, at which I was earnestly invited to be present, but the multiplicity of my pastoral engagements prevented me from doing so, much to my regret. I, however, readily promised to pay a visit at Fairmount as soon as the married couple should have returned from their wedding tour.

At first it had been decided that the young people should settle in the vicinity of London, and that Mr. Lewellin should continue his mercantile pursuits as formerly, but this plan was ultimately abandoned. "I presume," said Mr. Roscoe to Mr. Stevens, when they met to adjust the final arrangements, "that your nephew will inherit your property, as my daughter will inherit mine, when it shall please God to remove us to a better world; and if so, I think they will possess a fortune quite large enough, without running the risk of losing any part of it by the speculations of commerce, and without encumbering themselves with the difficulties and anxieties necessarily attendant on them."

"This question," replied Mr. Stevens, "has often engrossed my attention, and I am happy to find that our sentiments on it coincide."

While Mr. Stevens and Mr. Roscoe were thus debating this grave subject, and determining what income they would portion off for the young people, they were disturbed by the sudden entrance of Mr. Lewellin and the ladies, who were ignorant of the point under discussion. "You two gentlemen look very grave," said Mrs. Stevens; "one would almost suppose that you have been discussing some question in which the destinies of Europe are involved."

"No, Madam," said Mr. Roscoe, "we have not been agitating any such question, but another, if not of equal importance, yet of equal interest to you."

"And what may that be, Sir?"

"I see your curiosity is awakened; but cannot you restrain it for a few hours, till you can coax your husband to gratify it?"

"Why, Sir, a woman very naturally feels anxious to know what, when known, will deeply interest her; and though you gentlemen sometimes practise the art of tantalizing, yet you must admit, that we can easily get at your secrets. When together, you can keep up the game; but when you separate, you give up the prize. You glory in your strength, when supported by each other's courage; but alone, you soon surrender."

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"Ah! so it is; we, the lords of the creation, are compelled to pay tribute."

"Of course, Sir, tribute to whom tribute is due."

"To Cæsar, Madam!"

"And to Cæsar's wife, Sir."

"I see you are restless; and as I have too much compassion to keep you on the rack, I will announce in due form the question which we have been agitating. It is this—Shall your nephew and my daughter, after a certain event takes place, go to reside near London, or shall they reside near us?"

"A question, I presume, Sir, no less interesting to you than myself."

"Equally so, Madam."

"And how have you decided it, Sir?"

"We have come to no decision; but we should prefer their settling near us, rather than going so far away."

"I am happy to hear you are of that opinion; it completely coincides with my own views. I was always averse to George and Sophia being settled at a distance from us."

The reader will no doubt remember Miss Denham, whose death I narrated in a previous part of the book.<sup>[32]</sup> Her mother did not long survive the melancholy event; and Mr. Denham, being now left alone, soon sank into a morbid melancholy, which embittered his last days. He had outlived nearly all the companions of his youth; followed those to the grave who were to have inherited his property; and after languishing in a state of mental gloom and depression for several years, he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. His property, which consisted principally of land, he ordered to be sold, and the proceeds to be divided amongst his poor relations, with the exception of a small estate which he bequeathed to an intimate friend. Mr. Roscoe became the purchaser of one of his estates, which was situated in the parish of Broadhurst, not far from Mr. Ingleby's rectory; and as the gentleman who had rented it had just resolved on removing to a more distant part of the country, Mr. Roscoe deemed it a most eligible location for the young people. It consisted of a good house, very pleasantly situated, with about eighty acres of arable and pasture land, well wooded and watered.

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When it was known that Mr. Roscoe had made this purchase, Farmer Pickford called on him with the view of obtaining a lease of it for his son Harry.

"I hear, Sir, as how you have bought one of the farms belonging to Mr. Denham; and I have made so bold as to call and say, I can get you a goodish sort of a tenant if you should want one. One that will do justice to the land, and no mistake."

"And who is it you have been thinking of?"

"My son Harry. He'll make as good a farmer as his father, and that is saying a good deal; though, perhaps, I shouldn't blow my own trumpet. I will stand score for the rent, and the proper

tillage of the farm."

"I thank you, Farmer, for your offer; and I should have much pleasure in accepting your son as a tenant, but I have purchased the farm with an intention of offering it to Mr. Lewellin, if he should feel disposed to become a farmer."

"I beg pardon, Sir; I hope no offence. I wouldn't have said a word, if I had known that. Howsomever, I shall be glad to have him for a neighbour; and anything I can do to sarve him, I shall have a power of pleasure in doing."

"Thank you, Farmer. He will need instruction beyond what I can give him; and I had resolved to call on you for a little advice."

"That, Sir, I will give at any time, with a power of pleasure."

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"It is pretty good land, I believe, Farmer?"

"The land, Sir, has a good heart in itself; but it has been desperately run out. It will take a power of trouble and expense to bring it into a good working condition, and no mistake. Mr. Denham was a bad landlord. He never would make no improvements, nor help his tenant to make any. And I always find a bad landlord makes a bad tenant."

"I am very glad, Farmer, that you have called, and have referred to your son Harry; and I will now tell you what has been running in my mind. I know the farm has been mismanaged, and that it will require, as you say, much trouble and expense to bring it into a good working condition; now, could you not spare your son Harry for a year or two, to act as bailiff to Mr. Lewellin; and thus he will be doing something for himself, which you know won't prevent him from taking a farm, when you have an opportunity of doing so?"

"It shall be, Sir, as you say."

"Well, then, you and your son had better call in the course of a few days, and we will settle the terms of agreement."

"With a power of satisfaction. This will mainly please my mistress, and Harry too, and no mistake."

Farmer Pickford then took his leave, and Mr. Roscoe proceeded to Fairmount to acquaint the family with the projects he had in view, in which they all gladly acquiesced. "Indeed, George," said Mrs. Stevens, addressing herself to Mr. Lewellin, "I think you will sustain no loss by exchanging the smoke of London for the salubrious air of Rockhill, and may part with your prospects of civic honours without regret, to be enrolled on the list of country gentlemen. Though you may not at first be so expert in farming as in mercantile transactions, yet in process of time your rural occupations will be no less interesting, if not quite so profitable."

"The exchange, Aunt, will be made without regret, especially when made in accordance with the wishes of my friends."

"We all wish it," said Mrs. Roscoe, who had accompanied her husband to Fairmount; "and it quite reconciles me to the idea of parting with my dear Sophia."

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In the course of a few months Mr. Lewellin disposed of his business in London; the house at Rockhill underwent a thorough repair, and was neatly furnished, Harry Pickford was duly installed into his office, the farm stocked with the usual variety of live cattle, and the day for the celebration of the nuptial ceremony fixed. At length the wedding morning dawned, when the sun shone without a cloud, a circumstance which Sophia's good old nurse hailed as a happy omen of her future happiness. Every one was astir at an early hour. The friends invited to the wedding arrived, and the bride, with her father and mother and the rest of her party, drove off to the rectory, where they found Mr. Lewellin and Mr. and Mrs. Stevens and their friends waiting to receive them. "I am happy," said the venerable Rector, "that I have lived to see this day; and more happy that Divine Providence has conferred on me the office of uniting you in the bands of matrimony."

He then knelt down and prayed with them, and as he prayed warm tears were shed, but they were not tears of sorrow. Prayer being ended, they at once proceeded to the church. The good old Rector, dressed in the habiliments of his office, walked first, followed by the bride leaning on her father's arm and the rest of the marriage party. On entering the church they passed direct to the altar, where the ceremony was performed by Mr. Ingleby with great solemnity, in presence of a larger concourse of people than had been remembered in the village on such an occasion for many years. As soon as it was finished, the married pair proceeded to the vestry to attach their signatures to the register of their marriage, when Mr. Ingleby thus addressed them:—"I hope you will enjoy the excursion you are about to take; that a kind Providence will watch over you, to preserve you from all evil; and that you will return to us in health and peace. Accept this small packet as a token of the interest I feel in your happiness, and possibly you may retain it as a relic of friendship long after I have left you for a better world." He then placed it in the hands of Mrs. Lewellin, saying, "You may open and examine it at your leisure." On re-entering the church, they were both unexpectedly greeted by the village choir, who sung in sweetest melody the 128th Psalm, from Sternhold and Hopkin's version—

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"Blessed art thou that fearest God,  
And walkest in his way;  
For of thy labour thou shalt eat,  
Happy art thou, I say.

"Like the fruitful vines on thy house side,  
So doth thy wife spring out;  
Thy children stand like olive plants,  
Thy table round about.

"Thus art thou blest that fearest God,  
And he shall let thee see  
The promised Jerusalem,  
And her felicity.

"Thou shalt thy children's children see,  
To thy great joy's increase;  
And likewise grace on Israel,  
Prosperity and peace."



M. S. MORGAN      T. BOLTON  
**THE BRIDAL PARTY WELCOMED BY THE VILLAGERS.**

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The bridal party on coming out of the church were received with acclamations by the assembled rustics, who, all attired in their holiday clothes, thronged the churchyard, and pressed forward to wish the new married couple a long and a happy life. Nothing could more unequivocally testify to the universal popularity with which Mr. and Mrs. Lewellin were regarded among the villagers. The bells in the old tower rung forth their merriest peals, while the village children, with their little baskets, strewed the path with flowers. On reaching the churchyard gate, the wedding party stepped into the carriages which were waiting for them, and drove off to Mr. Roscoe's mansion. There the young couple proceeded to dress for their journey; and having partaken of some refreshment, left for the usual tour. The wedding party were entertained at dinner, by Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe, in celebration of the joyous occasion: while the company was cheerful and lively, there was no appearance of that levity which too often attends the celebration of the nuptial vow, even amongst the decidedly pious. "There are some of the customs of the world," said the venerable Rector, "which a Christian may follow without in the least compromising his character; I shall therefore offer no apology for giving the following toast—'MR. AND MRS. LEWELLIN, AND MAY THEY LIVE LONG ON EARTH, AND FINISH THEIR COURSE WITH JOY.'" This toast was duly honoured by the whole party, who soon afterwards retired to the drawing-room, where the remainder of the day was spent in innocent festivity and social intercourse. A sumptuous rustic feast was likewise spread on the lawn for the villagers, who were thus furnished with the means of participating with their superiors in the general rejoicings of the day.

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We now return to the wedded couple. "I wonder," said Mrs. Lewellin, as they rode along in the post-chaise, "what this packet contains: I must open it, and have my curiosity gratified. Ah!" said she, on discovering its contents, "it is just like Mr. Ingleby, he is always so kind and considerate. Here is his pastoral advice to us, who have just returned from the altar." She then proceeded to read to her husband as follows:—

"I am happy, my dear young friends, that, in the union which has taken place this day, there has been no sacrifice of Christian principle—no violation of filial duty, and that it has been consummated under the most auspicious circumstances. You are both, my young friends, fellow-heirs of the grace of life; so that you have each obeyed the Divine injunction by marrying in the Lord. Here are your parents and your guardians offering you their congratulations, while Providence is opening before you a scene of prosperity, which, I trust, you will ever continue to enjoy. But you will not find this world a paradise; nor will you be allowed to pass through it without meeting with trials. It is not my wish, certainly, on this joyful occasion, to darken your prospects with the shades of threatening evil, but permit me, an old man on the brink of the grave, to address a few words to you, which may be of service after I have gone to rest with my

fathers.

"Ever remember that you are both imperfect Christians, which will keep you from forming extravagant expectations, and guard you against the depressing influence of those momentary disappointments which you may feel. It is generally admitted, by the most competent judges, that temper is the hinge on which the happiness of domestic life turns; and if you can contrive to keep this always in a good condition, you will never be disturbed by the gratings of discontent, or the harsher sounds of anger or of discord. You are, I believe, both amiable, and have, during a long courtship, preserved the equilibrium of your temper—

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'Ne'er roughen'd by those cataracts and breaks,  
Which humour, interposed, too often makes;'

yet you have now entered on a course in which you will find the correctness of the poet's remark exemplified—

The kindest and the happiest pair,  
Will find occasion to forbear;  
And something, every day they live,  
To pity, and perhaps forgive.'

"I have known some who have been very fond of each other before marriage, and for some time after it, but their affection has gradually dwindled into indifference, even while they have been unconscious of any change. This is an evil against which I wish you to be on your guard. You may now suppose that such an event cannot occur; but what *has* befallen others *may* befall you. Pure love is a delicate plant, which suffers by neglect; and though you may imagine that by virtue of its inherent strength, it will perpetually yield the fragrance and the fruit of conjugal felicity, yet it will not do so without the most assiduous care. Endeavour, then, ever to exercise towards each other an amiable and forbearing temper, which will make you appear no less lovely in each other's estimation when the gray hairs of age come upon you, than when in the full bloom of youthful vigour.

'The love that cheers life's latest stage,  
Proof against sickness and old age,  
Preserved by virtue from declension,  
Becomes not weary of attention:  
But lives, when that exterior grace  
Which first inspired the flame, decays.  
'Tis gentle, delicate, and kind,  
To faults compassionate and blind;  
And will with sympathy endure  
Those evils it would gladly cure.'

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"But if pure affection may be regarded as the foundation on which domestic happiness rests, it is the province of good sense to raise the superstructure—to decorate and embellish it—to secure its internal harmony, and to cast up those mounds and bulwarks which will protect it from external annoyance and danger. I do not know that I can define this expression better than by calling it, that sense of propriety which is suited to the situation in which the member of a family is placed. Good sense will teach you to keep your proper station in your family; when to see and when not to see the faults and the excellencies of others; when and how to administer reproof, or to give commendation; and how to uphold your authority without the appearance of severity. It will also induce you to pay great attention to the little things of domestic life, which exercise so material an influence in promoting its happiness.

"As *your* manners will have a material influence over all the subordinate members of your household, the exercise of your good sense will teach you the importance of keeping your proper station, lest you should, by an act of encroachment, give excitement to any evil tempers or dispositions, which the occasion may appear to justify. I am aware of the extreme difficulty of marking out the exact boundary within which you ought to keep in the exercise of your authority, or in your habit of personal inspection; but as an improper interference with the opinions or the prescribed duties of others very rarely fails to give offence, even when no offence is intended, good sense will keep you on your guard against rousing unnecessarily irritable feelings. I do not wish you to suffer your servants to govern you, nor do I wish you to stand in awe of them, as I am convinced, from long observation, that the sceptre of authority should be held by the heads of a family; but as your comfort will depend very materially on those by whom you are served, I would advise you to study their temper and their disposition, and so to shape your commands as to secure obedience without a murmur, and bring about reform without opposition. Remember that your servants are not slaves, to be governed by authority without reason—that they are not stoics, to be treated as though they had no feeling; but are your equals in relation to God, though your inferiors in relation to civil society—who have as strong a claim on your generosity, as you have on their fidelity, and who will in general reward your kindness and sympathy by their affection and grateful obedience.

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"If there be one sight more lovely than another in the present world, that sight is a happy family, whose different members live together in love and in peace, bearing each other's burdens, anticipating each other's wants, and endeavouring, by the thousand nameless expressions of kindness which they may show to each other, to secure and augment each other's felicity.



"As you are both disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will, I have no doubt, erect an altar of devotion in your habitation; but you must guard against the supposition, that all the duties of family religion are discharged when you have presented the morning and evening sacrifice. You may have servants to instruct who are ignorant of the nature and design of the gospel of peace, or whose positive aversion to every form of religion renders remonstrance or persuasion necessary. Though you may imagine that the instruction of the pulpit will prove the means of removing their prejudices, and imparting to them clear perceptions of the truth as it is in Jesus, yet I would advise you not to trust entirely to it. A little private conversation with them, when a favourable opportunity occurs, or a few familiar remarks made before or after reading a portion of the Scriptures, when you are collected together for the purpose of family prayer, may have a powerful effect on their minds, and lead them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. And if you should be instrumental in bringing any of them to repentance, and to the knowledge of the truth, you will have an ample compensation for your anxiety and labour, in the more ardent attachment which they will feel for you, and the greater fidelity with which they will serve you.

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"I have more than once heard it remarked, that social intimacy very often proves injurious to that intimate Christian fellowship, on which the growth, if not the vitality of personal religion very materially depends. Hence, husbands and wives, parents and children, frequently converse more freely on the experimental influence of religion with distant associates or comparative strangers than with each other. But this ought not to be. They who are animated by the like precious faith, and who have to encounter the same spiritual difficulties, ought not to suffer the closeness of their union to operate as a reason why they should hold no spiritual communion with each other. Let me then entreat you, now you are just on the eve of forming your domestic habits, to avoid this evil, into which too many fall; and by the most unreserved mental communications, become helpers of each other's faith and hope.

'If pains afflict, or wrongs oppress,  
If cares distract, or fears dismay,  
If guilt deject, or sin distress,'

do not lock up your grief as a profound secret, which a false delicacy may wish you to conceal from one another; but rather disclose it without reserve, and you will meet in your reciprocal sympathy a relief from your burden of sorrow. And that you may cultivate this intimate religious fellowship, allow me to suggest to you the adoption of a habit, which I think eminently conducive to your spiritual prosperity. Always retire, during some part of the day or the evening, to pray *with each other*, and for each other; and you will find that the line of the poet records a fact, which your own experience will soon attest to be true, that prayer

'Brings ev'ry blessing from above.'

It enriches the mind with the treasures of spiritual wisdom, while it imparts a sweetness to the disposition, and an amiability to the temper, which cares and anxieties will not impair.

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"And though, my young friends, I cannot cheer you with the hope of being able to pass through life without coming into contact with its temptations, its disappointments, and its bereavements, yet He in whom you trust, and to whom you have both devoted yourselves in the spring-time of your life, will never leave you nor forsake you, but will be a very present help in every time of trouble. If you are spared till the time of old age, I trust you will be 'like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.' And if you should be removed in early life, you will be transplanted to that celestial paradise, where you will flourish in undecaying strength and glory for ever. It is but a little while that I shall live on earth as a spectator of your bliss; but if spirits are allowed in their disembodied state to visit, though unseen, the abodes of mortals, I shall often be with you, 'joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.'"

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## AN OLD FRIENDSHIP REVIVED.



fter a delightful tour through the west of England, and part of South Wales, Mr. and Mrs. Lewellin arrived at Malvern, where they intended to remain for some time previous to returning home. On the Saturday after their arrival, in ascending the hill behind the town, they passed two ladies, when Mrs. Lewellin said, "I think I know the tallest; she appears to be an invalid, and, to judge from her fixed look, I should infer that she had a faint recognition of myself."

They turned back to pass them again, if possible, but they lost sight of them in the little crowd of fashionables enjoying their morning promenade. As they were sauntering along on their return to their hotel, they passed what appeared to be a small place of worship, and on making inquiries, they found it was a Dissenting chapel.

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"We ought," Mr. Lewellin remarked, "to be devoutly thankful to Divine Providence for raising up so many of these unobtrusive little sanctuaries—they are the retreats of the gospel, when it is driven out from the Established Church, as is too often the case."

"To me," replied his wife, "any place is a Bethel, if its walls echo to the name of Jesus."

The next day was the Sabbath. They were seated near the door of the chapel, when they saw the two ladies enter whom they had observed on the preceding day; but as they passed on to occupy a pew near to the pulpit, they could not get a sight of the face of either of them. The service was conducted as usual with extreme simplicity—singing, without the aid of any instrumental music, and extemporary prayer, free, however, from monotony or tautology. The sermon was short and impressive, setting forth the grand truths of revelation in a simple, earnest manner, and enforcing them in tones of mild, persuasive, yet commanding eloquence. The text would be considered by many a very commonplace one, yet it is one which embodies the whole theory of Divine truth—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). When the two stranger ladies were walking up the passage, after the close of the service, Mrs. Lewellin contrived to be standing with her pew door partly open, but drew it back as they were in the act of passing. The eye of the invalid lady caught hers; she paused, and exclaimed with emotion—"And is it you, my dear Miss Roscoe?"

"Not Miss Roscoe *now*," replied Mrs. Lewellin, waving her hand towards her husband; "I have exchanged it for Lewellin. And is it you, my dear Miss Rawlins?"

"Yes, still Miss Rawlins, your old friend. How marvellous that we, who were once two such giddy girls, should meet after so great a lapse of time in a Dissenting chapel!"

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"The God of grace often works wonders."

"Always when he saves sinners."

"And does my dear Miss Rawlins feel herself to be a sinner?"

"Yes, and one of the chief. Some others may be more vile, but no one can be more worthless."

"Is this an illusion, or a reality? Am I in some fairy land?"

"I do not wonder at your exclamation. It is more like romance than reality."

They walked away from the chapel together, and when parting, Mrs. Lewellin said, "If you are at the chapel in the evening we will sit in the same pew."

"O yes, my dear; we greatly prefer the chapel to the church. *There* we have the pomp of religion; *here* its beautiful simplicity. At *church* we hear the Church itself and its ceremonial rites held up to us from day to day; *here* the Saviour himself is placed before us as the Alpha and Omega of the service. We are more partial to the substance of the truth, than to shadowy forms."

In the evening a minister officiated, who was on a visit to Malvern for the improvement of his health. He was a fine looking man, though much emaciated, and preached as one whose eye was turned away from the vanities of time, contemplating steadfastly the glories of eternity. His text was strikingly appropriate to his own condition and to ours:—"The fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. vii. 31).

"The context to this passage," said the minister, "tells us, my brethren, what experience confirms—that our abode on earth is short. St. Paul, therefore, exhorts us, and we will do well to attend to his exhortations, to guard against too fond an attachment to any relation or possession in life. You who weep, and you who rejoice, should moderate the intensity of your emotions; as you will soon be far removed from the influence of the causes which produce those feelings, and the possessions which you now hold on the most secure tenure will soon be claimed by others. Set not, therefore, your heart on this world, which you must so soon leave. Its appearance is attractive, like the shifting scenes of a theatre, or a gaudy pageant in a public procession; but it will soon vanish from your sight, to amuse and beguile others in like manner. There is another world—more splendid, more glorious, and more durable—towards that you should turn your attention, and seek with the most intense ardour of soul to be prepared to enter it. Otherwise, when you depart from this world—and you may very soon depart—you will go into outer darkness, and be lost for ever."

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"I hope, my dear Mrs. Lewellin," said Miss Rawlins, on the following morning, when they were promenading by themselves in a retired walk, "you will forgive me for not replying to the last letter I received from you. Indeed, I have often reproached myself for not doing it. It has been the occasion of bitter grief, and some tears, especially of late."

"I can very easily forgive you, dear Miss Rawlins; but will you permit me to ask you why you did not reply?"

"It was, at that period of my life, absolutely unintelligible. I concluded you were become a mystic; and I foolishly imagined you were contemplating taking the veil, and that I should soon hear you had entered a convent. You will not be surprised at this when you advert to the foolish letter I wrote to you about religion."<sup>[33]</sup>

"If agreeable to you," said Mrs. Lewellin, "I should like to hear by what means you were brought to see and to feel your real character and condition in relation to God and the eternal world."

"My history is a very singular one—abounding with incidents that illustrate the workings of the special providence of God. You know, my dear, in what a gay circle I moved. The concert, the drama, the ball-room, card-parties, and novels absorbed my whole soul. I lived in a perpetual whirl of excitement and gaiety. But I was not happy, and often felt disgusted with my own frivolous pursuits. At length, I had a severe and dangerous illness, brought on by imprudently exposing myself to the cold damp air, in returning from a ball. For some weeks my life was

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despaired of, and these were weeks of terror. I was brought to the verge of the dark world, and felt appalled at the thought of entering it. I was rebellious, too, and murmured against God for depriving me of life at such an early period."

"It was by a cold, caught at a ball, that your old friend, Miss Denham, lost her life."<sup>[34]</sup>

"Yes; I recollect you alluded to her death in a letter I received from you. Were you intimate with her?"

"I was with her when she died."

"Indeed! I know she was a gay devotee to the world; and, therefore, it may be painful to hear how she died. What myriads are offered as victims to the Moloch of fashion!"

"No, my dear, not painful. Her head was reclining on the bosom of a pious friend, who was present with me at the interview; and her last words were—'I am dying, but not without hope of attaining eternal life, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.'"

"How thankful I am to hear that. It is like the rescue of a friend from shipwreck. But to resume my story. I was gradually restored to health, and re-entered the gay world, amidst the warm congratulations of my friends. At the close of the season we came to Malvern to spend a few months. Here the mystic roll of Providence began to unfold itself. One day, when rambling by myself over the common, I saw a neat little cottage, which I entered. It was occupied by an old woman, who sat reading her Bible. I apologized for my act of intrusion; when she requested me to take a seat.

"I hope,' she added, looking at me benignantly as she spoke, 'you love your Bible. It tells us about Jesus Christ; about his love for poor sinners; and about his dying for them, to save them from perishing; and it tells us that if we come to him He will never forsake us. There is no book like God's Book.'

"I felt confused, and soon left her; but her words followed me. They were perpetually sounding in my ears; and yet I could not draw out of them any intelligible meaning. A few days after this I met an old school-fellow, looking very ill; and having promised to call on her, I did so the following week. I found her confined to her bed, and evidently with but a short time to live. She said to me, when taking leave of her, 'You see, my dear Miss Rawlins, that I am now going into another world: and I go in peace, because I look by faith to Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners. He has assured me, in the Bible, that if I come to him, and trust in him, He will save me. You have been near death, but your life is spared; let me entreat you to leave the gay and thoughtless crowd, and come by faith to Jesus Christ to save you, and to make you happy.'

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"These last words made a deep impression on my heart, and gave rise to some painful reflections. Must I then, I said to myself, withdraw from the gay world to be happy? Can Jesus Christ make me happy? How is this possible, when he is dead, and gone to heaven? These references to Jesus Christ reminded me of your letter, which, as it happened still to be in my writing desk, I again perused. I was struck with the harmony of sentiment and testimony between your letter, the observations of the old woman, and the appeal of my dying friend; and I felt its influence, even though it appeared to me, in a great measure, unintelligible."

"It is said of Samson," remarked Mrs. Lewellin, "that the Spirit of the Lord moved him at times; that is, he was occasionally acted on by an unusual impulse. And something analogous to this may be traced in our moral history; the recurrence of impressions and emotions, of a singular character, proceeding from some unknown cause. The Lord the Spirit is at work in the heart, but his operations are veiled in darkness; happily, the time for explanation comes at last."

"It has been so, my dear Mrs. Lewellin, in my experience. Singular events have been employed to produce those singular emotions; but at the time, I could trace them to no perceptible cause, nor did I ever suppose they would lead to any important issue. But the mystery is now graciously explained. Soon after our return home, another incident occurred, which exercised a material influence on my mind. We went to dine with an old friend of my father's, who lived about ten miles from town, and intended to return in the evening, but such a violent storm came on, that we were glad to accept our friend's invitation to remain for the night. At nine o'clock the parlour bell was rung, and in a few minutes the servants entered, and our own coachman with them, when a large Bible was placed near a clergyman, one of the party. He read the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, and offered up a very solemn and impressive prayer. This was quite novel; I had never before been present at such a service. I was again brought into contact with the great facts of revelation; and when on my knees before God in prayer, I became still more restless in my mind. I felt a strong inclination to go again to scenes of gaiety, to dispel the strange thoughts, and still stranger forebodings, which haunted me; and yet I recoiled from doing so, under an instinctive apprehension that they would make me still more restless and unhappy. I felt, at times, so miserable, that I took no interest in life. At this crisis, another incident occurred, trivial in itself, and apparently casual, but it was one of those agencies which were working together for my good. Our coachman brought with him, from the pious family which we had been visiting, some religious tracts; and on passing through the kitchen I saw one on the dresser; it was *Poor Joseph*.<sup>[35]</sup> I took it and read it. It delighted me from its singularity. I involuntarily exclaimed, when I had finished reading it, 'What a contrast between this poor half-witted man and myself! he is in ecstasy when referring to Jesus Christ coming into the world to save sinners, but I can only refer to this great fact with apathy and indifference. How is this?' It appeared strange, and was a heavy burden on my heart."

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"Our Lord says, 'They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick' (Matt. ix. 12).

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A man in health looks with indifference on the physician; but not so the dying patient. It is a deep sense of personal guilt, and a vivid apprehension of positive danger, that fits a sinner to form a correct estimate of the need and value of a Saviour. When such a discovery is made and felt, then it is hailed with rapture, and mental repose is enjoyed as the consequence of trusting on the Saviour for pardon and salvation."

"I now perceive and feel this; but it would still have been hidden from me, had it not been for another circumstance. I had one gay friend to whom I was much attached; indeed, with the exception of my parents, she was the only person I really loved. She completely ruled me, though one of the most gentle creatures I ever knew. I was never so happy as when in her company. She was as fond of the gay world as myself. On one occasion we had both accepted an invitation to a grand ball given by Sir John Markham, but in the morning I received a note from my friend requesting me not to expect to meet her there; adding, 'I withdraw from the gay world, and for ever. It is a vain show, which promises happiness, but yields none. Don't be alarmed; I will explain when I see you.' This note took me by surprise; but I was more pleased than distressed. I refrained from going to the ball, and went to see my friend. She then informed me that her attention had recently been turned to her Bible, by a sermon she heard preached by the Rev. James Harrington Evans, and she had resolved to seek lasting happiness by yielding herself to God, through the redemption of Christ Jesus the Lord. Her conversation, though somewhat unintelligible to me, was in perfect harmony with the sentiments I had previously heard others express. I now readily complied with her earnest solicitation to accompany her, on the following Sunday morning, to hear the same eloquent preacher. We went together. His text was, 'For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father' (Eph. ii. 18). When he was explaining to us the nature of access to the Father, and showing us why and how we ought to come to Him, the veil was removed, and the light of life shone with clear radiance into my heart. I felt subdued, captivated; and, for the first time of my life, I could say, 'Now I know where true happiness is to be found.' *Now* I could understand your letter. I followed, then, without hesitation, my friend's example, in withdrawing from the gay world."

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"I suppose," here remarked Mrs. Lewellin, "the secession of two such gay devotees from the circle of fashion, occasioned some little tumult?"

"O, yes, we had a few calls from some of the more inquisitive, who live on excitement; but we were both inflexible, and now we are subjected to no annoyance."

"What did your parents say?"

"I think they were more pleased than otherwise, especially my dear mother, whose health had been rapidly declining for some months. Very soon afterwards she was confined to her room; and God honoured me to be the instrument in directing her to the Lamb of God, who gave his life a ransom for many. She passed through a severe ordeal of mental suffering during her long illness; but when descending into the dark valley, she saw, by faith, Jesus coming to receive her; and she died in peace."

"These varied conflicts, my dear Miss Rawlins, in which you have been engaged, must have proved a severe trial to you."

"They have rather seriously affected my health, which has given way, and occasioned our present visit to Malvern."

"I congratulate you on your rescue from the allurements of a vain and giddy world. Now that you are made alive from the dead, you must yield yourself to God, to fear, and love, and glorify him, and show forth his praise."

"As I have now, my dear Mrs. Lewellin, unbosomed to you the secrets of my heart, I shall feel more at ease. But, O! where can I find words adequate to express my grateful feelings to my adorable Saviour, for the marvellous manifestations of his sovereign compassion and love to my dear mother, my beloved friend, and myself!"

The next day Mrs. Lewellin went with Miss Rawlins, to see the old woman who lived in the cottage on the common. On entering, they found her in her arm chair, with her Bible open before her, so intent on what she was reading, that she did not appear to notice them, till she was spoken to.

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"Sit down, ladies; I am glad to see you."

"At your old employment, I see," said Miss Rawlins.

"Why, Miss, I don't know that I can be at a better. It is proper that a child should read his father's epistles of love, and that a servant should study to know what his master requires him to do and suffer."

"Do you ever feel weary of reading the parts of the Bible you have read before?"

"It is, Miss, with God's Word, as it is with God's world. We enjoy a serene evening and the beauties and melodies of the spring, as much this year, as we did in any gone-by year of our life. I was just thinking, before you ladies came in, that I could say nearly off at heart the third chapter of John's Gospel; and yet I could read it again, with as much pleasure and profit, if not more, than I did the first time I read it. There is such a wonderful depth, and such a rich fulness and living power in God's Word."

"What book," inquired Mrs. Lewellin, "do you like next to the Bible?"

"O, dear, Ma'am, I have long done with all other books. I used to like good John Bunyan's

*Pilgrim*, and I have read it through many times; but now I care about no book but my Bible. I sometimes think I should like to take the Bible with me to heaven, as then I should be able to have some dark sayings explained, which I can't understand now."

"You have no doubts, I suppose, about the certainty of your salvation?"

"No, Ma'am; not *now*. Some time since, I was greatly distressed with doubts and fears, but now all my anxieties are at rest. I stand with my staff in my hand, waiting to hear my Father call me home. He will call soon."

"How simple, and how dignified," said Mrs. Lewellin, as they were leaving the cottage, "are the anticipations of an old disciple, when approaching the entrance to the heavenly kingdom!" [472]

"And what a contrast," replied Miss Rawlins, "to the devotees of fashion! They will amuse themselves at the card-table, till their hands become too enfeebled to play; and even on a death-bed will listen with deep interest to descriptions of operas and plays, a new singer, or a new actor; inquire with eager curiosity who wore the most splendid dress at the ball—what new marriage is now on the *tapis*—in short, will listen to anything, however trifling, to keep off the thought of dying."

"Yes," said Mrs. Lewellin; "and when, for form's sake, the officiating priest is sent for, and he has gone through the prescribed ceremonies—has read the absolution and given the sacrament, and they have thus made their peace with God—they still live on, as long as they can live, amidst the gay scenes of former times now gone from them for ever. But to that one great event in their moral history, which is so certain, and so near at hand, all references or allusions are imperatively forbidden, as though its entire oblivion could prevent its actual occurrence. O, it is painful to think of the terrific surprise and overwhelming horror which will seize on their spirits, when they pass into the eternal world!"

"Yes, my dear; and if *our* preparations for death, and if our reminiscences and anticipations when dying, should bear, as I trust they will, a nearer resemblance to the dignified deportment, and the sweet serenity of the old woman on the common, than to the criminal frivolity of these self-doomed devotees of fashionable life, we must, in imitation of the devout Psalmist, and with tears of joyous gratitude, ever say—'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake'—(Psalm cxv. 1.)"

On their return from this visit, Mrs. Lewellin said, with some embarrassment of manner, "We have now, my dear Miss Rawlins, been at Malvern longer than we contemplated. We leave tomorrow, but I hope that we may again meet somewhere on earth, to renew the sweet and hallowed intercourse we have so much enjoyed here." [473]

"I am thankful that you kept the secret of your departure to the last moment. An earlier intimation of the exact time would have had on my heart a very depressing effect. Our conversations at Malvern will ever be held by me in pleasing remembrance, and I shall long for an opportunity to renew them. Good night. We will have no formal parting. It will be too painful."

As Mr. and Mrs. Lewellin had exceeded the time which they had originally contemplated spending on their tour, they now proceeded homewards to Rockhill, where they found Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe, and a few other friends, waiting to welcome them to their new home. The meeting was a delightful one, nothing having occurred to either party, during their absence, to occasion annoyance or perplexity.

A few months after their return, Mrs. Lewellin received the following letter from Miss Rawlins:

"DEAR MRS. LEWELLIN,—It will give you, I have no doubt, some pleasure to hear that I am again in my father's house, and in the enjoyment of perfect health and vigour. And you will, I doubt not, unite with me in humble adoration and gratitude to the God of all grace, not only for the grace bestowed on me—one of the most worthless of the unworthy—but for his marvellous loving-kindness to my dear father, who is so much delighted, and so deeply moved by the preaching of the Rev. J. H. Evans, that he attends his chapel with me regularly every Sabbath. Though there is no decisive evidence that he is become a new creature in Christ Jesus, yet I hope he is entering the narrow way that leads to life. He spends much of his time in reading his Bible and Doddridge's *Exposition*, and is very earnest in his inquiries about coming to Christ to be saved. Truly the God of grace often works wonders. My endeared friend, Miss Forrester, whom you saw with me at Malvern, is now, and is likely to continue to be for some time, an inmate in our family. We were one in spirit when we were living and moving amidst the frivolous and ensnaring gaieties of life; and we are still one in spirit now we are both united to the Lord; but it is a spirit of a purer nature, and one that death cannot destroy.

"I often think of our unlooked-for meeting at Malvern, and the pleasant hours of Christian intercourse we spent together when there. I hope both you and Mr. Lewellin have been enjoying good health since your return home. I need not say how glad I shall be to hear from you. Write soon, and believe me, ever yours,

"LETITIA."

## THE WANDERER'S RETURN.



Some months having now elapsed since Mr. Lewellin's marriage, I set off to pay my long promised visit to my esteemed friend and his lady. I was accompanied by Mrs. Orme, who joined me in London from the Elms, and after a pleasant journey we arrived safely at Rockhill. It was promptly decided that the first half of my time should be spent with them, and the other at Fairmount, with Mr. and Mrs. Stevens. The day after my arrival, I took a stroll round the farm with Mr. Lewellin, and I was much gratified by its general appearance. I did not see his bailiff, Harry Pickford, as he was gone to Weyhill fair, to purchase a few South-down sheep; but I had great pleasure in hearing that his master had every reason to be satisfied with him, and that great confidence was placed in his judgment and activity. "He is," Mrs. Lewellin facetiously remarked, "an able professor in the science of agriculture; and I think, Sir, if you examine Mr. Lewellin, you will pronounce him an apt scholar. He has made much rapid progress in his studies during the session;—he may possibly take a degree."

On the Sabbath it was arranged, while we were at breakfast, that Mrs. Orme should ride to church with our kind host and hostess; but I preferred walking, as I wished to take the same route I had taken some years before, and ascertain, if possible, what practical effect had resulted from my casual advice to Robert Curliffe, whom, on a previous occasion, I had found working in his garden,<sup>[36]</sup> with his two sons. It was a fine autumn morning, without a cloud; the air was genial and invigorating, and the stillness of the solitary lane along which I was passing formed an agreeable contrast to the noise and bustle of the thronged streets of my town residence. Robert's cottage still stood where I first saw it, but its appearance was greatly improved, and his garden was in a higher state of cultivation. These were auspicious signs, and formed, as will shortly be seen, fresh illustrations of an oft-repeated remark, that the work of grace in the heart contributes to the promoting of temporal as well as spiritual comfort. On entering his cottage, I found him dressed in his Sunday clothes, with his Bible beside him on the table, and in his hand Fuller's *Gospel its own Witness*. He expressed great joy at seeing me; and his wife, offering me a chair, said, "You will see a change here, Sir, since your first visit; the grace of God is a wonder-working power."

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"And I suppose you are both happier than when you preferred working in the garden on the Sabbath to going to church?"

"Yes, Sir," said Robert, "we are; and we are better off in worldly matters. Our home is a quieter home. Our lads are more orderly in their manners, and both go to Mr. Ingleby's Sunday-school. We are a reformed family."

"I shouldn't like," said Robert's wife, "for things to go back into their old state; it would be like a good garden going back to a common waste."

"You have now something of more importance to think about and talk about, than about planting and weeding your garden."

"Yes, Sir, the wonderful facts of the Bible; especially God's unspeakable gift of a Saviour who is able and willing to save us."

"What the Lord has done for us in our souls, since you had the first talk with our Robert, has given me a wonderful liking to the Bible, and to Mr. Ingleby's preaching. Before that time, if I read a bit of a chapter, I could not make out its meaning; and if I heard a sermon, it made no impression on my heart; it came in at one ear, and went out at t'other. Ah! dear; things are wonderfully changed in us. I shouldn't like them to be changed back again; it would be worse than seeing our garden overrun with thistles and nettles."

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I now pressed on to church. The Curate read the Liturgy with great solemnity and pathos. My Dissenting prejudices subsided as I listened to the solemn words of prayer; and the responses had a soul-inspiring effect. "Yes," I said to myself, "the prayers are simple, sublime, and appropriate; they are such as a sinner should offer up, when kneeling before the Lord; they prepare the heart to unite with the voices of the heavenly kingdom in their chorus of thanksgiving and praise." At length I saw the vestry door open; the venerable Rector walked out, ascended the flight of stairs, and entered his pulpit. After a short extempore prayer, he announced his text—"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke xv. 20).

On my previous visit to Fairmount, I had observed that the infirmities of age were fast creeping upon Mr. Ingleby, and this was now much more manifest, though it could scarcely be wondered at, as the good Rector had considerably advanced beyond the period generally allotted to the life of man, being now upwards of eighty years of age. His voice, however, was still clear and sonorous; and though there was less activity and brilliancy of imagination, yet the same bold and impassioned appeals to the conscience and the heart came from his lips as when I first heard him. He commanded the attention of his audience, and he rewarded it. After describing the old man walking anxiously up and down in the cool of the evening in front of his rural mansion, situated, it might be, in some remote quarter of Palestine, he proceeded to recount his supposed soliloquy, while thinking of his long-lost child:—"Is he still living, or has he been devoured by some wild beast of prey! Is he in affluence, or is he in want! Does he ever think of his home, and of his father, or has he forgotten both! Shall I ever see him again! Shall I ever embrace him again, as I embraced him the morning he left me! Shall I ever hear him address me 'father,' as I

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was once accustomed to hear him call me!' The old man is now just going to retire for the night, when something is seen moving in the distance—it advances—it is a man—a poor forlorn outcast, come to ask for shelter; he shall not be denied; he looks more fixedly—the figure advances, yet it is still a great way off; it is—no, it cannot be; he looks—it is, it is my son! See how the old man runs to embrace the traveller! What a joyous meeting! what a night of gladsome mirth and hallowed devotion! And who, beloved brethren, supplies me with the materials for this dramatic sketch? Jesus Christ. For what purpose? To assure us that our heavenly Father feels more compassion for a relenting sinner than he can feel sorrow for his sins; and that He feels more paternal delight in the exercise of mercy, than a sinner can feel joy by having all his sins forgiven him."

When the sermon was over, I saw Farmer Pickford and his wife standing at the corner of the lane, waiting for my approach.

"I am glad to see you back again. I have looked for this day, many a day, and many a night, since you were preaching in the barn. You look well, Sir. Time makes no change in your appearance."

"I hope, Sir," said Mrs. Pickford, "you will come and see us; we shall be so much pleased."

"We have had, Farmer, a very touching sermon this morning."

"It touched me to the quick, and no mistake. I have shed more tears this morning than I ever shed in any morning since I was born. It made me feel a power of trouble, like."

"And it greatly affected me," said Mrs. Pickford; "it made me think of our long lost George; shall we ever see him again?"

"He, my dear friend, who brought back the prodigal of the gospel, can bring back your dear son." [478]

"I hope he will," replied the Farmer. "I don't care in what condition he comes home, so that he does come back, and I live long enough to receive him. He may come in rags for what I care. I'll give him a capital supper, and a new suit; and we'll have a joyous merry-making, and no mistake. You'll give us another sarmunt in the barn?"

"Yes, do, Sir," urged his wife; "we shall be so pleased, and profited, too. One of our neighbours, Mr. Richards, was so impressed by your discourse on the conversion of Zaccheus, that he is quite a changed character. He was, before he heard it, a very irreligious man; but now he regularly goes to church every Sabbath morning, and to Mr. Stevens' chapel every Sabbath evening. And he comes to our weekly prayer-meeting; and we often have edifying conversation with him."

"Before he heard that sarmunt," said the Farmer, "Richards was just what I was before your first talk to me about my soul—a drunken, swearing sort of chap; but now he keeps as sober as a judge; and his talk is quite heavenly. He gets on in the good things faster than I do; I'm still but a dullish sort of a scollard; worse luck. But after all, I know something about the one thing needful; that's worth knowing. The Lord be praised; and many thanks to you, Sir."

"I hope, Farmer, by this time, that you enjoy a well-grounded assurance, that you are accepted in the Beloved, and feel safe for eternity."

"As for that, Sir, I must speak with great care. I must not be too bold. Howsomever, I don't fear dying, and that's a main good thing; a kind of a triumph, like; the Lord be praised. I love Jesus Christ—that's certain; I love my Bible, and I love the services of God's house more than I used to love the ways of sin, and that is saying a good deal. Will you give us another sarmunt in the barn, Sir?"

"Yes; and I will let you know when I can do it." [479]

I dined in the course of the following week at Mr. Roscoe's, and much enjoyed my visit. It revived a recollection of the discussions of former times, between him and his Tractarian brother, now become an able advocate of the faith he then laboured to destroy. I never saw Mr. Roscoe looking better; his spirits were buoyant, rising at times to youthful cheerfulness. He abounded with anecdotes, both grave and facetious; and was, indeed, the soul of the social circle. We were deeply interested by the narration of an occurrence which happened on the preceding day, and which I will give in his own words:—

"I walked yesterday as far as Brushwood House, on a little matter of business, and on my return home, just as I came to the corner of the coppice, I saw a respectable looking young man sitting on the stump of a tree in the hedgerow. He rose, bowed, and said, 'My name, Sir, is George Pickford, and I am just back from a long roving trip, on board of a merchant ship, and I have been watching a long while for some one to go and tell father and mother that I am back safe and sound. I am afraid to go home till some one has told them that I am here, because, as they don't know whether I am dead or alive, my abrupt appearance may startle them. And if, Sir, you will be so kind as to do this little job for me, I shall feel a power of gratitude. It won't take you far out of the way.' After chatting awhile with him about the places he had visited, I asked him whether he had been successful and taken care of his money, 'Why, Sir,' he replied, 'as I am so near home, I don't mind confessing to you what I have confessed to no man since I came on shore. I have saved upwards of £130; and I have it in a leather bag belted round my body under my shirt. I kept clear of the land sharks in every port we entered. I have for the last four years kept within compass—never gaming on board, and never drinking on shore; but before then I used to do such things.'

"Mrs. Pickford saw me approaching the farm-house. She was all hurry and bustle to get herself,

and her neat little parlour, in order for my reception. I took a chair and talked some time about things in general, and then alluded to the sermon we had heard on Sabbath morning. The tear fell from her eye, as she said to me, 'Sir, it was a most painful sermon; it brought my George so forcibly before my mind.'

"You may possibly,' I remarked, 'see him again.'

"I don't expect it, Sir. He has been gone six years come the 8th of October; and we have not heard from him, or a word about him, since he left us.'

"Be of good cheer; you will see him ere long.'

"Her look was now wild and penetrating; and she exclaimed, 'What, Sir, do you say, and shall I see my George ere long?'

"Be composed,' I added, 'I bring you glad tidings. Your George is back safe and sound; and he has requested me to come and tell you.'

"Back, Sir! safe and sound; and you have seen him; tell me,' rising as she spoke, 'where he is, that I may see him too.'

"I then said, 'If you will sit down, and promise to remain seated for the next quarter of an hour, you shall see him.'

"A hard promise, Sir; but I thank the Lord he has given me an opportunity to make it.'

"I stepped through the fold-yard, hailed George, who was on the watch, and then led him to his mother. I shall not attempt a description of the scene that followed. She sprang into his arms, and he into hers.

"Mother, forgive me.'

"I do, my child.'

"I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, my mother.'

"I forgive all, my dear, dear George; and bless the Lord for giving me this opportunity of telling you so.'

"His younger brother and his sisters, who stood gazing and weeping, all gathered around him, as soon as his mother withdrew her embraces. 'But where is father?' I heard him say, as I retired from this scene of domestic joy and happiness.



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"One thing I must not forget to mention. When it came up in the course of our conversation, at our first interview, that I knew his old master, his robbery of whom occasioned his running away, he put a letter into my hand, and asked me if I would deliver it to him. It contained the amount stolen, with interest, and compound interest up to the present date: with a confession of his crime, and an entreaty for forgiveness."

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We were all deeply affected by this touching tale, particularly Mrs. Lewellin and Mrs. Orme, who said, both speaking at the same time, "We must go and see George and his mother, and congratulate them on their happy meeting."

In the midst of life, we are in death. We had a most unexpected confirmation of this during my stay at Fairmount. Mr. Stevens had engaged to accompany Mr. Roscoe to Norton, on a trifling matter of business; and as they were to start at ten o'clock, Mr. Roscoe rose rather early, took



breakfast with Mrs. Roscoe, conducted family prayer as usual, and then retired into his study. Mr. Stevens came, and as Mr. Roscoe did not make his appearance, Mrs. Roscoe rang the bell, and desired the servant to call him. The servant went to his room, knocked several times, but receiving no answer she opened the door, and saw her master in the attitude of prayer. This circumstance induced her quietly to retire, but on closing the door, she was so much struck with the singular position in which she had seen his head, that she returned towards him, and immediately exclaimed in consternation, "My master is dead!" This exclamation, which was heard by Mr. Stevens, induced him to run up stairs, where he found the servant standing, petrified by terror, near her venerable master, who had, when engaged in the holy exercise of communion with God his Saviour, left the scene of his earthly cares and bliss, to take possession of his heavenly inheritance. His hands were yet warm, and his countenance had undergone no change, but the eyelids and the mouth had fallen—there was no respiration, no motion, for he had ceased to be a citizen of earth. The consternation which this unexpected event occasioned cannot be described. It burst upon the family like a thunder-storm. Mrs. Roscoe hastened into the study. "My husband, my dear husband!" she exclaimed, and was carried fainting into an adjoining room, where she remained for a quarter of an hour in a state of total insensibility, unconscious of her loss, till she saw Mr. Stevens approaching her.

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"And is my husband dead, Sir?"

"Be composed, my dear friend, it is the Lord's doing."

"Yes, Sir, I know it; but it is still a terrible trial. Does Sophia know it? Oh! tell her to come to me immediately."

Mr. Stevens hastened to convey the mournful tidings to Mr. and Mrs. Lewellin. When he rode up the lawn in front of their house he saw them returning from a morning's walk, and after an exchange of a few common-place inquiries, he took Mr. Lewellin aside, and communicated the intelligence. Mrs. Lewellin, on looking through the parlour window saw that Mr. Stevens was the bearer of some news that deeply affected her husband; and feeling apprehensive that it bore some reference to her parents, she immediately rushed out, and asked if all was well.

"Yes, my dear," said her husband, "all is well that the Lord does."

"Yes, I know it; but what has he done?"

"Your father"—

"My father! What! tell me!"

"Your father," said Mr. Stevens, "was taken suddenly ill this morning, and when I left him was not able to speak to me."

"Is he living, Sir? O, tell me! Suspense tortures me! Let me know the full extent of the calamity!"

"Your father is now mingling his praises with the redeemed before the throne!"

"What! and have I lost my father? Is he gone without giving me his blessing? How did he die?"

"We found him dead on his knees in the study."

"On his knees! O, happy saint!"

"His death has indeed been a translation."

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"And how does my dear mother sustain the blow?"

"She wishes to see you immediately."

They hastened to the house of mourning, but on entering the breakfast-parlour in which Mr. Roscoe had only a few hours before partaken of his last meal on earth, Mrs. Lewellin's feelings overcame her. On recovering from this hysteric fit she became more composed, and expressed a desire to see her afflicted mother, and being supported by Mr. Lewellin and Mr. Stevens, she was led into the room where the bereaved widow sat, silent and motionless, in all the solitude and agony of grief. She rose to meet her daughter, and in a moment they were closely locked in each other's embrace, but they were too much overpowered with anguish to utter any words but those of sorrow. They wept aloud, but in their weeping there was the majesty of grief, bending in un murmuring submission to the will of their heavenly Father.

"And is my father dead?"

"Yes, my child, you have lost your father, and I have lost my husband."

Mrs. Lewellin looked round the room, and having fixed her eye on his full-length picture, she approached it, and said, "There he is! yes, there he is! My father! speak, my father! It is thy Sophia that speaks to thee!" She stood silent for a few moments, and then sunk in the arms of her husband. For several hours she continued in a state of high delirium, but became gradually composed, and retired to rest. Next morning she awoke with her feelings less agitated; and though she wept when she saw her mother, yet she spoke of their mutual loss with more tranquillity.

"Though it has pleased God," said the bereaved widow, "to deprive us of the visible presence of one we so ardently loved, we must not abandon ourselves to unavailing grief—we must not sorrow as others that have no hope; but rather bow down our souls in submission to his holy will and say, 'Even so, O righteous Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.'"

"I hope, my dear mother, I can repeat that sentiment; but still I feel that I have lost one of the

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best of fathers that ever called a child his own; and if I should be unable to control my feelings, I hope you will bear with me. Ours is no common loss."

To relieve myself in some measure from the depression which this bereavement had occasioned, I bent my footsteps towards Farmer Pickford's homestead, and there I saw his son George, and had from him a rough outline of his adventures, which I will briefly narrate.

He left the port of London, on board a merchant vessel, in company with Jack Summers, who had seduced him into the ways of iniquity; but poor Jack fell overboard, and was drowned, before he set sail. His first voyage was to Havana; where, one day, he went on shore with the ship's carpenter. They visited the slave-market, where they saw men, women, and children sold like beasts of burden. This sickened them, both of the West Indies and slavery; but he said, "We served them out," for, on stepping into their boat they found, coiled up in the jib-sail, a negro lad, about the age of fifteen, who said, "Me let go wid you." They contrived to get him on board without his being seen; George took off the top of an empty water butt, put the negro in, gave him a bottle of water and some bread and cheese, and told him to lie still till the ship was under weigh. Early the next morning the negro's master came to inquire if there was a black boy on board; and when the captain, who didn't know anything about it, assured him that there was not, he turned back; and soon after the vessel set sail. "We brought him away with us," said George, "and he has been with me ever since, and he is one of the best fellows of the crew for work." This voyage, upon the whole, was a very pleasant one, and he took a strong liking to a seafaring life. His second voyage was to Madeira, and this, also, was a pleasant one, notwithstanding a short though violent storm, which, to quote his own expression, "the little snug vessel outrode in gallant style." His third voyage was to Calcutta; but, on rounding the Cape, they encountered a tremendous hurricane, which lasted several days and nights without intermission; fears were entertained for the safety of the vessel, as she got fearfully strained; and now it was that the captain discovered the superior capabilities of George, for, having been apprenticed to a carpenter, he was able to take the berth of the ship's carpenter, who died some weeks before. On his return to port, the mate was promoted to the captain's berth, who took the command of another ship; and George Pickford took the berth of the mate. His character for sobriety and activity gave much satisfaction to Messrs. B., his employers; and he was a great favourite with the crew. Nothing occurred of any great importance for the next three years, till his last visit to Calcutta, when the ship was detained for upwards of two months; the captain giving him permission to go ashore as often as he pleased. Here he met a young man whom he knew—a native of Broadhurst, but now a resident in Calcutta—a decidedly pious man, who invited him to spend the following Sabbath with him. He did so; and they went together to the chapel in which Mr. James Hill, an English missionary, preached. As he sat directly opposite the pulpit, the eye of the preacher fell directly upon him—at least he thought so; and the text, "Be sure your sin will find you out," (Num. xxxii. 23), brought his sin of dishonesty to his master, undutifulness to his parents, and his uniform forgetfulness of God, and contempt for his authority, with such vividness to his recollection that he hastened on board as rapidly as possible. There, in the quietude of his own berth, he pondered over this new discovery, which was accompanied by a train of novel and poignant emotions. His soul was overwhelmed with grief; but yet it was a grief which gave him more relief than pain. It was pungent, but it did not drive him to despair. Mr. Hill, in the conclusion of his discourse, quoted the words of Jesus Christ—"Whosoever believeth in him should not perish." "I caught hold of that promise," he said, "and I kept hold of it; and I found it a rope strong enough to save me. I believed I should not perish; I tried to pray, but could not get further than the prayer of the publican, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.'" He stated that he longed for the return of Sabbath during the whole of the week; and when it came, though his duties on board required his attention in the morning, yet in the evening he was at liberty, and he again heard the same minister preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God. He felt its great moral power on his heart, reducing the wild tumult of feeling to a peaceful calm, and giving him a good hope, through grace, of pardon and salvation. The next morning the ship weighed anchor, and set sail; and he closed his statement to me as follows:—"I left my home a wild lad, and a criminal; I lived in bold rebellion against God up to the age of twenty-three; I acted a most unkind and undutiful part towards my dear parents, by keeping them in a state of ignorance of my whereabouts. When I went into Mr. Hill's chapel I had no more desire for conversion than I have now to be unconverted; but the Lord had compassion on me, and has saved me: glory be to his holy name. I am a brand plucked from the burning, if ever there was one plucked; now I wish to live to show my gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, for saving me; and to do good to my fellow-sailors. I am glad to say that two of our crew are God-fearing men; and we often meet together for reading the Bible and prayer. I had many precious moments, in prayer to the Lord, on our voyage back; and sometimes felt his presence near me, especially one night in a fearful storm. I knew he had the winds and the waves under his command. I trusted in him, and felt secure.

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On my return to Fairmount, after this interview with George, I met the Farmer, who gave me his usual hearty shake of the hand.

"Have you been to my homestead?"

"Yes, and have seen your son George, and had a long chat with him."

"He is grown a finish sort of a chap. He's more of the gemman than his father, and no mistake. He has seen a main bit of the world, like. How well he talks; and what a power of matter he has to say. He keeps us up rather latish with his stories. Some are funny and make us laugh; and

some are shocking. Man is a bad fellow everywhere till the grace of God touches his heart. Howsomever, George has scraped up a goodish bit of money. Ay, if a man has any luck at sea, he often gets on faster than we do here on land."

"Your son, I rather think, has found something more valuable than gold, or silver, or precious stones."

"The Lord be praised. Yes, he has found the precious pearl of great price. That's a proof to my mind that Jesus Christ is everywhere, or my George would not have found him in Calcutta, which, he says, is thousands of miles off. I suppose he has told you about the sarmunt that made him feel all at once that he was in a new world? He must have been as much surprised, when going out of the chapel as Zaccheus was when he dropped down out of the sycamore tree. What a wonder-working power the grace of God is, and no mistake!"

"You were not at home, I believe, when your son arrived?"

"No, I had been all the morning, along with two of my men, doing a bit of hedging and ditching in one of my lower meadows, t'other side of the hill. And all the while I was working, I was thinking over the sarmunt Mr. Ingleby preached on Sunday morning. It was one of great power; it touched me to the quick, like. And just as I was coming down the hill, to get a bit of dinner, I saw a chap running across the fold-yard into the house. I wondered who it could be. After a bit, he came out, and my mistress with him, and I saw her pointing towards me. I felt all at once a power of strange thoughts rush into me; and I stood still as the chap was running towards me, jumping over hedge and ditch, like a greyhound after a hare. When he got a bit nearer, about five hundred yards off, I thought all at once it was the step and swing of George; and I heard him cry out, 'Father! father!' as loud as he could bawl; but for the life of me I couldn't speak a word more, and I couldn't have been more frightened if I had seen two ghosts. I seemed stuck fast into the ground with my tongue tied; so that I was obliged to leave him to do all the work of hugging, and kissing, and such like. When I got a bit over my fright, I told him I was main glad to see him back; and that I would give him as good a supper as was put on the table the night you gave us the sarmunt in the barn about the conversion of Zaccheus."

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"It must have been a joyous meeting to you."

"I have been thinking two or three times since, that it is almost worth while to lose a youngster for a year or two, for the delight of seeing him come back safe and sound. You should hear him read the Bible and pray. It would do your heart good, Sir. Now, Sir, when will you come and give us the sarmunt in the barn? George shall read out the hymn, and pitch the tune, and then you will have a sample of his cleverness in such matters. Old William, the shepherd, says he'll take the biggest wether-bell he can find, and he'll go round to all the cottages and farm-houses in those parts, and cry notice of it. I must clear out both barns to find room for the people; they'll come as thick as rooks after the plough. The Lord be praised that I should ever live to see such joyous times and such wonderful doings: no sham work; and I must not forget to thank you for the part you have had in them."

"You may expect me next Wednesday week."

"Very well, Sir, I shall expect you on that day."

"But one thing I have to request, and that is, that you don't get such a splendid supper as you did last time."

"I never trouble myself about kitchen matters. I leave that to my wife, whose name is Martha; and you know that the Bible tells us that Martha always has a liking to give a good treatment to our best friends. No, no, I mustn't speak about such a matter; if I do, there will be a rookery in the kitchen."

"Then I must send her a note and make the request myself."

"Well, just as you like, Sir; but I guess it won't matter. Women, you know, don't like to be put out of their way; and I am sure of one thing, that if you give us a good sarmunt, as you are sure to do if you preach, she will give you a good supper, which she is sure to do if she does the cookery. Why, Paul says, if you mind, Sir, that we must give our carnal things to them that give us spiritual things."

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As I was taking my leave of him, he said—"Please, Sir, just stop one minute. It almost got out of my head; but it's back again. Did George tell you what he says to his mother and me? He says he is mate of this ship, which I suppose is a goodish sort of a thing; and he says he thinks he shall be made a captain after he has had another voyage or two, which I suppose is something better; and he says he'll take his brother Sam with him and show him Calcutta and —, I forget what he calls it, but it is where our tea comes from; and he says he'll make him a bonny sailor, which he says is better than ploughing or turnip sowing. But his mother don't like this talk, for she says she shall never sleep at night when the wind gets up and the lightning comes. Well, I would rather keep them both at home, than let either of them go; but George has a desperate liking for the sea: and it seems to be his calling, and we must trust the Lord to take care of them. O dear, how I forget things! My thinkings about George coming back to us and Sam going from us, drives almost everything out of my head. I heard Bob Curliffe say, as I was crossing the lane on the top of the hill, that he heard his master say to Mr. Hyde that Mr. Roscoe is dead, is that true, Sir?"

"Yes; he died suddenly, yesterday morning, when on his knees in prayer."

"That's just how I should like to die, and no mistake. What a wonderful change for a man—all in a moment; from earth to heaven in no time! Mr. Ingleby will give us a grand sarmunt on Sunday

on this subject, or I am no prophet. I shouldn't wonder if he takes the matter of Enoch's getting into heaven without dying. I should like that way of going, but we must leave all to the Lord. After all, I don't care how I go, or who sees me go, so as I get into heaven at last."

The Farmer was right in his predictions. Mr. Ingleby did give us an excellent sermon on the translation of Enoch; and this was followed by an admirable sketch of the character of our deceased friend. But I can do no more than transcribe the subjoined paragraph, which I took down at the time I heard it:—

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"When it pleaseth God to visit our friends with a lengthened indisposition before he removes them, we have the pleasure of administering to them the consolations of religion—of exchanging the expressions of Christian sympathy—and catching from their lips some sublime expressions of anticipated bliss. The sufferings, however, which they generally endure are so keen and so poignant, that in many instances we are thankful when the contest is over. But if death comes in an unexpected hour, and bears off a friend without giving us any warning, we are plunged into the lowest abyss of sorrow, because we are denied the privilege of bidding him adieu: yet as a mitigation of our anguish we have this consolation, that he was not called to *walk* through the dreary valley, being borne as 'on angels' wings' to heaven. In such a case his departure partakes more of a translation than an act of dying; he oversteps the grave, and enters into the possession of his purchased inheritance without having his fears awakened by the solemnity of his removal, or his peace disturbed by the anxieties and distress which it occasions to others. One hour he is with his friends on earth, busily employed in all the duties of his station—the next with his friends in the celestial world, joining with them in their ascriptions of praise to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb. One hour he is mourning here below over the imperfections of his character—the next he feels himself made perfect in purity and in blessedness; and while those who revered and loved him are weeping around his breathless corpse, he is taking his part in the exercises of that sacred temple in which the worshippers serve the Lord day and night for ever."

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At last the long expected Wednesday night came, and Mr. Stevens drove me in his gig to Farmer Pickford's, where I found the barn full of people waiting my arrival. His son George commenced the service by reading a hymn, and he read it very well; he then led off the singing; his brother Harry, a good tenor, standing on his left, and his father, a good bass, on his right. His mother, with two or three younger females, stood behind, and altogether a very effective rustic choir was formed. I selected for my text the 23d verse of the 11th chapter of the Acts—"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

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"This, my dear brethren," I observed, "is very likely the last time I may ever meet you, and address you, in this rustic temple, which is as glorious in the eyes of the Holy One of Israel, as the magnificent temple at Jerusalem, which was his local dwelling-place in ancient times. For here he has condescended to visit you, though unseen, and listen to your prayers and your praises; and here the glorious gospel of his grace has proved his power to your salvation. Yes, when you have finished your course, and the conflict is over, and when you have gained the prize of your high calling, your recollections will hover over this hallowed spot, as the spiritual birth-place of your immortal souls; where you were quickened into newness of life; and where 'after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory' (Eph. i. 13, 14). I solemnly charge every one of you to be faithful unto death, otherwise you will die in your sins, and be lost for ever. And how dreadful would such a loss be!"

The service closed in the usual way, and the congregation dispersed. The Farmer introduced several persons to me, who had received spiritual benefit from the sermon on the conversion of Zaccheus, particularly his neighbour Farmer Richards, of whose conversion he had previously given me some account, and who was invited to sup with us. This meal was as sumptuous as the former one. It was soon over; and then before I rose from the table I thus addressed them:—"Great spiritual changes, my dear friends, have taken place in your family since I took my first meal in this kitchen. You," addressing Mr. P., "were then an unenlightened and an unrenewed man, living without God in the world, without Christ, and without hope; but now, with your dear wife, you have passed from death unto life; have both tasted that the Lord is gracious; are made fellow-heirs of the grace of life; and can rejoice in the hope of your final salvation. Your first-born has long since yielded himself to God, as one alive from the dead; and there sits by your side your long-lost George, unexpectedly restored to you, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus before he came back to receive your parental benediction. And though the younger children are not yet brought within the bonds of the covenant"—(I was here interrupted by the Farmer, who, under an excitement he could not repress, exclaimed, "I think our Sam is, for I saw him on his knees in prayer the other night.")—"I am glad to hear this, and I trust that he, like his two brothers, will yield himself to God, to be renewed, sanctified, and saved; and that his dear sisters will follow their example; and that all of you will be saved, and glorified in the celestial world." "The Lord grant it may be so," said all. At the urgent request of Mrs. Pickford, I read a psalm, and prayed with the family. It was a solemn service—more solemn than any preceding one, because it was the last. Many wept when on their knees, and some wept when they rose up, to give and receive the final farewell. I hastily shook hands with every one in the room, simply saying, as I went out, "Lord bless you, and keep you. I hope we shall meet in heaven." "Amen!" was the response, given with an earnestness and a solemnity that was almost overpowering.

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When the Farmer came to button the apron of our gig, he again took my hand; and he said, as the tear fell from his eye, "The Lord be praised for sending you to taste my ale and cream cheese, and you be thanked for coming. I hope you will pray for me, that I may stick close to the Lord, with all my heart and soul; and I hope you will always pray for our George and his brother Sam, when the wind gets up. Good night, gemmen; a safe ride to Fairmount. Farewell."

## A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

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One morning, while at breakfast at Fairmount, I was surprised by a note from Mr. John Ryder, requesting the favour of a call from me, at Aston, before I returned home. The reader will remember Mr. Ryder<sup>[37]</sup> as a suitor of Miss Denham, and the affecting farewell of the latter to him on her death-bed.

"There is a mystery in this," said Mr. Stevens, "which I cannot account for. I have not seen Mr. Ryder for many months. Miss Denham's death was a dreadful blow to him, and since then he has never recovered his wonted spirits, but become quite a recluse, neither paying nor receiving any visits."

"Who can tell?" I remarked; "her death may issue in his spiritual life. I will send a reply, saying that I will call on him to-morrow evening."

"He is a noble character," said Mrs. Stevens; "and a young man of great intelligence and most amiable disposition. I trust his affliction has led him to direct his attention to the only true source of consolation. Indeed, I have some grounds for hoping that this is the case, as I understand he has been very regular in his attendance at church for some time past."

On going to Aston the following evening to call on Mr. Ryder, I unexpectedly met him, and we walked together to his house. After thanking me for my promptness in thus responding to his request, he proceeded to disclose to me, without much reserve, the deep perplexity and strongly excited state of his mind on the question of personal religion; asking me, at the same time, for my advice, and how he should act to obtain relief from his perplexities and depression of spirit.

He frankly confessed that prior to the death of Miss Denham, for whom he had long cherished a most ardent attachment, he had imbibed some vague sceptical opinions against religion. Her dying farewell, however, both astonished and confounded him, particularly the last words which she addressed to him:—"We now part, but I hope not for ever. Death, which is now removing me, may soon call for you; and then I hope you will find that consolation in the death of a despised Saviour, which it has pleased God, very unexpectedly and undeservedly, to give to me." "I never," he remarked, "heard her say anything like this before. She was now entering the dark unknown world; but it appears that she derived consolation from the death of Jesus Christ. How is this?" said I, as I withdrew from the chamber of death; and how can it be? I have said thousands of times since. However, what I saw and heard on that awfully appalling occasion left an indelible conviction on my mind, that there is a something in religion suited to humanity at the most momentous period of its history. But what is that something? I said to myself. Is it a hidden mystery which the great teacher death alone can explain; or is it possible to get the mystery explained before death comes? This is the emphatic question I wish you to solve, as my happiness both in this world and the next depends on its solution."

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In token of his sincerity, he told me that he had altogether withdrawn from the gay world; regularly attended his parish church, and had taken the sacrament several times. He now read the Bible, and other devotional books, in preference to novels and periodicals; and went through a regular form of private prayer, both morning and evening. He closed by saying:—"But, like a man surrounded by a thick mist when crossing some wild moor, I know not whether I am going right or wrong—I can obtain no satisfaction."

I was about to reply to this communication, when our arrival at Aston, and the appearance of Miss Ryder, to whom I was introduced by her brother, put a stop to further conversation on the subject for the present. We now entered the house, and while tea was preparing, Mr. Ryder proposed that we should take a turn round the garden. In passing along, my eye caught sight of a beautiful figure of Ceres, resting on a pedestal. I remarked, that it was by a very slow and painstaking process that things of real excellence were brought to perfection.

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"Yes," replied Mr. Ryder; "a few months ago that beautiful figure was a rough, shapeless stone. I have often thought, when standing and admiring it, what an eye and what a taste its sculptor must possess! But after all, it wants life to give the full expression of beauty."

"It stands as an emblematical figure."

"Yes, Sir; of the productive power of nature."

"And, Sir, of something else."

"Of what?"

"Of the man who has the form of godliness, but who has never felt its regenerating and life-giving power."

He paused, looked grave, but spoke not. After the lapse of a few moments he moved on in silence, as though my words had excited a new train of thought in his mind. At length he said:—"I

do not clearly understand what you mean by the expression—the regenerating and life—giving power of godliness."

"I mean the regenerating power of the Divine Spirit, creating anew the human soul, and infusing into it spiritual life. 'You,' says the apostle, when addressing the members of the church at Ephesus, 'hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins' (Eph. ii. 1)."

"But is man, at any period of his moral history, living in a state of death? Such a supposition appears to me to be paradoxical."

"Before the regenerating power of the Divine Spirit acts on the soul of man, he lives in a state of death, in two senses. We say, for example, of the culprit who is condemned to die, that he is a dead man. His life is not his own; it is forfeited to the claims of justice. And thus, while living in an unrenewed and unpardoned state, we are legally dead; our life is forfeited to the claims of Divine justice; and we are exposed to the penalty of the violated law of God."

"And what is that penalty?"

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"Condemnation, including in its infliction the forfeiture of the favour of God; mental disquietude, remorse, and dread of death, exclusion from a state of happiness, on passing into the eternal world; and banishment to hell, in despair, for ever. For it is written—'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them' (Gal. iii. 10)."

He again moved on in silence; and then suddenly stopping, and resting his eye for a few moments on the ground, he replied, under great excitement:—"This, Sir, is a fearful condition of existence. It is appalling. It chills my blood to think of it. Then my present restlessness and disquietude of soul are the lighter inflictions of this tremendous penalty—the premonitions of the coming storm of God's righteous displeasure."

"Yes, Sir; and they are given in mercy and in love."

"You surprise me. What! does mercy ever employ such terrific forerunners to announce her coming? If so, for what purpose?"

"To rouse man, while living in a state of false security, to an apprehension of his guilt, and consequent danger. They are, in fact, warning voices, warning man to flee from the wrath to come, to repent of his sins, and to make him feel the absolute necessity of a Divine interposition to rescue him from the peril of his condition, that he may 'seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near' (Isa. lv. 6)."

We now entered a tastefully constructed grotto, covered with ivy, situated at the upper extremity of the garden. Here we had an enchanting prospect of the surrounding country, and stood gazing on it for a while in silence, when Mr. Ryder remarked—"This, Sir, is a beautiful world."

"Yes, Sir," I replied; "and it would have been a happy world, if sin had not entered and defiled it, and thus marred our happiness. The beasts of the field and the birds of the air appear to have escaped its withering influence. They are happy. It is only man, the noblest specimen of the Divine workmanship, who is groaning and pining away in mournful sadness, under its polluting and destroying power."

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"To me, Sir, it appears surprising that the Deity should have permitted sin to enter this province of his vast dominions, and allow it to become the active agent of so much crime and misery, when he could so easily have prevented it, if he had chosen."

"I am not surprised by your remarks, for unquestionably the dispensation under which we are living is awfully mysterious; but still, notwithstanding the impenetrable darkness which envelopes certain parts of the Divine procedure, other parts are plain and intelligible, obviously conducive to our present and final happiness. Hence, if we act wisely, we shall turn our attention from what we *cannot* know, to what we *may* know—from concealed reasons and causes, to revealed facts. Instead, then, of perplexing ourselves about the origin of evil, we shall sit at the feet of Jesus, and he will tell us what God has done to repair the injury of the fall—'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John iii. 16). This, Sir, is plain, and this is intelligible; and we are assured by the Son of God himself, that if we believe in him we shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Your remarks, Sir, interest me. They illumine the darkness in which my own thoughts have been long revolving in shapeless confusion. I begin to perceive that my salvation is possible. You referred just now to another sense in which man is dead, in addition to the forfeiture of his life, by his violations of the law of God; will you explain what that other state of death is?"

Our conversation was here interrupted by a summons to tea. Mr. Ryder was now profoundly silent on the questions which had engrossed our attention, leaving an impression on my mind that his sister had no sympathy with his spiritual anxieties and depression. She was about twenty-five years of age, of very pleasing manners, and an apparently amiable disposition—neither obtrusive nor reserved; sprightly, and somewhat of a facetious turn. When looking at and listening to her, the words which our Lord addressed to the accomplished young ruler of Judea involuntarily occurred to me—"One thing thou lackest." Her brother now proposed another stroll in the garden, which was prevented by the arrival of some visitors, and the rest of the evening passed away without any recurrence to our former topic of conversation. On taking leave, Mr. Ryder made me promise that I would soon repeat my visit, which I accordingly did in the course

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of the ensuing week.

On this occasion I again met Mr. Ryder, as before, taking an evening stroll, and we walked to Aston together. On passing an old dilapidated mansion, we saw its proprietor standing in the porch, a nondescript both in appearance and character. "That, Sir," said Mr. Ryder, "is the most singular man I ever knew; he is very wealthy, and leads a very selfish and sensual life; he loves nothing but himself, his dogs, and his gun. He has sympathy for a dog when in pain, but none for a human being. His dogs are fed sumptuously, and taken the greatest care of, but he has never been known to give anything in charity to his own species. He shuns all intercourse with his fellow-men, and is, in fact, a perfect misanthrope—a being without a heart. Not long ago, his father, who lives in extreme poverty in the adjoining county, came to see him, but he peremptorily ordered him away without giving him bit or drop."

"This man," I replied, "loving nothing but himself, his dog, and his gun, not even his own father, is happily a very rare case, but it is one which is both illustrative and suggestive. He is a living emblem of the unregenerate man; who is a selfish being, loving nothing but what ministers to his own sensual gratifications. He has no heart to revere and love his heavenly Father, and is consequently unfit for heaven, and unfit to live amongst, and associate with the pure and happy spirits who dwell there. If he were taken to heaven in his present moral and spiritual condition, he would appear as strange a being amongst them, as this man does amongst you—shunning all, for want of congeniality of taste and disposition; and shunned by all as odious and repulsive; his expulsion would be an act of necessity, both in relation to himself and to others. Hence it is obvious from the nature of the case, as well as from the Word of God, that before an unregenerate man is meet for heaven, the sentence of condemnation which is recorded against him must, by an act of free grace, be repealed, and then all his sins are forgiven. In addition to this, he must be renewed in the spirit of his mind, and a spiritual life must be breathed into him by the power of the Divine Spirit."

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"I have, Sir, I think, a clear apprehension of what you mean by an act of grace in repealing the sentence of condemnation recorded against us for the sins we commit; but you say, that in addition to this we need the infusion into our mind of a new life, which you call a spiritual life. But if we are pardoned by an act of free grace, will not this secure to us an admission into heaven, without that additional operation to which you refer, and of which I can form no clear conception?"

"The exercise of free grace in pardoning a sinner is merely exempting him from a liability to punishment in this world, and in the world to come; but if he remain unrenewed, he will be the same in his moral principles, in his predilections, and antipathies, after he is pardoned, as he was while under a sentence of condemnation. He will feel no filial reverence for God; the love of Christ will not glow in his soul; he will possess no aptitude to hold fellowship with the pure spirits of the celestial world; nor can he live and move amongst them with dignity and ease, as one of their order."

"I perceive, Sir, the drift of your meaning; but yet it is enveloped in mysticism. One moment I seem to have it; but it is gone ere I can lay hold of it; it flits before me, and vanishes. However, there is one question which I shall feel obliged by you replying to: By what process can I originate, or get originated, this new spiritual life into my soul; and how must I set about it?"

"You cannot, Sir, originate it. As you cannot pardon yourself, neither can you renew yourself."

This remark fell with terrible force on his spirit, and cast a deep gloom on his countenance. He looked fearfully anxious, like a man who, on gaining an eminence apparently beyond the reach of the tide, sees his connection with the shore cut off by the unexpected rising of the waters.

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"I am, then, in a hopeless condition! It appears, Sir, from your statement, that I came into existence in a state of spiritual death, and consequent condemnation, without possessing any self-quickening power. This, if true, forces upon me the conviction that I must look upon myself as a poor unfortunate being, involved in a tremendous calamity, which I could not avoid, and from which I cannot extricate myself. Why, Sir, I am in a state of hopeless and irrecoverable misery."

"No, Sir, neither irrecoverable nor hopeless; for God, who is rich in mercy to pardon, is also rich in mercy to renew and quicken you into newness of life."

"But will He do it?"

"Yes, if you are willing to have it done."

"Willing! Sir; I am anxious to be saved, and saved on any terms, and by any process. I am willing to submit to any privations, any self-humiliation, any physical or mental tortures, to obtain the hope of salvation."

"One of the principles of God's wise and gracious administration is embodied in the following absolute promise made to his ancient people, accompanied by its contingent condition:—'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock' (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 37). A new spirit and a new heart is what you need, and now want; this God alone can give, and for this you must pray with great earnestness."

We now arrived at Aston, where, after having tea, we sauntered out as before into the garden,

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and entered the grotto to admire the view. Here Mr. Ryder resumed the thread of our conversation by saying:—"Permit me to ask you a question, which I feel to be important. When the Divine Spirit breathes this spiritual life into the soul of a man who has been living in a state of spiritual death, is he conscious of the change produced?"

"In some rare instances, I believe that a man does feel the action of the renewing and life-giving power of the Divine Spirit, at the very instant of time he is passing from death to life, though he may not then know by whom the spiritual operation is performed."

"But, Sir, as it is only rarely that such a sudden transition from death to life takes place, by what signs are we to determine its actual occurrence, when it is the result of a more lengthened process?"

"I believe the infusion of spiritual life in the soul of man is always an instantaneous act, though a long time may and often does elapse before he actually knows that he is quickened into newness of life. And in all cases the signs by which we may decide as to its actual occurrence, are very similar to those by which we determine the reality of our physical existence. For example, I am conscious that I am alive, because I breathe, feel, see, and hear, which I could not do if I were not alive. By a similar criterion we arrive at a satisfactory belief of the reality of our spiritual life. I am made alive from the dead; and as a proof of it, I can utter the voice of prayer and of praise. I *feel* sin to be a loathsome burden, offensive to my taste; I can *see* the glory of Christ displayed in his life, in his sufferings, and in his death. I can *hear* the voice of the Lord speaking to me in his promises, to comfort and strengthen me; and in his precepts, commanding my subjection and resignation to his sovereign will; I can *walk* in the way of his commandments, and feel obedience to be a source of gratitude and delight. I often *hunger* and *thirst* after a more perfect conformity to his righteousness; and now my meditations on God are sweet and delightful; and I can say—'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee' (Psal. lxxiii. 25). These are the unmistakeable signs of spiritual life."

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"You certainly, Sir, have supplied me with ample materials for thinking and reflection, and made an opening for my more easy understanding of the Bible. But there is one question of a more direct personal nature, which I wish to propose, and it is this—What am I to do? I am restless and unhappy. I want relief. Where, and how, can I obtain it? What positive thing am I to do, or suffer, to obtain it? That is the great question with me *now*. I perceive that the ulterior design of the Christian scheme of revelation is to restore man to the moral state from which he is fallen; but I have now to do with the present time, and the present state of my mind. What am I to do, or suffer, to gain peace of mind, and get that new spiritual life, of which you have been speaking?"

"I am happy, Sir, that it is in my power to give a specific, and I trust a satisfactory reply to your question. You are awakened out of your long dormant state of moral insensibility, to see and to feel your real character and condition in relation to God and eternity. This is the primary cause of your mental disquietude and restlessness. You have sought for relief in the outward forms of religion, and in the services and sacraments of the Church; but you have not succeeded in obtaining it. These expedients have proved to you the mirage of hope, not the well-spring of relief. Happily, there is a relieving power yet in reserve, which will not deceive or disappoint you—'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke xix. 10). As Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, he will not refuse to save any sinner who makes his appeal to his compassion and his power. Indeed, he assures us—'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John vi. 37)."

He now arose, evidently much impressed, and walked slowly out of the grotto, pacing to and fro along the gravel walk. After some time I moved off in an opposite direction; but at length we again met.

"I hope, Sir," he said, "you will excuse my uncourteous act in leaving you; but I wished, by a little calm reflection, to settle in my mind the important statement which you have given me, before the vivid impressions which it produced went off. I trust I shall long remember this interview; and I hope the day may come when you will hail me as a fellow-disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ."

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I then prayed with him, and shortly after took my departure. I did not see his sister on this occasion, as she was from home, but I left a copy of Dr. Doddridge's *Sermons on Regeneration*, with a note begging her acceptance of it, and a request that she would read it carefully.

Several months after this visit, when I had returned home to my ordinary duties, I received the subjoined letter from Mr. Ryder, which I read with emotions of gratitude and praise to Him who works all things after the counsel of his own will:—

"ASTON, 25th February, 18—.

"REV. AND DEAR SIR,—The conversation which passed between us, when I had the pleasure of a visit from you some months since, supplied the clue which I had long been searching for, to a right understanding of the Word of God on the great practical questions relating to my present happiness and final salvation. I know that my knowledge is still very superficial, but I trust I now understand the hidden mystery; what it is to pass from death to life; and from a state of guilt and condemnation to pardon and acceptance. I have taken the one decisive step, and cast myself at the feet of the Saviour, pleading his own promise, and he has given me rest. I have now obtained—what I long sought for in vain—peace of mind, and a good hope of final



happiness; because I have been diverted from the refuge of lies, in which I too long trusted, to the true source of consolation.

"You will not be surprised to hear, that the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Cole became more and more distasteful, as I advanced in my knowledge of Christ and the mystery of redemption, till at length I reluctantly withdrew from his church, which I have attended from my childhood. I now attend the church of the Rev. Mr. Guion, an excellent preacher and pastor, whom I believe you know. And it is with no slight emotions of joyous delight, that I have it in my power to inform you, that my beloved sister has been brought to feel the renewing influence of religion on her heart. This blessed result has been brought about by reading the incomparable sermons of Dr. Doddridge, which you so kindly gave to her. Being favoured with the enlightened and soul-searching ministry of our excellent pastor, she soon obtained joy and peace in believing. While I was left to wander in darkness, or in twilight, through many an anxious month, at times nearly despairing of a successful issue, her translation from darkness into light was almost instantaneous. She is now my helper in the Lord; and the affection which always subsisted between us is now doubly strengthened by the ties of Christian love and sympathy.

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"I hope that ere long you will again be in this part of the country; and I need not say how glad my sister and I should be to see you.—With every sentiment of respect, in which Anna joins, believe me, yours very sincerely,

J. RYDER."

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## THE SCEPTIC RECLAIMED.



Before leaving Fairmount to return home, I was unexpectedly gratified by a letter from Mr. Gordon, who had learned, from a mutual acquaintance, of my having gone to pay a visit to my friends in the west of England. His communication, upon the whole, much pleased me, and revived hopes which had almost ceased to exist. It satisfied me that his mind was restless, yielding in some slight degree to the force of facts and evidence, though he still clung pertinaciously to his sceptical notions. He wrote as follows:—"I have been prosecuting my inquiries on what you call the grand question, having read carefully Dr. Bogue's essay, which you kindly presented to me. I have also conned over some of the facts and evidences which you brought forward at our last interview.<sup>[38]</sup> This, I presume, you will say is taking a step or two in the right direction; and I suppose you will wish to know the practical result. I will first give you the negative: it has not issued in what you would hail as a glorious triumph—my conversion to the Christian faith. No; I am what I was when you left me—still a decided unbeliever. My heart recoils from admitting that a theory of religion, enveloped in such mystery, and accompanied by such conditions, can claim a Divine origin. However, this much I will confess, that it has led me to revise, in some slight degree, my own theory of belief, or what you may call my disbelief. You will excuse me going into detail, as that would spin out this letter to a tedious length. I admit, then, that Christianity may work very beneficially amongst savages; and it may promote the happiness of persons of intelligence and taste, who are trained up under its influence. I have now no desire to exterminate it. Indeed, I would rather consent to let the venerable tree, which has taken such deep root in popular prejudices, or, if you prefer it, in popular sympathies, remain to afford shade and shelter to you who regard it as the tree of life, than I would touch it to injure it. No, Sir; I respect the taste and feelings of others too much to wish to deprive them of the object of their attachment and veneration."

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Mr. Gordon concluded his letter by saying that he hoped to have the pleasure of seeing me in London, as he presumed that I should pass through the metropolis on my way to my own town.

About a week after receiving this letter I quitted Fairmount, leaving Mrs. Orme, who was still to remain for a few weeks longer at Rockhill. From the pressure of my engagements in the metropolis I was unable to make out my purposed call on Mr. Gordon. Having occasion, however, about four months afterwards, to go to London to preach a charity sermon, I set out one evening to see him; but on reaching his house, was concerned to find that he was in a very precarious state of health, and had been unable to go out for some time. On sending up my card, I was at once admitted, and found him in the drawing-room reclining on the sofa. He looked very ill; but, judging from the expression of his countenance, I thought he was glad to see me. On making some inquiries as to the length of his confinement, and the nature of his disorder, he made a reply which brought on a lengthened conversation.

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"It is now," he said, "nearly three months since I was in the city; and it is doubtful whether I shall ever go there again."

"Is your disorder, then, of such a threatening character?"

"Why, yes, it baffles Lawrence. But he is now trying another medicine, which he hopes will take effect; if not, he says, I must prepare for the worst."

"I hope, then, you are making the necessary preparations."

"To be candid, Sir, I am the same man as when we had the last chat on the question of

Christian missions, with this only difference—then I was in vigorous health, but now I am prostrated by disease, and disease which threatens to be fatal, though it does not give me much pain."

"You must no doubt feel some anxiety when so near death—on the eve of the final extinction of your being, or of passing into another world of existence, and for ever?"

"Why, yes, I am no stoic; and therefore I feel emotions both novel and painful. I would rather live than die, especially if I could recover my usual health and energy; because it is better to be, than not to be. The prospect of a termination to my existence is no pleasing theme for reflection."

"Then you still believe that when death comes you will cease to exist, and perish for ever like the beasts of the field?"

"That is my belief."

"But you may be mistaken."

"I admit it, because mere belief and positive knowledge are two very different things."

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"Then you are living in a state of uncertainty; as you know not whether you will be annihilated or live on for ever in another state of existence. Surely this must give rise to some fearful and depressing thoughts."

"No, I cannot say that it does, because I think the Deity who brought me into existence without my solicitation, and who has given me such a large portion of enjoyment throughout life, will still befriend me, if he decide that I shall continue to exist after death in another world. That I shall continue to exist, however, I do not expect."

"But do you not perceive the fallacious ground on which your expectation is placed, unless you believe, and without any clear evidence, that the Deity has made a special dispensation in your behalf?"

"I don't quite understand you."

"Why, you infer that your future condition of existence, if you are to live after death, will be similar to the one which you have enjoyed here, and which has been, upon the whole, a very favourable one. Suppose another person proceed on the same principle, he must infer, that his future condition will be a most painful and unfortunate one, simply because his present condition is so. There is, then, a self-evident and a dangerous fallacy in the proposition which allows two persons to draw from it such opposite inferences, the one for, and the other against himself, and without any reference to personal conduct or character."

"There may be a logical fallacy in my proposition, and in my reasoning on it; but it is the only ground of hope, when, in some moments of misgiving, I am led to admit the possibility of passing into another state of existence."

"Well, then, you are reduced to the necessity of making one admission, which is a terrible rebuke to your sceptical theory."

"Indeed! and what is that?"

"That your position, in relation to death, is an unenviable one, especially when placed in comparison with that of a believer in Christ; indeed, it is one which should make you recoil in terror."

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"I admit it. Yes, Sir, if you were in the same condition with myself, you would, I have no doubt, have visions of celestial glory flitting before your imagination, and you would be in ecstasy. Yes, a believer in Christ has a great advantage over us, when he approaches the crisis of his destiny. No gloomy thoughts or anxieties harass his soul; but on the contrary, a brilliant prospect stretching far into eternity opens to his view. Yes, a believer in Christianity ought to feel a transport of joy in anticipation of his death."

"Then, on your own admission, death to a believer in Christ is the morning star of a glorious day; but to a sceptic, it is the dark shadow of coming night."

"I admit you have brilliant visions, when death is coming to bear you off; we have none, we see nothing but darkness, and feel at times the terror of uncertainty. I admit you occupy the vantage ground then; you stand on what you believe is a rock; beneath us is the moving quicksand. Yes, you die in general better than we do, or can do. There is no denying this; and I shall not attempt to disguise it."

"Your condition, my dear friend, in my apprehension, is truly appalling. It agonizes me. I see you standing on the edge of a tremendous precipice. In a moment you may be lost, and perish, and for ever. Shall I pray with you, before I leave you? The prayer of faith may prevail for your rescue and salvation."

"Excuse me, dear Sir, without supposing that I undervalue your generous friendship. You would save me, I know, if you could. But I have no faith, and therefore it would not be honest to appear devout, and I cannot compel myself to believe."

I called again before I left London, but as he was asleep, I did not see him; but I saw his housekeeper, a very intelligent, pious woman, in whose integrity I knew he had great confidence. She informed me, that when sitting with her master during one very restless night; and thinking, from some heavy sighs which he occasionally heaved, that some new feelings were stirring within him, she said to him—"It is a great pity, Sir, that you will cling so firmly to your infidel opinions when they cannot comfort you. You had better look up to the Saviour; he is able, and he is willing

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to comfort and save you."

"Well, Mary," he replied, "I admit it would be better if I could believe in a Saviour, as you do, than to remain in my present state of uncertainty; but I have no faith—I cannot compel myself to believe."

"Then, Sir, pray to the Lord Jesus, and he will give you faith to trust in him for salvation. He has compassion for them that are out of the right way."

"But how can I pray, when I have no faith in prayer? It may all be true what you believe, and if it should, I am irrecoverably lost, and for ever; but I have no faith in such a tremendous issue."

"But, Sir, such a tremendous issue may be certain, even though you do not believe it; and the bare possibility of its occurrence should alarm you."

"I admit that, but I can't compel myself to believe."

I returned home with a heavy heart, feeling as a humane person feels, on coming out of the prison, where he has had the last agonizing interview with an old friend, whom he has left under the sentence of death. Having requested Mr. Gordon's housekeeper to let me know if any change took place in his health, I received a note from her a few weeks afterwards, saying, the crisis was past, and that he was so far restored, that he was now at Maidenhead, trying the effect of a change of air and scene. This gave me pleasure—as a respite sometimes issues in a rescue. His form was ever before me. Many a petition did I offer up to the Hearer of prayer in his behalf; and more than once, on rising from my knees, I felt a strong persuasion that the prayer of faith would prevail. It was after a very remarkable season of special devotion, when I pleaded with the Lord with intense and hallowed earnestness, that I received from him the following letter, which was an ample recompense for all my labours and anxieties:—

"REV. AND DEAR SIR,—I yield at last. My only hope for pardon and peace is in the precious blood of Christ. My heart is too full to write much. It is full to overflowing. Do come and see me, and I will tell you all. I can secure you a spare room not far from my own lodgings.—Yours truly,

ARTHUR GORDON."

I set off immediately, and spent several days with him; and had from him and his housekeeper a detailed statement of the occurrences which had taken place, and which I will now reduce to continuous order, for the gratification of the reader. He had taken lodgings in a cottage occupied by a poor but pious family, and which was pleasantly situated near the banks of the Thames. Though he had no regard for the exercises of family devotion, yet he had no very strong antipathy to them. He therefore felt no annoyance by hearing the good man read and pray with his family morning and evening, though no one knew that he was in the habit of listening. The simple, yet earnest petitions (as Mr. Gordon afterwards confessed) which were offered up to the Hearer of prayer, in behalf of the stranger, for his restoration to the enjoyment of perfect health, and that his affliction might be sanctified to his spiritual benefit, often made a deep impression on his heart, but it passed away without any appearance of a beneficial result.

An incident now occurred which had nearly proved fatal to him, but it was overruled for good. He went with a party of friends to spend the day at Marlow; and as they calculated on the probability of seeing some wild ducks, one gentleman took his gun with him. On their return down the river in the evening, they resolved, as it felt rather cold, to walk the last two or three miles. In stepping out of the boat, one of the party slipped, and at that moment the loaded gun, which he carried in his hand, went off; Mr. Gordon, who was a little in advance, and stooping down to fasten his shoe, fell, and his hat was blown to shivers. All were terror-struck, under the impression that he was killed; but it was soon discovered that he had sustained no injury, beyond a slight wound on the right side of his forehead, and the tip of his ear, which were slightly grazed. They pressed around him with their congratulations; one facetiously remarking, that he must have been born under a lucky star, to dodge death so dexterously, when it was so near him. The accident, and the escape, naturally engaged more of their conversation than any of the other occurrences of the day; but there was no reference to the special providence of God, except in the usual strain of sceptical derision. "A pious believer," said the facetious man, "would be for kneeling down, and offering up a tribute of thanksgiving for your lucky escape, Gordon; and so should I, if I believed in a special Providence."

"I don't believe," said another, "that God ever interferes in such little matters; if he did, he could easily have prevented the slip of the foot, which was the first moving cause of the explosion; and had he done that, Gordon would have saved his hat, and gone home without his scars."

These remarks, which at any other time would have been in harmony with his opinions and sentiments, by his own admission, now grated harshly on his ears; he felt his spirit recoil from them, and for the first time in his life wished himself out of such company. He was somewhat astonished, as he confessed to me, by the suddenly awakened antipathies, which beat so strongly in his heart. On arriving at his lodgings, he related to the family the particulars of his narrow escape from death; when the good man exclaimed, in a subdued tone of pious reverence, "The Lord be praised for protecting you in such an hour of danger. This, Sir, is an instance of what the Psalmist calls preventing mercy, for which you should be truly grateful to the Lord."

Mr. Gordon knew that his servant united with the family in their evening devotions; and thinking that this accident and escape would form a subject of reference in the prayers of the

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pious cottager, he kept his door ajar, and sat and listened. He heard his servant say, "My master is as kind a man as walks on the earth, and is thankful for any attentions which are paid to him by any one; but he has no gratitude in his heart to the God of his mercies. He lives, as the apostle says, without God in the world."

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"Well, then," replied the good man, "if he offer up no thanksgivings to the Lord for his miraculous escape from death, we will do it for him; and pray that he may be brought to feel as a child of our heavenly Father ought to feel." He then read the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, remarking, at the conclusion, that it was a great privilege to be able to believe the consolatory and soul-sustaining truths which they had been reading. One sentence in his prayer was uttered with emphatic earnestness—"We thank thee, O Lord, for preserving the life of the stranger now sojourning with us, when it was so near death; and we pray that he may feel towards thee as a child ought to feel towards his heavenly Father." This touched his heart.

"I never," he said to me, "felt such an emotion as I experienced when that simple prayer was uttered. It was as thrilling and as powerful as it was sudden and unexpected. I immediately arose and seated myself on the sofa, and was soon absorbed in a train of deep thought. Yes, death came very near me to-night. He has marked the signs of his nearness in the scar wounds on my forehead and my ear. Was it mere chance which gave me a hair-breadth escape from a sudden death? Yes, says infidelity; God never interferes in little matters. But would it have been to me a little matter if I had had an arm blown off, or a leg broken, or been sent out of life into another world; and probably to ——. No. It would have been a great matter *then*. Is my preservation from death to be regarded as a little matter? Was God away from the spot where my friend's foot slipped? Yes, says infidelity; and I should have responded to this saying before the event occurred; but I cannot *now*. I doubt my own faith; I renounce it. It may do at a club, or a convivial party; but it won't do for the spot where death was coming, but where the victim has been miraculously rescued from his power. 'AS A CHILD OUGHT TO FEEL TOWARDS HIS HEAVENLY FATHER!' Beautiful expression! Yes, I ought to feel grateful to God; but I have never considered him as standing in the relation of a father to me. But has he not on this occasion acted like one?"

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On turning and looking carelessly round the room, he saw his copy of Tremaine lying on the side-board. He took it up and opened it; the chapter on Providence caught his eye, and he read it. "This," he confessed to me, he found to be but "starlight-reading; clear, but cold; brilliant, but wanting in power; expanding the intellect, and charming the imagination, but not finding its way to the heart. I read, and believed; read, and yet doubted. I was," he said, "completely bewildered; but I recollect saying, O that I had the faith of the cottager, or my servant, my mind would be in perfect peace."

His housekeeper, who, as yet, was ignorant of the novel process of thinking which was going on in his mind, informed me that she was astonished and delighted one evening by his asking her for the loan of her Bible. She fetched it, and on giving it to him, said, "That book, Sir, will do you good, if you pray over it when you are reading it." He read the sixth chapter of Matthew; read it several times; and when referring to it in our conversation, he said, "What a difference, Sir, between the two readings! Tremaine reasons closely and clearly; he almost demonstrates and compels belief; but there is no pathos, no power; the heart still remains sceptical and unmoved. Jesus Christ asserts, commands, and promises; the heart is captivated, and induced to place its trust in God. Yes! 'it must be,' as the pious cottager remarked, 'an inestimable privilege to be able to believe the consolatory and soul-sustaining truths which I have now been reading.' I believe *now*. But how is this? Logic has not been reasoning. My intellect is dormant; and yet it is spell-bound by novel and solemn thoughts. It is making new spiritual discoveries, which, I believe, are grand realities, but which I have long despised and rejected as legendary tales; and I feel tranquil. And yet, as the process of reflection goes on, I feel again bewildered. My calm is becoming a tumult; and out of satisfaction springs up anxiety. Is this a delusion, or am I waking up out of a mental torpor amidst sublime spiritual realities? I am conscious of a change which has come upon me, and very unexpectedly."

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"You do not doubt its reality?"

"No, Sir; it is no sham. I am as conscious of its reality as I am of my own existence. I am no sceptic *now*. I have no hostile feeling *now* against the remedial scheme of salvation. I adore Christ *now*. I can give him my heart. I am astonished by my own utterances; but they are the genuine expressions of my feelings."

"I presume, Sir, you ascribe the great change which has taken place in your belief, and in your moral taste, to a supernatural cause; to what the apostle calls the grace of God?"

"I do, Sir. There are three things which satisfy me that this marvellous change is the work of God. In the first place, I had no conception that such a change was either necessary or possible; in the next place, I had no more power or inclination to effect it myself than I have to raise a dead man to life; and then it has been produced so suddenly, preceded by no intimations or anticipations of such an occurrence, and by such apparently inadequate means. The simple prayers of the rustic cottager subdued me. They touched my heart. I could, as you know, withstand the assaults of the most acute and powerful reasoning; your persuasive eloquence touched no cord of my heart. I could repel, with a sarcasm, the most awful warnings; and stand immovable when death was advancing to execute the penal sentence; but I could not stand out against the simple prayers of the pious cottager. Indeed, I felt more inclined to yield than to resist. It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in my eyes. He made me willing in the day of his power. On this principle it can be accounted for, but on no other. Reason, as well as gratitude, compels me to say—By the grace of God, I am what I am. But O, my friend, where can I find

language to give full expression to the astonishment and gratitude which I feel when reflecting on the long-suffering and the forbearance of God, whose majesty I have so often insulted, and whose authority I have set at nought, defying his threatenings, and spurning his overtures of mercy! How marvellous the condescending compassion and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has at last brought me to penitence and contrition, and given me a hope of salvation!"

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"I suppose you now recal to your recollection, at times, some of the subjects of our former discussions; both your objections to the various parts of revealed truth, and how I endeavoured to refute them?"

"In the first place, I may mention, that from the outset, on the Saturday evening we first met,<sup>[39]</sup> and through every succeeding encounter, I had a latent apprehension that you were right; and that your belief, with its consolations and prospects, was far more conducive to human happiness, than my disbelief, with its suspicions and uncertainties; I clearly saw, that on your hypothesis, the loss of life, which is the greatest of human possessions, would be an incalculable gain; but on mine, it would be an irreparable loss. When reasoning in my calmer moments on these data, I arrived at this conclusion—for man's sake the Christian faith *ought* to be a genuine faith, even if it is not so; and I recollect when you were assigning the causes which invest the name of Jesus Christ with such great power over the human mind on its passing through scenes of extreme privation and peril, and especially when passing from one world to another, I felt that I would gladly exchange my disbelief and its uncertainties, for your faith and its assurances. I now, Sir, by the grace of God, can add my testimony to the truthfulness of what you asserted in that encounter. The Christian faith is both a renovating and consolatory power, and it does the work ascribed to it; it gives peace to a wounded spirit, and a hope full of immortality to the guilty and morally worthless."

"You would not now willingly be what you once were?"

"Be what I once was! no, Sir. As readily suppose that a glorified spirit, if left to his own choice, would choose to come back to earth, to re-tread its polluting soil, to raise again the standard of rebellion against the Majesty of heaven, and again intermingle with the workers of iniquity. Be what I once was! no, Sir. Like the man in the gospel who found the pearl of great price, I have no wish to lose what I have miraculously found; I have found the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Saviour, mighty to save; and to his service I now consecrate myself for life and for ever."

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He took me one evening to the place where the gun-shot accident happened, and when pointing with his stick to the spot where he fell, he stood a while speechless, the tears trickling down his cheeks, when he exclaimed, under the impulse of strong emotion, "What a mercy that I was not blown from this spot into hell! On this spot, Sir, I have stood every evening since the accident occurred, to offer up my adorations and thanksgiving to the God of my mercies, and to echo the utterance of Paul, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief' (1 Tim. i. 15). Yes, Sir, and I will visit it when the gray hairs of age hang upon me, if I am spared to old age; and shall I ever forget it when in heaven? But the gun-shot and my escape would have proved the materials for a profane joke in a convivial party, had it not been for the sovereign grace of God, who employed it as the precursor of my salvation—'Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name'" (Psal. ciii. 1).

He continued at Maidenhead till his health was thoroughly re-established, and then he returned to London. On his reappearance at the counting-house, in which he had long held an important office, he received the hearty congratulations of the firm, and of all his fellow-clerks, by whom he was greatly respected, for his close application to his duties, his gentlemanly habits, and the kindness of his disposition.

Shortly afterwards he had occasion to pass through my town on some business of his employers, and paid me a visit. We spent a very pleasant evening together. He then informed me that he had had a visit from Mr. Newton, and another infidel friend; who called with their congratulations on his escape from the gun-shot, and the recovery of his health, and to propose an excursion to Greenwich, with a party, on the following Sunday. This invitation he at once declined, and added, "You probably will be surprised to hear that I renounce as false, and as fatal, all the sceptical sentiments and opinions I once held; and now embrace with gratitude and joy the glorious gospel of Christ, as a true and sublime revelation of mercy and of grace. In future, my Sabbaths will be held sacred to public worship, in preference to any other exercises or pursuits. And I would earnestly entreat you to turn your serious attention to the paramount claims of the gospel; its rejection, as a legend of superstition, will embitter your reflections and appal your anticipations in a dying hour." They listened to this with profound astonishment, making no other remark than simply wishing him well, and then abruptly left him.

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I took occasion from this reference to Newton and his companion, to remark, that it would have been a great blessing for himself and others, if he had undergone this change at an earlier period of his life.

"Ah, Sir," he replied, and the tear stood in his eye as he spoke, "I reflect with shame, and at times with agonizing regret, on the efforts I have made to seduce others from the way of righteousness and peace. My friend Lewellin has happily escaped from the evil course into which I led him on his first settlement in London,<sup>[40]</sup> and he is now a bright star in the church of Jesus Christ; but I fear that some have passed into the eternal world, under the fatal delusions with which I perverted their minds. These two old friends who lately paid me a visit of congratulation, and others still living, who are lost in the crowd of gaiety and dissipation, have sustained incalculable injury from the influence of my example, and the fatal tendency of my former

sentiments and opinions. A recollection of these facts will entail upon me bitter regret and stinging remorse through the whole course of my life; and though I may obtain mercy from Him whose name I have so often blasphemed, yet from them I can expect nothing but the severest invective for having misled them, or the keenest satire and reproach for turning a renegade, as they will term it, to the system of scepticism we once professed in common."

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## THE RECTOR'S DEATH-BED.



For several years Mr. Ingleby's health had been gradually declining, but to the last he displayed great vigour of intellect and vivacity of spirit. When I saw him on the occasion of my wedding visit to Mr. Lewellin, he appeared to be still hale and active, notwithstanding the great age which he had attained. In common with the rest of his friends, I expected that he might still be spared for a few years to instruct them by his counsels, and animate them by his example. Mr. Roscoe's death, however, proved a severe shock to him; he fell into a state of nervous depression; and after a violent cold which he took in going to visit a poor cottager, in a remote part of his parish, his parishioners began to fear that he would soon be removed from them. For several Sabbaths he was confined to the rectory; but when he grew a little better, he resumed the discharge of his pastoral duties. Though he brought into the pulpit the stores of knowledge which he had been collecting for many years, and felt his spirit still glowing with the ardour of an intense affection for the spiritual and eternal welfare of his hearers, his energy was now considerably abated; his voice, which was originally full and commanding, became low and enfeebled, and he often appeared exhausted by fatigue, even before he had half finished the service.

We sometimes see a congregation, which a minister has collected together in the days of his vigour, forsaking him in his old age, to pay their homage to the rising sun of popularity; preferring the voice of a comparative stranger to that of their former shepherd; but the venerable Ingleby was never deserted. The people pressed to hear him when the silver locks of age adorned his head, with as much eagerness as when he possessed all the energy of youth; and felt as deep an interest in the last services which he conducted, as in any that had preceded them. It must be admitted that his situation did not bring him within the immediate influence of any strong competition for public favour; but though many of his congregation resided much nearer other clergymen, they nevertheless, at all seasons of the year, continued regular in their attendance on the ministrations of Mr. Ingleby to the close of his life. This attachment to their pastor took its rise in the usefulness of his public labours; and as he had uniformly conducted himself amongst them as a holy man of God, devoting his time and his influence to promote their happiness, his character rose in their esteem as circumstances gave him an opportunity of developing it. He acted on the following maxims, which were given him by an aged clergyman, not long after he took orders, and the practical utility of whose advice Mr. Ingleby soon experienced in securing him the permanent regard of his flock:—"Preserve the sanctity of your public character in the intercourse of private and social life. Do not visit your people often, except when they need your visits, and then convince them, that while you have no time to spare for the purposes of amusement or recreation, you are ever ready to attend to the claims of pastoral duty. Avoid engaging in the commerce of the world; yet never think that you are acting beneath the dignity of your station when engaged in giving advice to the inexperienced, or assisting others by your counsels, to guide their affairs with discretion. Let the poor of your flock know that their pastor is their friend in adversity, their advocate when oppressed, and will be their comforter when on the bed of sickness or of death."

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About a month before his decease he arose on the Sabbath morning free from pain, the spirit of former times came upon him, and he felt that he could get through the labours of the day, without availing himself of the assistance which his neighbour, the Rev. Mr. Guion, had so kindly offered. The text from which he addressed the congregation was taken from 2 Pet. i. 13, 14:—"Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." When he read the words, the attention of the people was immediately fixed on him. The effect which was produced by the delivery of this discourse was very powerful. It was undoubtedly much aided by the peculiar circumstances of the speaker, who was grown gray and infirm in the service of the people, and who in his introduction informed them, that he was led to the choice of the subject, under an impression, which left no doubt of the propriety of its application to himself. The aspect of the preacher, pale, emaciated, standing on the verge of eternity—the simplicity and majesty of his sentiments—the sepulchral solemnity of a voice which seemed to issue from the shades, combined with the intrinsic dignity of the subject—perfectly quelled the audience with tenderness and terror, and produced such a scene of audible weeping as was perhaps never surpassed. All other emotions were absorbed in devotional feeling; it seemed to us as though we were permitted for a short space to look into eternity, and every sublunary object vanished before "the powers of the world to come." "I had often heard him," says Mr. Stevens, in a letter which I received from him, "when he was more energetic, but never when he was more impressive; when he discovered more originality of genius, but never when he displayed more intensity of feeling; when he employed a more polished and a more imaginative style of address, but never when he spoke with more authority and power; and, thinking with the rest of the audience, that he was now terminating his labours, I felt a high gratification that he was enabled to bring them to a close with so much credit to himself, as the able and faithful

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minister of the New Testament. His appeal to the people, after he had finished his discourse and closed his Bible, delivered in simple and unaffected language, subdued the whole audience, and left us, when he had finished it, no alternative but an involuntary burst of sorrow that we should hear no more that voice to which we had so often listened."

The following is an extract from the Rector's farewell sermon:—

"My dearly beloved brethren, I have now served you in the ministry of the gospel for more than forty years, and am on the eve of closing my labours amongst you. Looking back on my life, I discover many defects in my character, and many imperfections in the manner in which I have discharged my public duties; these I most humbly deplore; but I trust they have been only the ordinary infirmities of a Christian minister, who has uniformly aimed to reach a higher point of excellence than he could ever attain. If I cannot, like the great apostle of the Gentiles, appeal to the holiness and unblameableness of my behaviour amongst you; yet I trust I can to the ardour of my affection, and the fidelity of my public ministrations; and while I would entreat you to cast the veil of charity over all the blemishes of my character, I would, at the same time, charge 'every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.' The truth which I have preached to you is now my support in prospect of the scene which is before me. The time of my departure is at hand. My course is nearly finished. I shall soon stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. My eternal state shall soon be decided; and I shall soon know the final decision. But I am not alarmed. I do not dread death. The judgment-seat does not appal me. The final sentence awakens no fearful forebodings of sorrow. I am looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Whether I shall ever be permitted to address you again from this pulpit, is known only to Him who works all things after the counsel of his own will; nor do I feel very solicitous to do so. If I should, I shall appear amongst you in weakness, if not in fear and in much trembling; and if I should not, I hope you will be provided with another minister, who will, either in this church, or elsewhere, as the Lord may direct, preach, to you with more energy, and with more success, the glorious gospel which I have so often proclaimed to you. But I cannot leave you without saying, that as I have not shunned to declare the whole truth of God in the most faithful manner, if any of you should eventually perish, you will not have it in your power to say that it was owing to my unfaithfulness. Any of you perish! What! will you reject the counsel of God against yourselves? Will you refuse to come to Jesus Christ, that you may have life? Will you neglect the great salvation, which has been made known unto you; and sink down to endless woe under the accumulated guilt of your impenitence? Must I be compelled to appear as a witness against any of you, in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel? and, instead of seeing you accepted in the Beloved, shall I see you banished from the presence of the Lord for ever? And must I now terminate my labours amongst you, under the awful impression, that while they have been the means of saving some, they have become the innocent occasion of aggravating the just condemnation of others? and thus, like the apostle, while to some I have been the savour of life unto life, must I be to others the savour of death unto death?"

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When the service was over, many of the people crowded into the aisle though which he passed; some stood in the porch of the church, others along the pathway which led across the graveyard, and some few followed him to the rectory, to shake hands with him and bid him farewell; sorrowing, like the elders of Ephesus, when they fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, most of all that they should see his face no more. This spontaneous expression of attachment, on the part of the people, deeply affected the venerable man, who wept as he reiterated his parting benediction to the aged and the young; and though he had strength given him to go through this trying hour, yet, on entering his parlour, he complained of a giddiness, and immediately fell fainting into the arms of Mr. Lewellin. This excited considerable alarm through the whole family; and one of the servants, in the paroxysm of her agony, sent forth the report that her master was dead. On his being removed into the open air, however, he soon revived, though, from the distorted appearance of his countenance, it was evident that he had received a slight paralytic stroke. He slept the greater part of the afternoon, but towards evening became very animated, and for several hours conversed, with great cheerfulness, on the immortality of the soul, and its final and blissful destiny.

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When Socrates was under sentence of death, he assured his friends, who came to offer him their sympathy, that his chief support in prospect of taking the fatal draught, was an expectation, not unmixed with doubts, of a happy existence after death. From reasoning and reflecting on the subject, he had been led to the conviction that something of man remains after his decease, and that the condition of good men will at last be better than that of the bad; but he could not discover in all his researches, any positive evidence in support of this opinion; and hence, while he expressed a hope of entering the invisible world on passing away from this, he candidly acknowledged that he had his doubts. "My situation," said the venerable Ingleby, "is more enviable than that of the sage of Athens. He doubted the immortality of the soul, while I firmly believe it. And why do I believe it? Not because my nature revolts at the thought of annihilation; not because I feel an instinctive desire to outlive the triumphs of death; but because He who sees the end from the beginning has said, that the wicked 'shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous shall go into life eternal.'"

"We ought," said Mr. Lewellin, "to be very thankful to the Author of revelation, for having announced the fact of our immortality in such a clear and unequivocal manner; for it has always struck me, that no other argument can be admitted as conclusive, but the testimony of one who has an actual knowledge of an endless futurity."

"I quite agree with you," said Mr. Ingleby; "for how is it possible for any being to know that I

shall live for ever but that Great Being who knows the end from the beginning? The communications which we have in the Bible, on this subject, are professedly his testimony; but if we reject these communications as fabulous, we must either give up our hope of immortality, as an idle fancy, or abandon ourselves to that state of dubious uncertainty, in which the Athenian sage lived and died. And to this dilemma the infidels of modern times are reduced; hence, while they cannot *disbelieve* in a future state of existence, they cannot anticipate it with any degree of confidence. If the gospel be, what they say it is, a cunningly devised fable, which has its origin, not in the records of truth, but in the invention of man, it is a fable which is eminently conducive to human happiness; and I should consider that man my enemy, who would even attempt to expose its fallacy. I am now near the close of life, the tomb is opening to receive me, and ere long I shall cease to be an inhabitant of this world. Am I to perish like the beasts of the field? or am I to exist in another state of being? These are questions which now present themselves to my mind, with an air of solemn majesty, which they never before assumed; but to whom can I propose them, with any hope of obtaining a satisfactory reply? There is no voice which speaks, but that which comes from the excellent glory; and that voice tells me, that this mortal shall put on immortality; that death shall be swallowed up in victory; and it teaches me to offer my thanksgivings to God, who hath given me the victory over the fear of death, and the terror of the grave, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"The language," observed Mr. Stevens, "which our Lord addressed to his disciples, just before his departure, to assuage the violence of their grief, is no less calculated to afford us consolation under our sufferings, especially when we are brought near the verge of eternity:—'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.'"

"I do believe in Him," replied the Rector, "and enjoy the influence of that belief, in the calm placidity of my mind. I do believe that he is preparing a place for me amongst the mansions of the blessed, and I enjoy the influence of that belief in the sublime anticipations of hope. Yes, I shall soon see him in all the glory of his majesty, and in all the tenderness of his compassion; and with the rest of the redeemed I shall soon bow down in his presence with mingled emotions of astonishment and delight! With astonishment, that he ever condescended to love me, and to employ me in his service; and with delight, at the scenes which I shall then behold, and the voices which I shall then hear. Then shall I be satisfied when I am assimilated to the Divine likeness."

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"You have then no doubt of your final salvation?"

"No, Sir; I wait for it as an event of absolute certainty."

"I perceive," rejoined Mr. Stevens, "that you now make no reference to the opinion which you have so often expressed respecting the 'different degrees of glory which the righteous will have conferred on them in the heavenly world.'"

"I am too deeply anxious on the more important point of getting into heaven, to bestow even a moment's consideration on the degree of my future happiness. I know I shall have infinitely more than I deserve; even if I should have less than the least of all saints; and I am perfectly willing to take what portion my Lord may assign me, under a full conviction that—

"The man who dwells where Jesus is,  
Must be completely blest."

"I once heard you say," remarked Mrs. Stevens, "that you had no doubt but we should know each other in the heavenly world. Have you, Sir, on more mature deliberation, been induced to change that opinion?"

"No, Madam. When I enter heaven, I shall not forget that I was once an inhabitant of earth—that I once lived in a state of rebellion against God—that he was pleased to bring me to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—that he employed me in the ministry, and assigned to me the parish of Broadhurst as the scene of my labours—that I associated in the days of my pilgrimage, with you and your husband, your nephew and his wife, and other Christian friends—and that in the exercise of social communion I once enjoyed some tokens of the Divine favour. If then we shall retain a distinct recollection of places and occurrences connected with our earthly sojourn, we shall surely not forget the persons who gave to those places and occurrences their chief interest and importance. Suppose I should now, while you are sitting by my side, steal out of life, and enter heaven, should I on my passage lose a remembrance of the room in which I expired, or the events which have transpired this day? Impossible! And could I remember these things, without remembering you and my other pious friends? And when you arrive, and are presented faultless, will you not be presented faultless in the individuality of your person, with all *your* remembrances of places, of persons, and events fresh upon you? And will it be possible for us to associate with each other without making some reference to the former state of our existence, which will necessarily lead to a discovery of who we are, and from whence we came, even if there should be no more direct method of gaining a knowledge of each other? But apart from this general reasoning, we may appeal to the Scriptures, which, I think, give their decided sanction to these views. Hence we find the apostle, when writing to the Thessalonians, who had through his instrumentality been converted to the faith of Christ, says, 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.' I cannot affix any meaning to this passage, unless I believe, that each apostle, and every minister in every succeeding age of the church, will know the persons

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who have been converted to God through their instrumentality; and that from this knowledge will arise some peculiar degree of glory and of joy."

"Then, Sir," said Mr. Lewellin, "doubtless you can now anticipate a high degree of felicity from this source, as God has been pleased to make your ministry very useful?"

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"I have no doubt but I shall partake of this source of happiness; but I am not now anticipating it. My mind is too deeply occupied by the important question of getting into heaven, to bestow one solitary thought on the minor questions of our speculative belief. I am nearing the borders of the holy land of promise; living now in the anticipation of soon seeing the King in his beauty, and of undergoing that transformation which I shall feel when I see him."

"Then, Sir, you think you will 'shortly put off this tabernacle,' and enter that 'house which is not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?'"

"Yes, Mr. Lewellin; and I can put it off with as much composure as I can throw aside a worn-out surplice. The time of my departure is near."

"But," said Mrs. Lewellin, "what shall we do when you are taken from us? We shall be like the sheep, when the shepherd is gone!"

"No, my dear friend, the great Shepherd may pitch another fold, and lead you to another pasturage; but he will still 'feed his flock; he will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that are with young.'"

His friends now left him to repose. He slept through the greater part of the night, but towards the morning became very restless—often complaining of a strange sensation in his head. He took a light breakfast, and as he felt rather drowsy, requested that he might not be disturbed. About noon he awoke; but felt no disposition to rise. He again took a little nourishment, and again fell asleep, and slept till near five o'clock. When he awoke he asked the hour, but he paid no attention to the reply which was made to him. His physician now gave it as his decided opinion that he would not live through the night. "He is in no pain; and if I judge from the state of his pulse, I should suppose that his life will gradually depart from him; perhaps when he is asleep." But about seven o'clock he suddenly revived, sat up in his bed, and requested to have his hands and his face washed. When this office of kindness was performed for him, by Mrs. Lewellin, he looked on her for some moments without uttering a word; and then stretching out his hand he said, "My dear, I thank you. You have not anointed me against my burial; but you have refreshed me to encounter the last enemy. Death is upon me, but he does not come in a terrific form. No; he is changed from the king of terrors into an angel of deliverance. I will thank you, Sir," addressing himself to Mr. Lewellin, "to read the eighth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and then pray for me; and pray that I may be favoured with a sense of the Divine presence when passing through the valley of the shadow of death." Mr. Lewellin having complied with his wishes, the venerable pastor then gave his friends his blessing; exhorting them to cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart. After remaining silent for some minutes, during which time he appeared to be in the solemn act of commending his soul to God, he looked round with great benignity of countenance, and said, "Why, my children, do you weep?"

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"Is it possible, Sir," Mrs. Lewellin replied, "for us to lose such a pastor and such a friend without weeping?"

"Well, I will forgive your tears, because I know you love me; but I cannot weep with you. Though I have not before me that scene of martyrdom which presented itself to the great apostle of the Gentiles, when addressing his son Timothy, yet I can adopt the triumphant language which he then uttered, and with an equal degree of confidence:—'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.'" And having uttered these words he reclined his head on his pillow, and gently breathed his last.

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## THE RECTOR'S FUNERAL.

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Upon the report of the pastor's death being spread through the village, a sudden shock was felt by almost every one, though the event itself did not excite much surprise. He had lived so long amongst his parishioners, and had endeared himself to them by so many acts of kindness, that they wept for him, as an affectionate child mourns for the loss of his father; and even the worldly and indifferent concurred in paying a just tribute of respect to his memory. On the day of his funeral, an immense concourse of people assembled. The instructions which he had given to his friend, Mr. Stevens, respecting his funeral, were minutely attended to; and they were in strict accordance with the chaste simplicity of character which he had maintained through life. There was no hearse with its nodding plumes—no hired mourners; he had selected twelve of the senior members of his church to carry his body to the tomb, and fixed on the spot where the bier was to rest while they relieved each other from the fatigue of carrying his mortal remains. The procession moved from the rectory about ten o'clock in the morning, preceded by the Rev. Mr. Guion and two other clergymen—followed by a few of his relations and a long train of friends, walking three a-breast, in deep mourning—many of his poorer parishioners, having only a piece

of crape on their hats, fell into the rear, which was closed by the children of the Sunday-school, who wore a similar badge of grief. Immediately as the procession began to move, the bell, which had been tolling for more than an hour, ceased till the bier stopped at the appointed resting-place, when it again commenced to send forth its melancholy sounds.

On entering the churchyard, the Rev. Mr. Guion began the solemn service by repeating the animating words of Jesus Christ—"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The coffin was taken into the church, and placed on an elevated platform before the pulpit, so as to be distinctly seen by the whole congregation; and after a few minutes, during which time the people were taking their seats, Mr. Guion began reading, in a most solemn and impressive manner, the lessons which are appointed for such an occasion. Agreeably to the custom at funeral obsequies in former times, after he had finished the two lessons, he ascended the pulpit, and delivered a discourse from the following appropriate text—"Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more" (Acts xx. 38). After a short and judicious introduction, he called attention to the following remarks, which he illustrated and enforced with great effect:—

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"The decease of a minister is an event of great importance—

"I. In relation to himself. No class of men occupy a station so important, or are called to discharge duties so momentous, as ministers of the gospel. The eloquent advocate who pleads at the bar, sometimes snatches the victim from the altar, against whose life the foul conspirator has brought his charge, and he retires from the scene of his labours amidst the plaudits of the people; but in a few years they both sink into the same silent earth, and a remote posterity remains ignorant of their anxieties and of their triumphs. The fearless senator attacks iniquity in the high places of its dominion, or rouses up the slumbering principle of justice to vindicate her insulted honours; but he sleeps with his fathers, and having received the honour of his country's applause he is conveyed to the mansions of the dead. The effects of their labours terminate with the occasion of their exercise; or if they should stretch into a distant futurity, they are circumscribed within the boundaries of time. From man they receive their commission, and to man they resign it when it is executed; and though their conduct will undergo a revision at the day of judgment, yet it is from man they receive their official discharge. But it is not so with us. It is true that we are under some degree of responsibility to our superiors in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and it is equally true that we are under some degree of responsibility to the people of our cure; but our chief responsibility relates to a higher tribunal, and a more important decision awaits us than any which man can pronounce. Fix your attention for a moment on a minister of the gospel, see him tottering on the brink of eternity—he falls, we catch his descending mantle, 'sorrowing most of all that we shall see his face no more; but while we are making preparations to perform his funeral obsequies, he is giving up an account of his stewardship. Then the motives which induced him to enter the ministerial office, and which induced him to continue it—the manner in which he spent his time, and discharged the hallowed duties devolving on him—will undergo a strict investigation, and the final sentence will be pronounced, which will fix his doom in raptures or in woe, for ever. If he be found faithful, he will receive the commendation of his Master; but if unfaithful, he will be cast into outer darkness, 'where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.'

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"It is an event of importance in relation—

"II. To the people of his charge. They lose their spiritual teacher, their counsellor, their friend, and their example. Yes! and some of you who are now looking on that coffin, if permitted to give utterance to your sentiments, would say, 'There lies the holy man of God, who met me in my mad career of folly and of crime, and was the means of turning my feet into the way of peace.' 'There he lies,' another could say, 'who, when I was perishing for thirst, opened my eyes, and showed me the well of living waters.' 'Alas!' another would exclaim, 'I shall now see his face no more; who, when I was sinking into despair, under the virulence of my moral malady, told me of the balm of Gilead, and of the great Physician there, who healed and comforted me, giving me renovated health and a deathless life.' Farewell, holy man of God; we shall see thy face no more, till we see thee the express image of thy Lord's person.

"It is an event of importance in relation—

"III. To general society. No man, saith the apostle, liveth to himself. While we are individually pursuing our separate interests, we are advancing the general good, and not unfrequently serve others, while intent only on serving ourselves. If this be true of men in general, it is more emphatically true in relation to the ministers of the gospel. While they are discharging the functions of their office in relation to the people of their charge, they are diffusing principles abroad in society which will be found to operate more widely than is generally imagined. When they die, the influence of their example, of their character, of their precepts, of their individual exertions to promote private happiness, and to support public institutions—and of their prayers—is a loss which is felt not only in the immediate circle in which they moved, but to a much larger extent; though it may not be felt so instantaneously nor so deeply.

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"But, my brethren, it is not in my power to calculate the loss which you have sustained by the decease of the venerated man whose corpse is now before us; and who, for more than forty years, has preached the gospel of peace in this pulpit.

"When he first entered on the duties of his office, he found a barren wilderness; but he has left a fruitful field. The church, which was mouldering to ruins, he repaired and enlarged; the congregation, which was scattered, he has gathered together; and many who have preceded him through the dark valley, and many whom he has left to follow him, he has been the means of

saving from the impending wrath of the Almighty. It is now many years since the person who is now addressing you went, under the most unfavourable impressions, to hear him preach; but the word that fell from his lips came with power, and I, who went to scoff, returned to pray. From that hour I revered him as my spiritual father in Christ; and an intimacy soon after commenced, which continued unbroken and undisturbed till death. If I were now to give full scope to my feelings, I should probably be censured by some for pronouncing an extravagant eulogy on his character; but I am conscious that while he owed all his excellence to the renewing and purifying influence of Divine grace, he uniformly displayed, both in public and in private life, a degree of excellence which has been rarely surpassed, if equalled, in modern times. As a preacher, he excelled no less in the descriptive than in the argumentative style of his address—combining in all his discourses strength of reasoning with the most happy modes of illustration—equally capable of awing his congregation by the solemnity of his manner, and subduing them by the tenderness of his appeals; compelling them by the ardour of his feelings, and energy of his utterance, to lose sight of the messenger who was speaking, in a devout contemplation of the message which he delivered; and giving to things unseen such a power of impression, that those which are visible seemed to dwindle into a state of absolute insignificance.

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"As a man, he was courteous in manners, and amiable in disposition; as a friend, he was disinterested and faithful in his attachments; as a Christian, he was devout and catholic in his spirit; as a minister, he was independent, yet attentive and affectionate—uniformly endeavouring to incorporate in his character the moral qualities which his Lord and Master developed in the progress of his history; and though a nice observer might discover a few shades of imperfection falling on it, yet they were scarcely perceptible. He approached the nearest to the perfect man of the Scriptures of any one I ever knew; but that which gave a distinctive peculiarity to his character, and which made him the object of general esteem and veneration, was his catholic liberality, his ever-active benevolence, and his amiability—combined with a chastened seriousness and sportive playfulness of disposition, which exhibited the gravity of religion untinged by the gloom of superstition, and its cheerfulness free from the levity of folly.

"He thought and judged for himself on every part of revealed truth, and maintained the doctrines which he held with the most determined firmness; yet he never suffered his mind to be soured by the spirit of controversy, nor was he ever known to treat those who differed from him with contempt or with indifference. He loved the catholic spirit of the gospel, no less than its sublime doctrines; uniformly condemned that arrogance of spirit which leads the bigot to say of the members of his own communion, 'The temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord are we!' and demonstrated by his conduct that he was as anxious to preserve the bonds of peace unbroken amongst the different denominations of Christians as to keep the unity of the faith entire. And while he gave a decided preference to the Church of which he was so bright an ornament, yet he felt a deep interest in the prosperity of every other religious community which contends earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints; and admitted to his friendship and intimacy the pious Dissenter, with as much cordiality as he embraced an Episcopal brother.

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"But his catholic liberality did not degenerate into latitudinarianism. He was willing to cultivate Christian fellowship with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and was anxious to narrow rather than widen the ground of difference between them; but he felt no inclination to compromise any essential doctrines of the gospel as a compliment to the semi-sceptical spirit of the age—choosing rather to run the risk of incurring the charge of bigotry, than sanction a popular opinion that there is no danger in speculative error, if the person who imbibes it be sincere in his belief, and display an exterior amiability of temper and conduct, in accordance with the laws of practical righteousness. His charity was not of that deceptive cast, which places a human being who rejects the leading doctrines of Christianity on a level, in the Divine estimation, with the humble disciple of Jesus Christ who implicitly receives them, as he was convinced 'that the charity which the Scriptures so earnestly inculcate, consists in a real solicitude for the welfare of others, not in thinking well of their state;' and thus, while he gave ample scope for the exercise of his compassion in aiming to promote the salvation of all his hearers, he felt awed by that authority which separates the believer from the unbeliever, and which marks, by a palpable line of distinction, the essential difference between those who admit, and those who deny the truth as it is in Jesus.

"Some men are benevolent, but the principle of their benevolence lies embedded in their mental constitution, like fire in the flint, and it is only by hard and reiterated strokes that it can be elicited. This principle, when exerted, may produce all the effects of a spontaneous flow of feeling; but it looks so much like that sullen selfishness which is absorbed in its own gratifications, that its occasional exertions are regarded only as a novel tribute to its own capricious taste.

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"Others are benevolent, but the principle of their benevolence is associated with so much finesse and self-adulation, and with so many disgusting and offensive requirements, that while it relieves the wants of a sufferer, it inflicts a deep wound on his spirit, and makes him feel such an oppressive weight of obligation, that he cannot enjoy the comforts which have been administered to him. But the benevolence of our deceased friend was the master-passion of his soul, and it was ever wakeful—ever active; which required no qualifications for its exercise, but misery in some of her multiplied forms; it prescribed no bounds for its exertions, but the limits of his own means; and he bestowed his bounties with so much delicacy, that no other emotion was ever excited in the breast of the recipient than that of the purest gratitude to his kind benefactor.

"His kindness of disposition led him to feel great tenderness for the reputation of others; and though no one could reprove vice more keenly, yet he never sanctioned that habit of depreciating

the character of absent individuals, which may be regarded as one of the most besetting sins of human nature. Hence, few men possessed more friends, or fewer enemies; it may be doubted whether among the numerous list of the former he lost the esteem of one.

"Perhaps no man ever united more closely in his private character the dignity and the cheerfulness of religion—preserving unimpaired the sanctity of his station with a lively and playful disposition; and maintaining the reputation of a holy man of God, while hailed in general society as the amiable, the intelligent, and the interesting companion. The line which separates the harmless from the pernicious he was never known to pass, so that he never injured the sanctity of his public character by any levities in his demeanour, but inspired a greater reverence for it, by the dignified ease of his manners, and the uniform placidity and agreeableness of his temper.

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"The closing scene of his life was no less beautiful than impressive; and forces from us the exclamation of the worthless prophet, 'Let me die the death of the righteous! and let my last end be like his!' He is gone! That face on which you have looked with so much pleasure, you will see no more; that voice to which you have so often listened with mingled emotions of awe and pleasure, you will hear no more, till you meet him before the judgment-seat of the Son of God; and, brethren, permit me to ask you, whether you think you are prepared to see him, and hear him there? He has preached to you the gospel of peace, with great fidelity, and with equal affection; but have you received it, not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God? He has watched for your souls as one who knew that he must give an account; but have you, by your submission to the truth which he proclaimed, enabled him to do it with joy and not with grief? Is there no one in this congregation who has remained insensible to his moral danger, though that danger has often been pointed out to you in the most awful and impressive manner? Is there no one who has remained impenitent, notwithstanding the various efforts which the venerated deceased employed to bring you to repentance, and to a belief of the truth? Is there no one who has forced the aged pastor to retire from this pulpit to his study, and there to weep and to mourn, and to say, in the bitterness of his mental agony, 'When I speak they will not hear: but put from them the words of life, and the way of peace they will not know?' He is gone to enjoy the reward of his labours, and ere long you, my brethren, will follow him. But are you prepared to give an account of the manner in which you have improved his faithful services amongst you? If you are, you will again meet and again intermingle your social feelings and affections in a world where you will enjoy an endless duration of bliss; but if not, let me beseech you to retire, and on your knees implore mercy and forgiveness, lest you should be taken off in the midst of your sins, and be cast out with the workers of darkness, where there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever."

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When this discourse was finished, the corpse was removed to the vault; and when placed in it, the remaining part of the Burial Service was read. When the earth fell on the lid of the coffin, as the impressive words, *ashes to ashes, dust to dust*, were uttered, there was a spontaneous burst of audible weeping from the whole assemblage, which, for a few moments, so overpowered the feelings of Mr. Guion, that it was with some degree of difficulty he could proceed. At length the service was concluded; but on returning from the church the order of the procession was deranged, for while some few walked back to the rectory, others pressed round the tomb; and many stood about the churchyard in detached groups, recalling the various incidents in their history connected with their deceased pastor. "O!" said one athletic youth, who wept while he spoke, "I was a bold transgressor till I heard him preach." "I went to laugh," said another, "but I returned to pray." "He was my friend," said many voices; and all expressed their opinion that they should never see a successor equal to him.

After the concourse of people had dispersed, Mr. and Mrs. Lewellin continued wandering amongst the tombs, reading the epitaphs which surviving friendship had engraven on the headstones of their departed relatives and friends. The place of sepulture in which they were now walking, was one of the neatest of rural burying places. The walks were free from weeds; there were no gaps in the hedges; the graves bore no marks of being trodden by the foot of beast or of man; the yew trees luxuriated in their native growth, without assuming those fantastic shapes and forms which a capricious taste sometimes compels them to take, and the green ivy overspread the walls of the venerable church. Many of the inscriptions on the earlier tombstones were nearly effaced, and those which were still legible, like too many of the "good old times," recorded sentiments and expressions which are no less offensive to a refined taste, than to a scriptural faith. But in the later stones, which had been erected during the lifetime of the venerable pastor, a striking difference was observable. The inscription bore the name and the age of the occupant of the tomb, and beneath it some appropriate text of Scripture—recalling the words of an elegant writer, "It is meet, pleasant, and soothing to the pious mind, when bereaved of friends, to commemorate them on earth by some touching expression taken from that book which reveals to them a life in heaven."

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Mr. Lewellin and his wife now entered the church, resolving to go and indulge their solemn meditations beside the uncovered tomb of the deceased pastor; but on passing down the aisle, were suddenly startled by the deep sounds of sorrow. On looking towards the vault where Mr. Ingleby's remains were deposited, they saw an aged couple leaning on their staffs, looking into the grave, but they appeared too much oppressed by grief to give any other vent to their feelings than by sighs and tears. "Come, Dame, let us be gone," said the old man to his wife; "it won't be long before we see him again." As they turned round from the grave, Mr. and Mrs. Lewellin advanced and kindly endeavoured to mitigate their sorrow. "O! Sir," said the old man, "he was a good man, and a faithful minister of Christ; and many will have to bless God for ever, for sending

him amongst us. We thought we loved him while he was with us; but we did not know that we loved him so much till he was taken away. But it won't be long before we shall see him again." "Then," said Mr. Lewellin, "I presume you have received the gospel which he preached amongst you, not as 'the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God.'" "Yes, Sir, we have been enabled to receive it. Before he came to preach in this village we very seldom attended church, and never thought about the salvation of our souls; but, blessed be the name of the Lord, we were both called to the knowledge of the truth through the instrumentality of his honoured servant; and have, for the space of near forty years, been walking together as heirs of the grace of life. It was a great shock to our feelings when we heard of his death, though we expected it; but now he is gone, it is our duty to be resigned to the will of God. But, Sir, resignation may feel its loss; and the Saviour won't condemn us if we weep at the grave of our departed pastor, as He once wept at the grave of Lazarus. He was one of the most excellent of the earth. He preached well, and he confirmed the truth which he preached by the unblameableness of his life. He was a most benevolent man. He obeyed the words of the Scriptures, and did good to all, especially to the household of faith. We shall never see his like again."

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My friend and his wife felt so deeply interested by the affection and piety of this aged couple, that they walked with them to their little thatched cottage. "This little cottage," said the old man, "was built for us by our pastor, who gave it to us for our life. This is the chair in which he used to sit, and this is the Bible which he gave us, and here is his picture, which we have had for these thirty years—and this is his walking-stick, that he gave me when I took my leave of him at the door of the rectory, the Sabbath before he left us." "And when," said the old woman, "I could not see to read my Bible, he gave me these spectacles; and he used to come, and sit with us, and talk to us of Him who lived and died for sinners, and made us forget the trials of the way, by discoursing to us about the joys of the end of it. But it won't be long before we see him again."

Mr. and Mrs. Lewellin were much affected by this touching account of their old friend, whose charity and benevolence formed a theme of grateful remembrance in the minds of those poor cottagers. Perceiving that their circumstances were much straitened, they presented them with a trifling sum, and then, amid the blessings of the aged couple, took leave and proceeded on their way to Rockhill.

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## THE NEW RECTORS.

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oon after the death of the venerable Ingleby, the Rev. Mr. Cole, the Rector of the adjoining parish of Aston, whose health had been gradually declining, was taken very ill. He had accompanied several of his friends to a concert in a neighbouring town, and on his return caught a violent cold. No danger was apprehended for several weeks; but having imprudently accepted an invitation to spend an evening at a friend's, where he was detained to a late hour at whist, his favourite amusement, his indisposition gained a fresh accession of strength by exposure to the night air. He now began to entertain apprehensions of a fatal termination to his complaint, and said to his wife, when she was consulting him on the propriety of putting off a party which had been fixed for the following week, "My dear, I shall never appear amongst you again."

"Don't say so, Edward. You are getting low-spirited and unnecessarily anxious. You should keep up your spirits, and anticipate the pleasure which you will yet enjoy amongst your friends."

"I have no *wish* to die, Emily, but I *must* die. The doctors can do nothing for me. I should like to see my old friends again, but I have no spirit to entertain them."

"I heard Dr. Bailey say, that he placed great dependence on the prescription which he gave to Mr. Russel. Indeed, I think you look better. He says he has no doubt but you will recover; and all your friends say that you must banish the thought of dying, as nothing will tend so much to accelerate that awful event. I think they had better come: they will put new life into you."

"Yes, they may tell me to banish the thought of dying, but I cannot do it; it forces itself upon me in spite of all my resolutions to avoid it."

"Dr. Bailey suggested to me to read some amusing book to you. Here are the *Pickwick Papers*. Let me read you a chapter about Pickwick and Sam Weller. I know how they used to make you laugh; and a hearty laugh, to my mind, does more good than all the medicine in the world."

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"Neither Mr. Pickwick nor Sam Weller, my dear, would be proper companions for me just now. I must pay respect to the sanctity of my character. I should not object, if I get a little better, to your reading me the *Vicar of Wakefield*, or a paper from the *Spectator* or *Rambler*. But I fear my disease has gone too far to be checked by any human expedient. I must yield to the law of nature, and prepare for death; and it is, I assure you, an awful thing to die—to go from one world to another."

"Well, my dear," replied his wife, "as you have long since made your peace with God, you have nothing to fear; and therefore I hope you will keep your mind composed."

"My mind is tolerably composed, Emily, except when delirious thoughts come and throw it into a tumultuous agitation, and then I feel wandering about in a maze of confusion. Death may be looked upon by some, who have no taste for earthly enjoyments, with peculiar interest, as the forerunner of their future bliss; but I would rather live than die."

When Mr. Cole found himself getting worse, and his most sanguine friends began to fear that the hour of his departure was at hand, he wished to receive the sacrament; and the Rev. Dr. Greig, from a neighbouring town, was requested to come and administer it to him. The Doctor seemed much affected when introduced to his old friend; and, after gently squeezing his hand, as a token of affection, he sat down by his bedside.

"I am sorry, Sir," said the reverend Doctor, "to find you so extremely ill; but I hope you will yet recover."

"That, I fear, is impossible; I must die; and I wish, before I die, to receive the holy sacrament. I think it will put strength into my soul, and enable me to meet death without dread."

"I hope you have no dread of death."

"Why, no, Doctor, I have no dread of death; but as it is the passage into the eternal world, I feel that it is an awful thing to die—more awful at the crisis than in anticipation." [542]

"It may be awful to the wicked, but it cannot be to you, who have spent your life in the public service of our Church, promoting the cause of virtue and religion."

"I confess, Sir, that I have nothing to reproach myself with. I have spent a long life in the service of our Church, and have endeavoured to teach my parishioners the way to heaven; and as a recompense for my well-meant efforts I hope eternal life will be given to me; but now that death is near, I feel it to be a more awful thing to die than when I viewed it at a distance. I now see the propriety of the passage in our Burial Service—'O God, most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge, eternal, suffer us not at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee.'"

Dr. Greig now proceeded to read the Communion Service; and having partaken of the elements himself, and given them to Mrs. Cole and the nurse, he presented them to his dying friend, who ate the bread, and drank the wine, with great solemnity of manner. The service being ended, he said that he had one more request to make, and then he should die in peace. "I wish, Doctor, you would read the Burial Service at my interment, and preach my funeral sermon on the following Sunday; and you may tell my parishioners, that I *die in charity with all mankind*."

In about six hours after his friend left him, a change took place, and he remained insensible the greater part of the night. Towards the morning he awoke out of a deep sleep; and, having taken a little refreshment, he sat very composedly for a few minutes. Looking at his wife with intense earnestness, he said, "My dear Emily, I suppose I must die;" and then he fell back on his pillow, heaved a deep sigh, and expired. On the seventh day after his death he was buried in a vault, near the communion table of his own church; and Dr. Greig, according to his request, read the service, and delivered his funeral discourse on the following Sabbath. The congregation, which was unusually large, appeared deeply affected, especially when the Doctor pointed to the tomb in which their deceased pastor had just been interred. [543]

In delineating the character of Mr. Cole, Dr. Greig dwelt for some time on his classical taste and his literary acquirements; paid a just tribute of praise to his amiable disposition and obliging manners, and commended him for his uniform attachment to the Church, of which he had been a minister for the greater part of half a century; and concluded by saying, "His religion was not of that austere cast which prohibits the innocent amusements and gratifications of society, and dooms its possessor to a life of perpetual gloom and mortification. It was an enlightened piety—a piety which united the gravity of wisdom with a cheerful and facetious spirit, which courted no popularity by the vanity of its pretensions; which sought retirement rather than publicity; and conciliated the favour of the Almighty by the practice of virtue, rather than by the dogmas of belief. His life is an epitome of moral virtue and social goodness, which may be read by all men with great profit. It will teach us all, and especially the clergy of our Church, how they should live, and what recompense they may expect to receive when called to die, as a reward for their fidelity to their charge. He did not, as we all know, in imitation of the example of some, rob other churches to fill his own; but was contented to preach to the select few who favoured him with their presence and their friendship; and who, I doubt not, will revere his memory as long as the power of recollection remains; and who, when the duties of life are discharged, will go where he is gone, to renew the intimacy of friendship, and enjoy the felicity of social converse. And who is not struck with the dignified serenity of his death! There were no raptures of enthusiasm in prospect of dissolution; no flights of fancy; no rhapsodies of expression, as though he were weary of life and longed to lose it; but a submission to the law of nature, which requires that we must die, accompanied by a sublime avowal which he wished me to make to you, *that he died in charity with all mankind*."

In examining the character of these two clergymen, and reviewing the temper of mind which they displayed in the immediate prospect of entering the eternal world, the intelligent reader will perceive a manifest difference; and though it does not become us to invade the province of the Supreme Judge, and fix the final destiny of any human being, yet we may be permitted to say, that the venerable Ingleby bore the nearest resemblance, in his life and in his death, to the ministers of the New Testament. If Mr. Cole was the most learned man, Mr. Ingleby was the most spiritual; and though Mr. Ingleby derived no gratification from the trifling amusements of fashionable life, yet he uniformly displayed a cheerfulness of disposition which became the sanctity of his office. Mr. Cole consented to die because he could not live; while Mr. Ingleby yielded up his life as a free-will offering to God who first gave it, and then demanded it. In the death of Mr. Cole we can discover no humility on account of the imperfections of his character—no utterances of a mind delighting in communion with the great Supreme—no reference to a [544]

Mediator, by whom the guilty and the worthless are reconciled to the offended Sovereign—no ardent anticipations of a state of changeless purity and glory; while, in the closing scene of Mr. Ingleby's life, we behold a spirit, yet inhabiting the tabernacle of earth, springing forward to meet the great Deliverer—hailing his approach with mingled emotions of awe and delight—giving utterance to the sublimest conceptions of future bliss, and in language, such as Paul employed when treading on the narrow isthmus which separates time from eternity. The death of Mr. Cole was certainly the most calm; but it was the calm of a stagnant pool, whose waters move not because they are unaffected by any current; while the death of Mr. Ingleby resembled the peaceful ripple of the crystal stream, as it moves tranquilly from its source to swell the waters of the vast ocean. The one died like a philosopher, over whose mind the light of evidence produced a belief of the existence of an eternal world, which, alas! presented no powerful attractions; the other, like a sinner, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and made meet to possess the inheritance of the saints in light, in comparison with which the brightest honours of earth pass away as things of no value.

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When the pastor of a Dissenting church is called away from his flock, to give an account of his stewardship to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, an event occurs in its history which generally produces a most powerful effect on the minds of the surviving members. As he, while living, was the pastor of their choice, so, when dead, they cease not to venerate and esteem his memory. They pay him, it is true, no superstitious homage. All they show is the feeling of pure nature, which requires no artificial expedients to express its affection for the object of its esteem when he is taken away. But amongst them, while the pastor dies, the ministry lives. They turn away from his tomb to listen to the voice of his successor; and though they cannot easily transfer that strong attachment and profound respect which have been the growth of a long and close intimacy, yet they receive him in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation.

In the choice of a successor they have great advantages over their Christian brethren who are members of the Establishment. They are not compelled to receive a pastor, but are left to choose one; and hence, as is natural, they select one whose religious opinions agree with their own, whose manner of preaching accords with their own taste, and whose character is such as corresponds with the sacredness of his profession. And though a popular election is liable to some objections, yet, from the mode in which it is generally conducted amongst them, they are but as the small dust of the balance, when weighed against the sterling value of the privilege which it involves and secures. The argument employed by Dissenters in support of this practice is, in their judgment, quite conclusive. They say, As we claim the right of choosing the attorney whom we consult on a point of law—of choosing our surgeon and physician when visited by sickness—of choosing the tutor under whose care we place our children, we act still more in accordance with the established laws of social life, and the most obvious dictates of enlightened reason, when we exercise the right of choice in relation to the pastor from whose public ministrations we are to receive the consolations of the gospel of peace. In this instance, no less than in others, a preference will be felt; and while we hold all in reputation for their works' sake, who discharge the sacred duties of the pastoral office with fidelity, we shall derive a greater gratification, and higher degree of improvement, from the labours of one for whose manner of preaching we may feel a decided predilection and regard. When this right of choice is denied us, we are compelled to receive a minister who has been appointed over us by the authority of another, and if he be just such a one as we like, no evil is produced; but suppose he reject the doctrines which we receive as true, or suppose his style of preaching be in direct opposition to our taste, or suppose his moral conduct be not in exact accordance with his profession, what in such a case ought to be our line of conduct? Can we expect to become established in our faith, by going where that faith is perpetually assailed? Can we expect to derive consolation, if we go where the manner in which the message is offered offends our taste? Can we expect to venerate the ministry, if the man who holds the hallowed office display not the same mind which was in Christ Jesus our Lord? Impossible! We may make the experiment, but it will not be found productive of the fruits of righteousness and peace; as the laws of nature forbid us to calculate on gathering grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.

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Within a few weeks after the death of Mr. Ingleby, the living of Broadhurst was presented to Mr. Porteous, the grandson of a neighbouring magistrate of the same name,<sup>[41]</sup> who took offence at the first sermon Mr. Ingleby preached; and though he felt a profound respect for his private virtues, yet he withdrew from his ministry, and usually attended that of Mr. Cole. This young man possessed a fine person, and the graces of a popular and commanding elocution; but he was gay in his manners, volatile in his disposition, addicted to the sports of the field, and decidedly opposed to those peculiar doctrines of the gospel which his predecessor had so long and so faithfully preached.

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As his character was generally known through the parish, the pious members of the Church were deeply depressed when they heard that he was appointed to succeed their deceased pastor; but they prudently resolved to hear him preach, having previously met on several different occasions to pray that a double portion of the Spirit of grace might rest upon him. The church was excessively crowded when he delivered his first discourse, which was founded on the following text—"Be not righteous over much."

He read the prayers with so much seriousness and propriety of emphasis, that the whole congregation was delighted with him. When he announced his text, there was a simultaneous movement amongst them; and for a few moments they looked at each other as though deeply amazed, and then the eyes of all were fastened on him. After adjusting his position and his attitude with great caution, and surveying his audience with an appearance of complacency, he

began reading his sermon, which he delivered in fourteen minutes, and then concluded the service. The sermon was a severe philippic on the labours of his predecessor, and the piety of his hearers; and though in the conclusion he paid a passing tribute of respect to his private virtues, and the benefits which the parish had received from his pastoral visits, yet he gave it as his decided opinion that he had uniformly disregarded the *important* injunction of the text:—"That he erred from the purest motives we all must admit; and it must be some consolation to know, that his error was all on the side of virtue; but virtue is never so lovely as when she is kept from all excess of feeling—as when she spurns from her those restraints, which, by keeping her out of the circle of *innocent* indulgences, give her the appearance of grief-worn sadness—as when she enjoys life, and is contented to wait for the reward which the Almighty will confer on her honest and well-meant endeavours to please him. That it will be my endeavour to avoid the error into which my most excellent predecessor fell, my intelligent hearers may calculate on; and I flatter myself by so doing, I shall diffuse over the whole of my parish, the air of cheerful gaiety and social pleasure; and that the gloom which has so long hung over you will soon disappear, as the lowering cloud retires from the face of nature, when the bright orb of day scatters his golden rays in passing from the horizon to the meridian."

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When he had finished his discourse, he paused for the loud Amen; but the good old clerk disdained to utter it; and when, on retiring to the vestry, he was asked by Mr. Porteous, the grandsire of the new Rector, why he had neglected his duty, he honestly replied, "Because, Sir, I did not choose to sanction those perversions of the gospel which the Rector has been guilty of this morning; nor appear to commend the severe and unjust animadversions which he has made on the character of my deceased pastor."

"Then, Sir, you shall be turned out of office."

"I will not wait to be turned out, Sir, I will resign it; for I have too much love for the truth to sanction error, and hold the reputation of my deceased pastor in too much esteem to say Amen, after it has been so wantonly defamed."

"Then, Sir, I suppose you intend to raise the standard of revolt against my grandson; but if that be your mind, you shall suffer for it."

"As I live, Sir, in a land of freedom, and was never in bondage to any man, I shall not, now I am grown gray in years, sell my birth-right for a mess of pottage; and therefore, without wishing to give either you or the new Rector any offence, I frankly tell you, that while he continues to preach as he has preached this morning, I will never return to hear him."

"You are an obstinate fellow, and ought not to be suffered to speak to your superiors in this style."

"You asked for the reasons of my conduct, which I have given you; and also for the line of conduct I intend to pursue, and I have told you; and now, as you descend to abuse, I will retire."

This altercation with the old clerk, who was greatly esteemed by the congregation for his superior intelligence and decided piety, was overheard by many of the people, who were much pleased; first, by his silence at the conclusion of the service, and now, by the bold stand which he made against the perversion of the truth, and the unmerited attack on the reputation of the venerable deceased. On coming out of the vestry, he was commended by them, and urged not to suffer any threat to induce him to bend to the authority, which had so unhandsomely endeavoured to intimidate him.

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As Mr. Lewellin had acquired a considerable degree of influence among the pious members of the Church, during the short time he had resided in the parish, they very naturally looked to him for counsel at this critical juncture; and though he was unwilling to take any premature steps, yet he gave it as his decided opinion, that they ought not to suffer the gospel to be driven from amongst them. "I am a Dissenter," said he to a few friends who waited on him; "but while the gospel was preached in the Church, I felt perfectly willing to worship there, and should have continued to do so, if the new Rector had followed the example of our deceased pastor, but as he has chosen to make such a bold avowal of his determination to extirpate the serious and devout piety of the parish, that he may propagate his gay and anti-Christian religion, I think we are called upon by the voice of Providence to prevent it."

"I cannot leave the Church," said one.

"Nor I," said another.

"Nor I," said a third.

"I should not like to leave it," said another, "but if I cannot hear the gospel in the Church, I will hear it where I can."

It was finally determined to let things take their course for the next few weeks, during which time they were to consult their friends on the question.

On the Sabbath after Mr. Porteous preached his first sermon at Broadhurst, Mr. Hartley, Mr. Cole's successor, took possession of his living at Aston, and preached his first discourse from Ezek. xxxvii. 3—"And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest." From these words, taken in connection with the entire parable, he gave a description of the moral condition of man, during the period of his unregeneracy; demonstrated the inefficacy of all human expedients to recover him, without the co-operation of a supernatural power; and traced the progress of his spiritual renovation by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit, from its earliest symptoms to its final consummation in heaven. The sermon discovered

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some ingenuity, but more judgment; it abounded with striking remarks, expressed in the most appropriate language; but its predominating quality was a regular appeal to the understanding and the heart of the audience, conducted with such force of reasoning, and charm of persuasion, that many expressed their astonishment at their former ignorance of revealed truth; while those who had long enjoyed the ministry of the venerable Ingleby, rejoiced that God had sent another faithful messenger amongst them. Some few, who were the late incumbent's personal friends, and who often participated with him in the amusements of fashionable life, were displeased with the *length* of the sermon, though they were gratified with the chasteness of the language which was employed; and reprobated the austere requirements of the new religion, while they spoke in very complimentary terms of the elegant composition and the good delivery of the new Rector. The great majority of the people, however, were astonished and delighted; and from the conclusion of the sermon were led to anticipate in Mr. Hartley a very different pastor from Mr. Cole.

"Hitherto, many of you have lived," said the preacher, "without any deep repentance on account of your sins—without any active and operative faith in the efficacy of the Saviour's death—without enjoying any spiritual communion with the great Invisible—and without anticipating your entrance into the eternal world with that sublime awe which such an event ought to inspire in your breast. It devolves on me to rouse you from this state of deep insensibility and criminal impiety. You live; but what is that life which you have lived? Has it not been a life of social pleasure—a life of vain indulgences—a life of indifference to the interesting facts, the sublime doctrines, the pure precepts, and the glorious promises of the gospel of Jesus Christ! It now devolves on me to awaken you, if possible, out of this mental delusion, that you may 'yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead;' then ye 'shall have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.' To accomplish this, I shall add private admonition to public instruction; and though I have no wish to pry into the secrets of your families, nor to obtrude myself where my presence would not be acceptable, yet it will be my endeavour, as far as possible, to gain an accurate knowledge of the spiritual state of the whole of my charge, in the hope that by God's blessing I may be able at the last day to present every one of you perfect in Christ Jesus. When you are afflicted, I will visit you; when in trouble, I will administer to you the consolations of the gospel; in your dying hours, I shall consider it a privilege to be permitted to cheer you with the hope of immortality; and as I am placed over you as your spiritual guide and friend, I assure you, that there is no sacrifice which I will hesitate to make, nor any duty which I will not most cheerfully perform, to promote your happiness; and I shall esteem the gratification of serving you an adequate recompense for all my exertions, as I seek not yours, but you."

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## A SECESSION AT BROADHURST.



When Mr. Hartley took possession of his cure at Aston, Mr. Stevens immediately declined having public worship conducted in his chapel any longer. On being remonstrated with by Mr. Langley, a zealous Dissenter, for breaking up a society which had been flourishing for many years, he said, "I dissented, not from choice,<sup>[552]</sup> but from necessity; but now I can hear the gospel in the parish church, I think it no less my duty to return to her communion, than I once felt it my duty to withdraw from it. The minister who is appointed over us is a good man; and as the church in which he officiates is large enough to contain the whole of the population, I see no reason why the people should be divided, especially as most of them have no conscientious objections against either the doctrines or the ceremonies of our Episcopal Establishment."

"But, Sir," replied Mr. Langley, "though the gospel be now preached in the church, you are not certain that it will be after the death or removal of the present incumbent; and then what are the pious members of the church to do, if you now shut up your chapel? Would it not be more prudent on your part, to secure the permanent continuance of the gospel in the parish, by perpetuating its public ministrations in your chapel, than thus hazard its entire expulsion? If you adopt this plan, there will be a place of refuge for the piety of the parish, if at any future time it should be compelled to retire from the Established church."

"Such a plan, I have no doubt," replied Mr. Stevens, "would meet with the approbation of many pious Dissenters; but I am not disposed to adopt it. If, under the ministry of our present Rector, the people should receive the truth, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, they will not suffer it to disappear from amongst them, even if they should be deprived of it in the church; but will most certainly avail themselves of their rights as British freemen, and erect for themselves a chapel, in which they may worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, and enjoy a ministry of their own choice."

But while the sun of prosperity was shining on the parish of Aston, dispelling the gloom of ignorance and superstition which had hovered over it for many years, it was setting on the adjoining hamlet, which had for a longer time enjoyed the light of truth, leaving the people in a most disconsolate state. "To lose our old pastor," said an old Christian to Mr. Lewellin, "was a great loss; but to have the candlestick removed from amongst us, and the light thereof extinguished, is a much greater loss. While we had the light we rejoiced in it; but I fear that, like the church of Ephesus, we have lost our first love; and as we have not repented and done our first works, the Lord has visited us with this grievous judgment."

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A few of the more influential members of the Establishment met at Mr. Lewellin's to consider what plan they ought to adopt on the present occasion. As they venerated the Church, and felt an ardent attachment to its forms and ceremonies, they were unwilling to withdraw from her communion. One gentleman said, he had been to consult the Rev. Mr. Guion, who gave it as his decided opinion that they should still attend their parish church, and pray for the conversion of the new Rector. "If," he said, "you have not the gospel in the pulpit, you have it in the desk; and though it may not please God to answer your prayers, yet you will have this compensation for the sacrifice you will be called upon to make—that you have remained faithful to your Church."

"I have no wish to leave the Church," replied another; "but I must hear the gospel. I am commanded to take heed *what I hear*; and if I disobey this injunction, how can I expect to enjoy the Divine blessing?" In this opinion they all concurred; and as they could attend the neighbouring church, it was proposed that they should sit under the ministry of the new Rector at Aston.

"But," said Mr. Lewellin, "though we who have vehicles can easily go three or four miles on the Sabbath-day, to enjoy a pure and an enlightened ministry, yet what are the poor and the infirm to do? They cannot attend; and shall we leave them to spend the remainder of their days in a state of spiritual destitution? Have they no claim on our benevolent feelings? Shall we, by deserting them in this their low estate, allow them to go and utter the mournful complaint at the footstool of the Divine throne, '*No man careth for our souls?*' Shall we provide no spiritual comforter, but suffer them to live and die without having one near them to administer the consolations of religion? Shall we stand still and see this fine moral inheritance falling back into its original state of ignorance and vice; when, by acting that part which our deceased pastor more than once recommended, we may be the means of preserving it from decay? Did he not say, in the last sermon he preached to us, that he hoped the Lord would provide another minister, who would preach the gospel to us either in the church, *or elsewhere?* And in a private conversation, on the evening of his departure, he said, in reply to a question, '*The great Shepherd may pitch another fold, and lead you to another pasturage.*'"

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"If," said a gentleman, "I were to consult my own inclination, I should still attend with my family at Broadhurst; but I do not think we should act a generous or a Christian part if we were to make no effort to establish a gospel ministry in the parish. Cannot we do what Mr. Stevens did under similar circumstances? and then, if it should please God at any future time, to favour us with a Rector who will preach the same doctrines as those which we have been accustomed to hear, we can return to the Church, and live and die in her communion. And if not, we shall have this compensation for the sacrifice which we shall be called to make, that we have acted in accordance with the wishes of our deceased pastor, and, I trust, in accordance with the will of our Lord and Master." This suggestion was eagerly seized by several others; and it was finally determined to build a neat chapel, large enough to contain about 500 worshippers; and to obtain the permanent labours of some good minister of Jesus Christ. As soon as this decision was made known, the pious villagers expressed their gratitude in the most affecting terms; and offered to contribute, out of the depths of their poverty, towards the necessary expenses which would be incurred; but their more wealthy Christian brethren rather chose to bear the whole burden among themselves.

One gentleman gave a piece of freehold land, on which the chapel was erected; and adjoining it, a house for the minister, with a large garden attached. It was built within the space of six months; and by the exertions of Mr. Lewellin, Mr. Drew, a pious and intelligent young man, was appointed to take the pastoral charge of the people. Being of a catholic spirit, and wishing to render his public ministrations generally acceptable, he prudently consented to read the Liturgy of the Church of England. Though, at first, some of the people sighed, and others wept as they passed by the venerable building in which for so many years they had worshipped the God of their fathers, yet in process of time they felt an equal degree of attachment to this second temple, which, if less imposing in its appearance, contained the Shechinah of truth, which departed from the altar when the venerable Ingleby fell asleep in Jesus. Some years after, in a conversation with the intelligent clerk, who held the same office in the chapel as he had filled in the church, he informed me, that his pastor bore a near resemblance to the deceased Rector, in the amiability of his temper, and in the ardour of his zeal for the salvation of his hearers, though he differed from him in the manner and style of his preaching. "The Rector, Sir," he remarked, "was a son of consolation, from whose lips the words of mercy fell in soft and subduing accents on the ears of the congregation; Mr. Drew is a Boanerges, the thunder of whose eloquence awes us by its majesty; but when he has wrought up our feelings to the highest degree of terror, he suddenly shifts the scene, and exhibits to our view the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Mr. Ingleby, I think, had the finest imagination, but Mr. Drew has the most powerful intellect; and though the former could enter into all the variations of Christian experience with the greatest ease, yet the latter applies the truth with equal force to the wounded conscience. Mr. Ingleby was distinguished by the gracefulness of his manner; Mr. Drew excels in the force and dignity of his delivery; and though we shall never cease to respect the memory of our former pastor, we are equally attached to our present. Under his ministry, no less than under that of his predecessor, many have been reclaimed from the error of their ways to the wisdom of the just; while the young and the more advanced Christian have been built up in the faith and the hope of the gospel. The poor are visited in their cottages; the dying have a spiritual comforter with them in their last moments; and over the whole parish a moral vigilance is exercised, which receives the sanction of all the wise and the good."

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After witnessing the changes which a few years had made in the external establishment of

religion in these two parishes, while the same moral process was going on in the salvation of the people, I felt how superior, in its nature and tendency, is the spirit of the gospel to that of religious bigotry. Had Mr. Stevens felt a bigoted attachment to the principle of dissent, he would have kept open his chapel after the settlement of Mr. Hartley at Aston, and thus have divided the people into two distinct societies; while the congregation at Broadhurst, if they had venerated the church in which the venerable Ingleby had so long preached, more than the truth which he delivered, would have been left without an evangelical ministry. But by acting the part of wisdom and of piety, they perpetuated the truth in each parish, without occasioning any division amongst those who were attached to it. Though in one village they sat to hear its enunciations on unconsecrated ground, while in the other it addressed them within the walls of the Establishment; yet as it derived none of its importance or worth from the places in which it is proclaimed, nor from the ministers who preached it, they mutually received it with meekness, as the engrafted word which is able to save the soul. Nor can I doubt that the Saviour visited with equal delight each congregation which assembled together in his name—that the Divine Spirit conveyed the same resistless energy to the Dissenting as to the Episcopal ministry—that the angels of heaven hovered over the village chapel with as much pleasure as over the village church; and that those who were made meet for glory on unconsecrated ground, were received with equal rapture by the spirits of the just made perfect, as their brethren who had worshipped within the pale of the Establishment. They differed in their relation to the external forms of Christianity, but possessing its pure and heavenly spirit, they stood in the same relation to Jesus Christ, who was their Saviour—to the Holy Ghost, who was their Comforter—and to heaven, which was their undefiled inheritance; and when, at the appointed time, any of them departed this life, they were neither commended nor censured for their denominative attachments while on earth, but admitted into the joy of their Lord as sinners redeemed by his blood. A friendly intercourse was kept up between the pious members of the two churches and their respective pastors, which demonstrated to the villagers that their religion was substantially the same in its nature and in its design, though it differed in a few external ceremonies. If they went to church, it was to worship God—to confess their sins—and to hear the glad tidings of salvation; and if they went to the village chapel, it was to engage in the same hallowed exercises, and listen to the same gospel of peace. As they felt no superstitious attachment to the places in which they assembled, nor imagined that the Episcopal form of ordination gave to the clergyman a degree of sanctity which the Dissenting minister did not possess, they intermingled in each other's society, not to wrangle or contend for superiority, but to cultivate the unity of their faith, and display the excellence of that grace which "teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Is it not to be regretted, that a similar spirit has not been uniformly cherished amongst the disciples of Jesus Christ? but, alas! they have in general caught the spirit of the mother of Zebedee's children, rather than that of their Master, and have been struggling for the ascendancy, instead of living in harmony with each other. And is it not to this cause, more than any deficiency of evidence, that we may fairly account for the too general rejection of the gospel; for can we expect others to believe in its Divine origin, when they see those who embrace it with the greatest eagerness, displaying an intolerant temper, and refusing to hold communion with each other because they happen to differ on a few points of opinion, which they all acknowledge to be of secondary importance? Every Christian should examine the following prayer of Jesus Christ, and the reason which he assigned for presenting it:—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John xvii. 20-23).

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When the spirit of religious bigotry takes possession of the youthful breast, we naturally feel disposed to attribute it to the immaturity of the judgment, or a deficiency in Christian principles. We therefore conclude, that in more advanced life these unamiable qualities will disappear, and a cordial attachment will be formed for all of every denomination who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth. This, I believe, is generally the case, though we sometimes see the evil spirit of bigotry souring the temper of aged Christians, contracting their benevolence, and rendering them more disposed to live apart from their brethren, than on terms of friendly intercourse; and if we venture to remonstrate with them, we are gravely told that they must preserve the consistency of their character. Consistency! And why not preserve the consistency of their character as Christians, who are required to love each other as brethren, rather than the consistency of their character as religious bigots, who neglect the weightier matters of the law, to cultivate the mint and cummin of ecclesiastical alienation and intolerance? Why not, when peculiar circumstances require it, overlook the little points of difference that exist between them; and unite as those who are endowed with the same spirit of faith—who are governed by the same authority, and who are moving on to the same state of blessedness and glory?

There were a few Dissenters who could not conscientiously worship within the walls of the Establishment, even though they revered the character of the new Rector at Aston, and approved of his ministry. Not being able to support a society of their own denomination, they subjected themselves to the inconvenience and expense of travelling several miles every Sabbath to enjoy the privilege of communion with their brethren at Broadhurst. But though they could not unite with their fellow-Christians at Aston in the exercises of public devotion, they were, nevertheless, zealous in co-operating with them in the execution of those plans of benevolence which related to the moral improvement and the temporal advantage of the hamlet in which they resided. A latitudinarian would be disposed to censure this unbending spirit in reference to public worship,

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and feel himself justified in holding it up to general reprobation; but a wise man will be sparing of his animadversions on conscientious scruples, when they are not suffered to disturb the harmony of friendly intercourse, and do not disqualify those who feel them from uniting with others of a different faith in the cultivation of the affections and charities of social life.

The Rev. Mr. Guion, who resided within a few miles of Broadhurst, and who had been for many years the devoted friend of the venerable Ingleby, was so much displeased when the pious members of the congregation seceded from the ministry of Mr. Porteous, that he broke off all intercourse with them, and not unfrequently expressed his censures in rather strong language. As they chose, in opposition to his advice, to withdraw from the pale of the Establishment, though he knew that their new Rector preached another gospel than that which they had heard from the lips of their deceased pastor, he looked upon them as schismatics, with whom he could not associate, even in the ordinary familiarities of friendship, without endangering his reputation as a clergyman of the Church of England. Though he admitted that some moral good might possibly result from the establishment of a Dissenting ministry in the village, yet he thought the evil would more than counter-balance it. He was a good man, but not a perfect man; a zealous minister of the everlasting gospel, but he wished that gospel to be preached only within the pale of the Established church; and though in private life he exhibited many traits of the Christian character, yet they were rather too strongly marked by the blemishes of a sectarian spirit. [560]

He occasionally met Mr. Drew, the Dissenting clergyman at Broadhurst, at the anniversaries of the various Bible Societies in the country, and also at the houses of Mr. Stevens and Mr. Lewellin. On these occasions he behaved to him with all the courtesy of a gentleman, but for a long while he appeared more disposed to shun than to court his society. He spoke of Mr. Drew in terms of respect, but not with the warmth of a brotherly affection as one minister of Jesus Christ should speak of another. On one occasion, having spoken rather more unguardedly than usual, Miss Ryder, who was one of his own hearers, with a delicate severity of rebuke, said, "I presume, Sir, when an angel of the Lord reports to his fellow-angels that a sinner on earth is brought to repentance, they do not pause to inquire whether he is a Churchman or a Dissenter before their rejoicing begins."

"And I suppose," remarked Mrs. Stevens, "when they receive their appointment to minister to any of the heirs of salvation, they do not pause in their embassy, contending which shall have the honour of waiting on a Conformist, in preference to a Nonconformist."

This colloquy was here joined by Mr. Ryder, who was as catholic in his spirit, as he was decided in his love of the truth. "To me," he observed, "the ecclesiastical distinctions between church and dissent, on which some rest such importance, appear superlatively little and unimportant, when put in comparison with the essential doctrines of the common salvation; and the less attention we pay to them the better is it, I think, for our own peace and Christian consistency. I am a Churchman in part, because I was educated as one; and because I can hear the gospel preached by her clergy. If, however, I were living in a parish where the gospel is disowned, as it is at Broadhurst, I am sure I should, without a moment's hesitation, turn a Dissenter, rather than not hear it." [561]

"And so should I," said several voices.

It is satisfactory to be able to add, that Mr. Guion's prejudices gradually subsided, and that in course of time he returned to the catholic and liberal spirit which he had formerly displayed when he contributed so generously to the necessities of the Rev. Mr. Powell.<sup>[42]</sup> Though, in the views held by him regarding the great body of Christians, he never attained to the largeness of heart so eminently displayed by Mr. Ingleby; he bore, nevertheless, in his character a strong resemblance to that excellent pastor, and appeared as his living representative in all that was lovely and of good report.

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## A FAREWELL TO OLD FRIENDS.



In quitting Fairmount, to return home, the reader will recollect that I left Mrs. Orme to remain for a short time longer at Rockhill, as Mrs. Lewellin felt much depressed in spirits by her father's death, and required the presence of a cheerful and affectionate friend to enable her gradually to dispel her grief, and regain her wonted interest in her ordinary domestic employments. Mrs. Orme's stay was protracted much longer than she originally intended, and the close of the year had nearly arrived before her kind friends would allow her to depart. During the period of her sojourn at Rockhill, she had gained many friends, who were attracted as much by the unsophisticated kindness and liveliness of her disposition as by her painfully interesting and romantic history. Among others, none formed a greater intimacy than Miss Ryder, who, with her brother, was now a frequent visitor at Rockhill and Fairmount. Mrs. Orme was invited to spend a few days at Aston, where she found herself exceedingly happy in the cheerful society of her new friend Anna, and the hearty hospitality of her brother, who was led to take a deep interest in his guest from the fancied resemblance which she bore to Matilda Denham, the departed object of his youthful affections. On taking leave of Mr. and Miss Ryder, Mrs. Orme made the latter promise that she would pay her a visit in the course of the ensuing summer, at the Elms, as Anna generally went to London once a-year to visit an elder sister, who had been married and settled there for some years. [562]

About two months after Mrs. Orme's departure from Rockhill, Mr. Ingleby died, as narrated in a foregoing chapter, and was shortly followed to the grave by Mr. Cole, the Sector of the parish in which Mr. and Miss Ryder resided. The reader is already aware of the remarkable religious revolution which now took place in Aston and the adjoining parish of Broadhurst, though of a very lamentable description in the latter place. In the course of the same spring, Mrs. Orme received intelligence of her husband's death, an event which naturally excited painful emotions in her breast, though, considering his past conduct, her grief for his loss could neither be very deep nor poignant. Her little boy was now nearly two years old, a lovely child both in appearance and disposition, and an immense favourite with his grandfather, who had insisted on his mother leaving him at the Elms when she went to visit her friends in the west of England.

On hearing of Captain Orme's death, Miss Ryder judged it best to defer her visit to the Elms; and consequently it was not till the following year that she had again the pleasure of renewing her friendship with Mrs. Orme, and thus becoming acquainted with the other members of her family. Nothing could exceed the kind attention paid her by Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, who felt grateful for the kindness she had shown to Emma while at Aston. They insisted on her remaining for a considerable period with them, and also that Mr. Ryder should pay a visit to the Elms, and take his sister home.

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Mr. and Mrs. Holmes had been much pleased with Miss Ryder, and also with her brother when he arrived at the Elms. The happy change, too, in his religious character, which had now taken place, led to a strong congeniality of feeling in the intercourse between him and his worthy host and hostess. Many a delightful excursion was taken by the family in company with their guests; a feeling of happiness pervaded every member of the household; and for the first time since the death of Louisa, the family regained their former liveliness and buoyancy of spirits. It was noticed, however, that on all occasions Mr. Ryder contrived to secure the company of Mrs. Orme to himself, both in the family excursions or when at home at the Elms. Various excuses were invented to favour their being by themselves, without awakening suspicion, which frequently excited a smile, and sometimes a good-humoured sarcasm from her sister Jane.

"Dear, dear," said Mrs. Orme, "I left a small needle-case in the alcove where we were sitting last evening."

"I will run, Emma, and fetch it."

"By no means, dear Jane, I won't trouble you; I can very readily put my hand upon it."

Mr. Ryder of course accompanied her to the alcove—a sweet retired spot; and then they extended their walk to a Roman camp, at a few miles' distance—contriving to be back in time to dress for dinner. On the following morning, Mr. Ryder, knowing that Miss Jane was under a special engagement to meet an old friend, said at the breakfast table, "I should like to take an excursion to town to-day, if you young ladies will accompany me."

"I believe, Sir," said the facetious Jane, with an arch look and significant nod and smile, "you know that I cannot go, which possibly may make the excursion the more agreeable."

The carriage was ordered out; the excursion was taken; and an apology was in readiness to be offered on their return for the lateness of the hour. These, and many similar indications of a mutual attachment, were too obvious to elude the notice of Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, and therefore it excited no astonishment when Mr. Ryder, one morning, with Mrs. Orme leaning on his arm, entered Mr. Holmes' study, and requested his consent to their union. The old man was so much delighted by this somewhat anticipated request, that without hesitation, he replied, "I will most cheerfully give it; and may the Lord bless you." At this moment Mrs. Holmes entered the room, and joyfully expressed her concurrence in the proposed match, which had already received the sanction of her husband.

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After all the preliminaries were duly adjusted the wedding took place; and the ceremony was conducted by the Dissenting clergyman whom Mr. and Mrs. Holmes attended, and whose ministrations had proved so great a source of consolation to Louisa, on the last occasion that she was able to go to chapel.<sup>[43]</sup> In accordance with the feelings, however, both of the bride and bridegroom, it was resolved that there should be no public display or large assemblage of guests, and that none but the most intimate friends on both sides should be invited. The marriage was consequently a very quiet proceeding; but though unattended by the public acclamations which greeted that of Mr. and Mrs. Lewellin, it was nevertheless quite as happy a one, both at the time of its celebration and in its results.

On the ceremony being completed, the married couple started for a tour of a few weeks on the Continent, proceeding by Antwerp and Brussels to the Rhine, thence passing through Switzerland to Geneva, and then returning home through France, by Lyons and Paris. On arriving at Southampton, to which they had crossed from Dieppe, they proceeded on their journey to the west of England, and in the course of a day or two arrived at Aston, where Miss Ryder had everything ready for their reception. And now the reader may suppose that as I have so satisfactorily disposed of Mrs. Orme, there remains nothing more to be said of their friends at the Elms; but I have not yet quite done with the family of the Holmes.

When a professor of religion renounces his faith, and goes off into the world, we usually see, as in the case of Mr. Beaufoy,<sup>[44]</sup> a most melancholy change in his character and in his habits. The man of sobriety often becomes intemperate; the man of unsullied moral character sometimes becomes a libertine; the habits of domestic virtue and religion are broken up, and all is desolation and misery. But when a sceptic embraces the faith of Christ, the moral and social change is equally conspicuous; and it invariably proves a personal and a relative blessing. Of this, a striking

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exemplification occurs in the history of Mr. Gordon, Mr. Lewellin's early friend. After he felt the renewing power of the grace of God, the old things of evil, to which he had long addicted himself, passed away, and he became a new creature in Christ Jesus—an essentially different man, in taste, in principle, and in social habits. He proved the genuineness of his conversion by the integrity and consistency of his conduct in all the subsequent stages of his career. In a letter which I received from him, some months after he had passed from death to life, he said, "Though I cannot doubt the reality of my spiritual renovation, and am compelled to ascribe it to the sovereign grace of God, and though I am persuaded that he will complete what he has begun, yet I deem it proper to let my principles be fairly tested, before I make any avowed profession of religion." On this resolution he acted. The first thing he did, that bore the aspect of attachment to the Christian faith, was to engage a pew in a church at Blackfriars', where the gospel was preached in its purity; and he was very regular in his attendance. And it so happened that his pew adjoined the one occupied by Mr. William Holmes, the eldest son of my old friend; who now, along with his brother Edward, carried on the business from which their father had retired. Young Holmes was already slightly acquainted with Mr. Gordon, having frequently heard of him from his sisters. In consequence of their sitting so near each other in church they frequently walked home together; a close intimacy sprung up between them, and they often visited at each other's houses. The account of Mr. Gordon's miraculous escape, and the marvellous change of mind and character which immediately followed, naturally interested young Holmes, and still more his family, who readily acceded to William's proposal, that the next time he came to the Elms he should bring his friend with him. Mr. Gordon was easily prevailed upon to accept the invitation; and so favourable was the impression made by him on Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, that he was requested to repeat his visit, and in a short time became so intimate as gradually to be regarded as one of the family. Many months had not elapsed before it was evident that a deep reciprocal attachment had been formed between him and Miss Jane, which at last terminated in a union, concluded under the happiest auspices. After their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon went to reside at Blackheath, where a few years afterwards I had the pleasure of being their guest. They had then three fine children; and though I have not seen either of them for some time, we still keep up an occasional correspondence. I am also happy to be able to say that after his marriage, Mr. Gordon became at once decided in his profession of religion, endeavouring in all things to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour. His natural *hauteur* was exchanged for the meekness and gentleness of Christ; and he became as zealous in the defence and diffusion of the faith once delivered to the saints, as he had been in his hostility against it. He was much esteemed by his Christian brethren, and so also was his wife, both of whom are now advancing together to meet the grand crisis of their destiny, without any dread of the final issue.

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Some time after Mr. Ryder's return to Aston, I received a letter from him giving me a sketch of his tour, and urging me to redeem the promise I had given him to pay the wedding visit. As the autumn was advancing, I resolved to go at once; and I spent two very pleasant weeks with him, visiting my other friends at intervals. One evening we had at Mr. Lewellin's a large gathering of some of the most prominent personages of my narrative, including the Rev. John Roscoe and his lady, the Rev. O. Guion, Mr. and Mrs. Stevens, and Mrs. Roscoe. As soon as we were comfortably seated, with nothing to do but to partake of our friend's hospitality, and enjoy the charm of social fellowship, the Rev. Mr. Roscoe, addressing Mr. Guion, said, "Can you, Sir, tell me anything about my old friends the Misses Brownjohn? The last time I heard of them they were engaged in a lawsuit about a fortune, to which they supposed themselves entitled by the death of their nephew.<sup>[45]</sup> Did they succeed in getting it?"

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"Yes, Sir; and it was, I believe, a very large property. They started their carriage immediately afterwards."

"Do you know how they got over the difficulties occasioned by the non-production of the register of their birth and baptism?"

"I don't know how they got over the legal difficulties; but the other difficulty was not got over to Miss Susan's satisfaction for a long time after she came into the possession of the property."

"You refer, I presume, to the omission of her name in the parish registry, recording the fact of her regeneration?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Such a document," Mrs. John Roscoe remarked, "must be of immense value in the estimation of an unregenerated Tractarian. No getting into heaven without it! A parish registrar must be a very important functionary in the estimation of these High Church devotees. If he fail in his duty, alas! their hope of salvation vanishes—they are left to die in despair."

"To solve her difficulties," continued Mr. Guion, "Miss Susan applied to the bishop's secretary to lay her case before his lordship for his opinion. The reply was to this effect: that as she had taken the sacrament for many years, and had a distinct recollection of having been confirmed, and a faint recollection of her god-mother, it must be taken for granted that she was baptized. But even this official opinion from the highest ecclesiastical authority of the diocese, did not quite satisfy her, though her sister, Miss Dorothy, often told her it ought; and gave it as her opinion, that if there was any omission she was sure the Almighty would overlook it."

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"Against this, Miss Susan demurred. 'Take for granted what ought to be positively certain! no, sister, I cannot do that.' She was restless—ever going about from one aged person to another, in

the hopes of finding some one who would give her some information as to her baptism. At length she found an old woman who recollected hearing that her uncle Robert, who died young, used to be spoken of in the family as her god-father. She followed up this clue, and found a son of this uncle Robert, who, on looking through an old account book, discovered the following entry:—'Paid for a silver cup, given to my god-child, Susan Brownjohn, of Norton, £3, 10s.' This cup she still had in her possession, bearing this inscription:—'The gift of Robert Fenton.' This was hailed as an unmistakeable evidence of her regeneration; and now she felt sure of going to heaven when the Almighty took her from earth."

"How painfully absurd," said Mrs. John Roscoe, "to see an old lady trotting about, without regarding wind or weather, in search of the proof of her regeneration; or, in other words, of her title to the kingdom of heaven! Are Miss Susan and Miss Dorothy still alive?"

"Miss Dorothy is; but Miss Susan has been dead for nearly a twelvemonth. It is generally supposed that her death was hastened by her anxieties and exertions about the legitimate proof of her baptismal regeneration. When symptoms of decay became alarming, her sister engaged a professional nurse to wait upon her—an intelligent old woman, who afterwards gave me the following account of Miss Susan's last days:—

"The first time I saw her, she was in her own room, seated in a high-backed arm-chair; the neatest room I ever saw—so clean, and everything in such prim order. 'Now, Mrs. —, Mrs. —,' she said to me, 'I forget your name, and therefore I shall call you Mrs. Nurse, I am going to die, for Dr. Black told me when I asked him, that he thought it probable that the Almighty was going to take me to himself; and I suppose it must be so. Now, Mrs. Nurse, I have a good many prayers to read; and a good deal to read out of this good book, *The Whole Duty of Man*; and I like to get all my reading over before tea, and then I can enjoy myself. You will now go out of my room, and not come back till I ring, which, I suppose, will be in about an hour's time.' However, the bell rung in about a quarter of an hour, and Miss Dorothy and I entered the room together. 'I can't,' she said to her sister, 'get through my reading so well as I used to do. I get sleepy as soon as I begin. But I see the cup.'

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"O!" said Miss Dorothy, 'you are too scrupulous, dear sister; the Almighty is sure to overlook it.'

"I suppose he will; but I like to be particular. However, it's a great comfort to me, to see the silver cup, the proof of my baptismal regeneration; the thing necessary, you know, dear sister, to fit us for heaven. I would not part with it for another fortune from the Indies.'

"I saw,' said the old nurse, 'a little old-fashioned silver cup on the mantel-piece, on which she often looked with evident emotions of pleasure: but I could not divine the reason, till one day she gave me a detailed history of the whole matter. She then asked me whether I was baptized at the church; and whether I had satisfied myself that it was duly entered in the church register; assuring me, that unless it was, I stood no chance of going to heaven. At length,' continued the old woman, 'the crisis came.'

"I suppose,' said Dr. Black to her, after examining her pulse very carefully, 'you would like to take the sacrament, before the Almighty takes you to himself?'

"To be sure I should, Doctor; our Church appoints it.'

"Shall I request your Rector, Mr. Guion, to call?'

"To be sure not, Doctor. I never have had anything to do with the Evangelicals while living, and they shan't come near me when dying. No, no, Doctor; I'll keep to the clergy of the proper order—the clergy of our fathers.'

"Very good, Madam; I know your predilections.'

"Yes, Doctor; and my antipathies.'

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"The day and hour was fixed, and old Mr. Johnson, from Ottersley, came to administer the sacrament; and Miss Susan was dressed for the occasion, propped up with pillows in her high-backed arm-chair. Soon after the ceremony was over, I saw,' said the old nurse, 'a change, and I knew death was coming; Miss Dorothy was standing by her side.' 'I feel,' she remarked, 'a queer sensation coming over me. Give me a glass of water;' but she expired when in the act of attempting to take the tumbler into her hand."

What a melancholy contrast this presents to the death of the pious cottager, Mrs. Allen!<sup>[46]</sup>

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I was happy to hear from Mrs. John Roscoe, that the ministry of her husband and his pious Curate was working moral wonders amongst his parishioners. The church was uniformly crowded with attentive hearers; the people flocked to it from distant villages and hamlets. "But, Sir," she added, "my husband has to pay the usual tax which is levied on all who distinguish themselves by their zeal and energy, in exposing the absurdity and fatal tendency of the popular superstitions, and trying to win souls to Christ. 'The most favourable construction I can put on his conduct,' said an old clergyman, in a large party, 'is this—he is a little beside himself.' I immediately replied, 'It would be, reverend Sir, a great advantage to many of your parishioners, if you also were a little beside yourself; and then they would stop at home, and attend your ministrations, instead of having to walk three or four miles every Sabbath to hear my husband.' This startled him, as he did not know that I was present. He then endeavoured to eke out an apology, which he would have been much wiser to have let alone."

I was sorry to hear that my old friend Farmer Pickford had sustained an injury by the slip of the ladder on which he was standing when lopping a tree, and that he had been confined to his bed some weeks. On seeing me enter his room, he stretched forth his hand, and said, "I thought, Sir, you would give me a bit of a call, like. I am main glad to see you. Here I am, the Lord's prisoner. I would rather be the Lord's prisoner than the devil's free man, and no mistake."

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"I hope the injury you have sustained is not likely to prove a lasting one."

"Why, as for that, I can't say. But now and tan I think I shall never be the man I was. I shall never be able to dig and trench, and mow and thrash, as when I was a youngster. And, at my time of life, I can't expect it. I am sixty-five come October. I tell you what, Sir, I see mercy mixed up with this affliction; and, as one of the Psalms says, I can sing of mercy and judgment. What a mercy that my neck was not broken; and that I had no broken bones. I never felt my heart so full of gratitude on going into my homestead as I did the morning when I was brought in on the hurdle. I couldn't help shedding some tears, like. The Lord be praised."

"Then you do not murmur, or feel disquieted?"

"No, no, Sir; not I. I a'n't going to commit that sin. I have had much comfort while lying on this bed, and no mistake. My mistress comes and sits by my side, and reads God's precious Book to me. I get main fond of the Psalms: they are like upland springs, they refresh my soul at once, like. And she comes, after church, on a Sunday, and talks over the sarmunts she hears there; and they come home to my heart. And Harry often comes, when he has struck off work, and he reads a bit, and gives the meaning of it, in his plain way, and what he says comes to my heart. So you see, Sir, I have many mercies mixed up with this affliction."

"Well, Farmer, I am happy to find that you are still holding on your way to the kingdom of heaven, and are full of peace and hope as you move onwards."

"Why, Sir, I hope you didn't think I should turn back, when you were gone. Turn back to the world and sin! and turn my back on the precious Saviour, who had compassion on, and rescued me when I was a lost sinner! No, Sir; I would rather be hacked to death first, and no mistake. But I mustn't feel boastful. I don't keep myself. No. The Lord is my keeper. I mind a sarmunt Mr. Ingleby preached one Sunday morning. It made me strongish in faith, like; I got the text by heart before I took dinner, and I can say it, without missing a word—'And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand' (John x. 28)."

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"The Psalmist says, 'It hath been good for me that I have been afflicted;' and I suppose, Farmer, you can say the same?"

"Yes, Sir, I can, and no mistake. I am main glad for this affliction. It gives me a bit of breathing time, like; I can think over spiritual matters now I am in this quiet room, better than I could while busy at the farm work. It's all right. The Lord be praised."

"You expect, I suppose, that you shall soon get about again?"

"Why, as for that, I can't say. I have a main liking for this room. It is so quiet, and my thoughts now and tan be so delightful. It's true I have had a power of pain and suffering, but this has been overtopped by heart's ease and spiritual rejoicings. I can say, what my mistress read out of the blessed book, 'The Lord has made my bed in my affliction.' And here I am, willing to lie still or get up, to suffer longer or go to farm work, just as the Lord pleases. I a'nt much mindful about it."

"I suppose, Farmer, you have thought sometimes during your confinement, about your departure from earth, to be with Christ?"

"Aye, that's it, and no mistake. T'other night, when I was thinking a bit about dying and going into t'other world, I wondered how I should feel when looking at Jesus Christ for the first time, and what I should say to him, and what he would say to me. These thinkings came to and again, with such power, that tears streamed out of my eyes, and no mistake; and I wept on, till I fell asleep."

"He will appear in his glory, when he comes to receive you to himself; and it will be a glory very brilliant, yet it won't dazzle or confound you, as your power of vision will be equal to the grandeur of the spectacle."

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"What a marvellous wonder that he should ever take a bit of a liking to such a wicked fellow as I was! But it's just like him. When he was here, he looked out for the chief of sinners; after them that are lost. I a'nt forgot your sarmunt in the barn about Zaccheus. I shall think of it when I am in heaven, if I should ever get there, as I hope I shall. And I shall have a bit of wish to see him, as he had to see Jesus Christ, when he got up into the sycamore tree."

I was much gratified by finding him in such a heavenly frame of mind—so patient under his sufferings, so resigned to the Divine will, so joyful in hope, and so strong in faith. I read a chapter, making a few explanatory remarks, prayed with him, and left him; but he would not let me go without a promise that I would see him again.

On my next visit, I saw Mrs. Pickford, who appeared the picture of grief. She wept, and said—"My dear husband has been very ill the last two days, and in very great pain; I fear the Lord is going to take him from me. However, I have the consolation of knowing, that he has taken refuge in the ark of safety; he cleaves to the dear Redeemer with all his heart. It is quite wonderful to hear how he talks about the love of Christ; about feeling its power on his soul; and about seeing him, and being made like him."



I went into his room, shook hands with him, and had a long conversation. When speaking of the Saviour coming, in the spiritual manifestations of his presence, to comfort and animate his disciples in the chamber of affliction, or when entering death's dark vale, he interrupted me by a burst of natural eloquence, which greatly delighted us—"I can speak to the truth of what you say. He does come and comfort my heart. I have had more heart-rejoicings in this room, than I ever had at church or chapel, when hearkening to sarmunts, and that is saying a great deal. My soul has been taken up to the third heaven, and though I have not seen Jesus Christ with my bodily eyes as Paul did, yet I have felt the sweetness of his love—the preciousness of his love, and no mistake. I say to my wife, I say to my children, I say to my servants, and all my neighbours, Take refuge in Christ, the living ark of safety, to save you from the wrath to come; and love him with all your hearts, and then when you die, He will come and comfort you, as he comes and comforts me. I beg pardon, Sir, for stopping you, but I couldn't hold no longer. My heart was too full."

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It is now a long time since I was last at Fairmount; but I frequently correspond with Mr. Stevens and Mr. Lewellin, and hear how matters are going on in that part of the country, of which, though not my native place, I may truly say, from the pleasing associations connected with it, in the words of Horace—

"Ille terrarum mihi præter omnes  
Angulus ridet."

My friends Mr. and Mrs. Stevens continue as formerly in the enjoyment of good health and spirits, and though advanced in years, are still active in promoting the religious and moral improvement of the villagers in their neighbourhood. Mr. and Mrs. Lewellin have now a young family growing up about them; and Rockhill is quite the admiration of the country round for the great improvements effected on it by Mr. Lewellin, who, by diligent perseverance, and the valuable services of his bailiff, Harry Pickford, has become quite a scientific farmer. Mr. and Mrs. Ryder are very happy, with two sweet children, a boy and a girl, and a constant interchange of visits is kept up with Rockhill and Fairmount. Miss Ryder still lives with them; but it is doubtful whether this will be the case much longer, at least it is currently reported in the village that Mr. Hartley, the Rector of Aston, is shortly to lead her to the altar, a statement which receives some corroboration, from the circumstance that the Rector has lately been getting his house repaired and newly furnished. Mrs. Roscoe, shortly after her husband's death, took up her abode with her daughter and son-in-law, where she receives every attention and kindness, and looks tranquilly forward to joining her beloved husband in a better world.

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My old friend Farmer Pickford, after being confined for nearly twelve months, gradually regained his health and his physical energy, and is now become a hale old man, and has every prospect of attaining a patriarchal age. A few months since I received from him a basket of game, with the following characteristic note:—

"REVEREND SIR,—As you have left off honouring my wife's cookery, she and I have been thinking that you would like to taste a bit of our game in your own house. I shot the hares, and Harry killed the partridges and the snipes. They are quite fresh—all killed yesterday. We hope they will come safe. I am happy to say that all's well at the homestead. We get a good sarmunt now and tan, in the kitchen. I hope we shall all meet in heaven, and no mistake.—Yours devoutly,

JOHN AND MARTHA PICKFORD."

His son George is now captain of a vessel, and Sam is his mate. People say that Harry is to be married soon to a daughter of Farmer Goddard; and if so, it is believed that he will leave his situation at Rockhill, and occupy the adjoining farm, which will become vacant at Michaelmas.

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## CONCLUSION.



he Author has now brought his labours to a close; and having thus finally disposed of the various characters in his story, it may justly be presumed that nothing more remains to be done but simply to thank his readers for their courteous attention to his narrative, and bid them a hearty and respectful farewell. But, perhaps, before doing so, he may be permitted to cast a retrospective glance on the course through which he and his readers have passed together, and review some of the leading principles which he has endeavoured to illustrate and enforce in the course of his work.

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In commencing his labours, the Author of the *Sheepfold and the Common* resolved to maintain a strict neutrality amid the various conflicting sects in the Christian Church, and avoid everything like an undue *clannishness* or *esprit de corps*. Assuming a position midway between the two principal religious parties which exist amongst us—Church and Dissent—he resolved to hold the balance of judgment and justice with an impartial hand—neither to lower the one, nor unduly exalt the other—allowing each to retain its own ecclesiastic polity, without presuming to encroach on the freedom which both so equitably claim. He has, he admits, exposed some of the

imperfections of the Episcopal Establishment; but these very imperfections have been pointed out and animadverted on by many of its most intelligent and decided advocates and admirers, both of the clergy and laity. In so doing, however, it has been very far from his intention wantonly to impair the credit of the Church of England, or alienate her members from her communion; but to render his assistance in paving the way for a revision of her polity, which is now so loudly called for, and which, in general belief, will render her a greater and a more impressive instrument of moral and spiritual power amongst the great mass of the people. He has not attempted to set in hostile array against each other those who are united in the same faith, though differing in denominational opinions and practices. He has given no advice to a Churchman or to a Dissenter which stands in opposition to the pure and catholic spirit of the gospel; but he has endeavoured to induce all, from a profound regard to the authority of Jesus Christ, as well as their own moral dignity and happiness, "to add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity" (2 Pet. i. 5-7).

His main object throughout the whole of his labours has been to present, in a popular form, the leading doctrines of the Christian faith; and to vindicate its integrity and purity against its ever-active opponents; and to prove, at the same time, that it is a remedial scheme to recover man from the ruin occasioned by the first transgression, rather than a mere educational or ceremonial one. He is aware that the heart of every man, while in an unenlightened and unrenewed state, presents an impassable barrier against its claims; but the regular marshalled forces of opposition are concentrated within the fortresses of scepticism and superstition. Scepticism assumes different phases, and takes various grounds of objection—alternately denying the truthfulness of the historic records of Christianity—impugning the credibility of its witnesses, and the rationality of its doctrines— inveighing against the so-called arrogance of its claims and requirements—and rejecting it as an ill-contrived theory, which answers no other purpose than to gratify the visionary, or affright the credulous. In the person of Mr. Gordon and others, the Author has allowed scepticism to express its hostility to Christianity; and the reader will form his own judgment of the way in which the arguments put forth by infidelity have been met and repelled. (See vol. i. pp. 96-104, 133-144, and 137; ii. 76-107.)

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In endeavouring thus to explain and illustrate Evangelical doctrines, the Author has necessarily been led, by the nature of his subject, to expose and confute the various forms of heresy and theological error which appear to be more especially characteristic of the present age. On one of these—the Tractarian heresy—which prevails to such a lamentable extent among many members of the Church of England, he has deemed it expedient to dwell at considerable length, and has frequently introduced the views maintained by the High Church party, as a subject of disquisition. On this point it may, perhaps, be necessary to enter somewhat into detail, as to many persons the remarks on the doctrines professed by the Tractarian body, and the animadversions on the teaching of their clergymen, may appear somewhat severe and unwarranted.

It cannot, the Author conceives, be denied by any Christian, who bows to the absolute authority of the Bible, and its obvious interpretation, that the only way to obtain eternal life is by believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and that the spiritual regeneration of the soul is a necessary prerequisite and qualification for an admission into the kingdom of heaven. But Tractarianism, like Romanism, virtually ignores this scheme of mercy, by introducing a ceremonial apparatus, by which a priestly power effects for its deluded victims and devotees all that is necessary for final salvation, without the concurrence of any supernatural grace, but what is supposed to flow through the artificially prescribed channels. To expose the absurdity, as well as the anti-Christian character of this heresy, the Author has introduced, in the person of Mr. Roscoe, the character of a devout and spiritually enlightened man, and in his brother, the Rev. John Roscoe, that of an able and zealous advocate of the Tractarian theory. The reader will form his own opinion on the merits of the question at issue, and the force of the arguments maintained by the supporters of the respective systems (i. 317-477).

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No one, the Author thinks, can read the New Testament with careful attention, without perceiving that the sacred writers treat of two distinct orders of human beings—the natural, and the spiritual man; the one enlightened and renovated, and living in mental fellowship with God; the other, living through life under the governing influence of his constitutional principles, and conventional predilections and habits—in whose estimation, whether he be a libertine or a religious devotee, the necessity of a mental regeneration is viewed as a fiction, or a mere theological dogma. Hence, it devolved on the Author, in a work of this description, to draw plainly the broad line of distinction, which he thinks the intelligent reader will discover he has done in his illustrative and confirmatory examples, as well as by the simple process of reasoning, deducible from the authoritative data of the inspired volume. (See vol. i. pp. 198, 342-346, 352-356; see also paper on *Calm Discussion*, i. 246, and *A Struggle for Life*, ii. 493.)

This broad line of distinction between the two orders of men, becomes more marked and decisive when they are dying, or when anticipating death. As an instance of this, the reader is presented with a contrast in the narrative of the deathbed of Mrs. Allen (i. 187, 188), as compared with that of Miss Susan Brownjohn (ii. 568-570), and in the respective accounts of the last moments of Mr. Ingleby, the Evangelical pastor; and Mr. Cole, the advocate of Tractarian principles (ii. 523-528, 540-544).

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In separate papers, which form essential parts of his work, he has brought under the notice of his readers a variety of individual cases, which may prove as beacons, or examples of great practical utility. He would call the serious attention of the incautious, who may be exposed to

beguiling temptations, to the case of Mr. Lewellin (i. 13), young Harvey (ii. 179), and Mr. Beaufoy (ii. 240).

To the case of the ANXIOUS INQUIRER, who is intensely concerned for his salvation, the Author has paid great attention, by explaining the *cause* of his mental disquietude, which is a penetrating conviction of personal guilt, and a clear perception of its consequent danger (i. 416 and 503).

The great question, *What must we do to be saved?* answered: see *An Escape from a False Refuge* (i. 530); also, *The Farm-house Kitchen* (ii. 292).

The spiritual perplexities to which all are subjected, in some degree, while working out their salvation, are specified and adjusted, and these are:—*The defective nature of repentance* (i. 176); *the declension of spiritual enjoyments*, and *the want of an assurance of final salvation* (ii. 159). See also Mrs. Loader's Letter (ii. 303).

In the person of Miss Roscoe we have a specimen of Christian decision, its sacrifices, its struggles, its conflicts, its triumphs, and its recompense of reward. Miss Holmes' religious history presents a very different complexion; in her we see the good work of grace beginning and advancing under favourable auspices; her conflicts are mental, and the final issue is glorious. In the case of Miss Emma Holmes is exhibited the painful consequences of duplicity and headstrong rashness, in entering into the married state.

Nothing, in the opinion of the Author, has a more powerful influence over the popular mind, to excite prejudice against Christianity, and to lead the profane and sceptical to call in question its Divine origin, than the multiplicity of sects which exist within the pale of the visible church; especially when they perceive the bitter and antagonistic spirit which they often cherish and express towards each other. The evil of this and its remedy, the Author has endeavoured to point out and illustrate (ii. 18-36.)

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The Author has interwoven, in the progress of his work, many specimens of the wonder-working power of the grace of God, in the regeneration and conversion of persons of varying degree of moral excellencies and of moral worthlessness; and of the diversified mode of operation which is observed by the Divine Spirit when effecting it. He would call the attention of the intelligent reader to the following cases, which are so many living witnesses in confirmation of the Divine origin and blissful tendency of the truth, by which they are called out of a state of spiritual death to give their testimony:—Mr. Lewellin (i. 23), the Rev. O. Guion (i. 76), Miss Roscoe (i. 129), Mr. Tennent (i. 151), Mr. Roscoe (i. 278), Farmer Pickford (i. 47, 392, 571), Miss Denham (i. 414), Rev. John Roscoe (i. 428), Miss Osbourne, the Quakeress (i. 503), Mr. and Mrs. Lobeck (i. 528-544), Mrs. Hastings—see *The Effect of a Word Spoken in Season* (ii. 108), Mrs. Farrington—see *The Farm-house Kitchen* (ii. 284), Mr. Ryder—see *A Struggle for Life* (ii. 493), Mr. Gordon (ii. 511-515).

That the papers are very unequal in point of interest and execution, no one is more conscious of than the writer; but what he has written, he wrote as well as he could when it was written; and he must now leave it to be dealt with, just as the candid and impartial critic may decide. He knows that perfection has never been attained; and though he feels that partiality for his own productions with which authors are charged, and to which they are compelled to plead guilty, when they speak so as to be believed, yet he is not vain enough to suppose that he has attained it. The work has its faults, which he has not skill enough to conceal, nor temerity enough to vindicate and if it possess no excellence, it will soon descend to that state of oblivion from which no interest can redeem it.

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"And now," to quote the language of an elegant author, "could he flatter himself that any one would take half the pleasure in reading his numbers which he has taken in writing them, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics, and the noise of folly; vanity and vexation flew away for a season, care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose fresh as the morning to his task; the silence of the night invited him to peruse it; and he can truly say, that food and rest were not preferred before it. Happier hours than those which have been spent in composing them he never expects to see in this world: very pleasantly did they pass, and moved smoothly and swiftly along; for when thus engaged he counted no time. They are gone, but have left a relish and a fragrance upon the mind; and the remembrance of them is sweet."

It has been justly observed, that there are few things not purely evil, of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, *this is the last*. Those who never could agree together, shed tears when mutual discontent has determined them to final separation. Of a place which has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart; and the Author, who has by a series of papers contributed to the improvement and gratification of society, may expect to be forgiven, if he should feel some novel sensations pervading his breast, when his last essay is before him.

Thus in the planning and execution of our schemes, life passes away, and we advance by unconscious steps towards its termination; and though by a singular species of artifice we contrive to keep our latter end in some distant perspective of futurity, yet in our more serious moments of reflection we feel that it is approaching. And can we anticipate it with cool indifference? Can we think of taking a last look at the varied beauties of nature, which have so often charmed the eye—of hearing the last words of friendship, which have so often delighted the ear—of uttering the last adieu which is to separate us from all communion with the inhabitants of earth—without feeling a degree of pensive sadness, which nothing can relieve but the hope of a

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blissful immortality? And even when this hope breaks in upon our solemn musings, and dispels the gloom which envelopes them, it is not always in our power to regain that tranquillity which the approach of our *last* hour tends to disturb. Our *last* hour! It may now be distant, but ere long it will be near. Suppose it were now come! Suppose only sixty more minutes of time were allotted to us on earth! Suppose we were now within a few, a very few steps of the seat of final judgment! Suppose in a few moments we should be called to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil! Suppose, ere the village clock proclaims to the rustic inhabitants the departure of *another hour*; we should be doomed to receive the decisive sentence, which will

"Remove us to yon heav'nly place,  
Or shut us up in hell,"

what would be the state of our mind? Should we be calm, like the woodman, who after the toils of the day, goes home to enjoy his rest? or should we be alarmed, as when the mariner sees the first symptoms of the rising storm? Should we be in ecstasy, as when the captive is released from the prison-house of wretchedness, and restored to his home? or should we turn pale, and tremble like the condemned criminal, when he hears the first sound of his own funeral knell? These are questions which we may now dismiss under an apprehension that they relate to a remote period; but that period is not so remote, as when the questions first met the eye of the reader; and ere long it will be *the present time*. Are we prepared to live through our last hour; and to give up our life, when the last pulse shall beat through our veins, without wishing to prolong it? Are we ready to step across the boundary which divides the visible from the invisible world, without faltering in our passage? If so, we may live in peace. We need fear no evil. We may range into futurity, without being appalled by any rising forms of terror. We may anticipate the last hour with tranquil joy, and calmly wait its approach. But if not, we ought to feel alarm. To be gay and sportive when treading on the verge of eternal woe, would be no less than a species of mental delirium. It would be an act of criminal folly; a treasuring up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath; and impiously smiling as the storm of the Divine displeasure is accumulating its stores of vengeance.

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Let me, then, before I have taken my final farewell of my reader, urge him once more to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling." Let me once more point his attention to "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Let me once more tell him, in the language which fell from the lips of the Redeemer, when he was on the earth:—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

I have now done; and commending my well-meant though imperfect labours to the blessing of Him who alone can render them effectual to the salvation of my readers, I now retire to the more private duties of my station, yet not without indulging the hope of meeting some in the celestial world, to whom I have been the means of imparting consolation, while passing through this valley of weeping.

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THE END.

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GLASGOW: W. G. BLACKIE AND CO., PRINTERS, VILLAFIELD.

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### FOOTNOTES:

- [1] In reply to an application which the author recently made in reference to this case, an intelligent son of this eminent Christian requests that the name of the deceased may be suppressed, saying, at the close of his letter—"The prayer of my dearest father was, God be merciful to me a sinner! and his last word, the name of that Redeemer on whose merits he relied, and to whose honour he had lived."
- [2] The following anecdote of George III. (from *Legends and Records*, chiefly Historical: by Charles Tayler, M.A.), supplies us with another interesting case of the aptitude of the mind to understand and feel the power of religious truth, after it has become inaccessible to every other mental communication. His majesty had been hunting in Windsor Forest, and after the hunt was over, as he was returning, his attention was arrested by a little girl who sat on the ground weeping. He alighted from his horse, and, having ascertained the cause of her grief, he followed her to a tent, in an unfrequented part of the forest, where lay an old gipsy on her dying bed, with her face towards the inside of the tent. She appeared too far gone to hear any of the sympathetic inquiries which he instituted. However, his eye was attracted by a torn and dirty book, which lay open upon the pillow of the dying woman, and he had the curiosity to see what book it was.

"Ah, Sir," said an elder girl, "I believe there's a deal of fine reading in that book; and my grandmother set great store by it, torn and soiled as it is. While she could use her eyes she used to be spelling it over and over again; but now, she says, the letters are all

dark and dim before her sight, she cannot see them."

His majesty said nothing, but, taking up the book from the pillow, he sat down on the green turf close to the head of the dying woman. The book was the Bible. He chose some of those beautiful passages which are easy to be understood, and, at the same time, full of hope and comfort to the sinking and fearful heart. He read of the tender compassion of the Father of mercies to his guilty creatures, in giving his own Son Jesus Christ to die for them, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life! Though she heard not what he said when he first spoke to her, she heard and felt the words of the Scriptures, for she turned entirely round and opened her dull eyes with a vacant stare; she endeavoured also to speak, but could only make a faint uncertain sound, in which no word could be distinguished. Then she drew her hands together, and clasped them as if in prayer, taking that way, it seemed, to show that she was quite sensible to hear and understand what was read to her; and the young girls drew near, and kneeled down quietly beside the bed, listening also to the sacred words of life, and feeling a sort of happiness in their sorrow, as they looked upon their beloved parent, now as calm as a sleeping infant, except that tears stole down her hollow cheeks; but any one might see that they were tears of joy, for all the while a smile was on her lips.

[3] The Baptist College, Stepney.

[4] The sceptic will sometimes endeavour to perplex and entangle the faith of an unlearned believer, by insinuating that, as he has never traced, through the medium of exact evidence, the origin of the different books of the Bible to their source, he cannot be assured that his belief is substantially a true belief—it may be, after all, nothing but the belief of a fiction. The following quotation from a distinguished writer, will, I think, prove as a shield of defence to the faith of the unlearned, and convince the sceptic himself, that his objection, plausible in appearance, is wanting in logical force:—"It is manifest that the concurrent testimony, positive or negative, of several witnesses, when there can have been no concert, carries with it a weight independent of that which may belong to each of them, considered separately. For though, in such a case, each of the witnesses should be even considered as wholly undeserving of credit, still the chances might be incalculable against all agreeing in the *same* falsehood. It is on this kind of testimony that the generality of mankind believe in the motions of the earth, and of the heavenly bodies, &c. Their belief is not the result of their own observations and calculations, nor yet again of their implicit reliance on the skill and good faith of any one or more astronomers; but it rests on the agreement of many independent and rival astronomers, who want neither the ability nor the will to detect and expose each other's errors. It is on similar grounds that the generality of men believe in the existence and in the genuineness of manuscripts of ancient books. It is not that they have themselves examined these, or that they rely implicitly on the good faith of those who profess to have done so; but they rely on the *concurrent* and *uncontradicted* testimony of all who have made, or who *might make*, the examination—both unbelievers and believers of various hostile sects, any one of whom would be sure to seize any opportunity to expose the forgeries or errors of his opponents."—*Whately*.

This observation is the more important because many persons are liable to be startled and dismayed, on its being pointed out to them that they have been believing something, as they are led to suppose, on very insufficient reasons, when the truth is, perhaps, that they have been merely mis-stating their reasons.

[5] Deut. xviii. 15; Psal. xlv. 1, 2; lxxii.; Isa. liii.; Dan. ix. 22, 27; Zech. ix. 9; Mal. iii. 1.

[6] 2 Tim. iii. 16.

[7] 2 Pet. i. 21.

[8] "No such a thing," says Archbishop Whately, "is to be found in our Scriptures as a catechism, or regular *elementary introduction* to the *Christian religion*; nor do they furnish us with anything of the nature of a systematic creed, set of articles, confession of faith, or by whatever other name one may designate a regular, complete compendium of Christian doctrines; nor, again, do they supply us with a liturgy for ordinary public worship, or with forms for administering the sacraments, or for conferring holy orders; nor do they even give any precise *directions* as to these and other ecclesiastical matters—anything that at all corresponds to a rubric, or set of canons." Why these omissions? A great defect in our Scriptures, say some; but, in my opinion, it amounts to a self-evident confirmation, that the writers of the New Testament were under the special dictation of the Divine Spirit, as to what they *should*, and what they *should not* record. If they were carrying out a fraudulent design, conceived by their predecessors, who wrote the Old Testament, they would, from their educational training and desire to act in character with their confederates, have imitated their example, and been very specific and minute in all their ecclesiastical arrangements. They would have inserted the law of dictation and prescription, which was so absolute under the Jewish theocracy, in the Christian code, and thus have rendered division of opinion and freedom of action impossible. The question then turns upon us: Why did they not do what it was very natural they should do, and what the necessity of the case would seem to require to be done, according to the judgment of every intelligent and reflective mind, who looked at it through the medium of the existing ecclesiastical regulations of the age and country? Their *not doing* what was thus natural *they should do*, and what the necessity of the case, according to human judgment, *required them to do*, is of itself a proof that they were not left to the guidance of their own understanding, but were held in subjection, according to their own confession, by the controlling power and wisdom of the Holy Ghost, under whose inspiration all Scripture is given. "The Jewish ritual, designed for one nation and country, and intended to be of temporary duration, was fixed and accurately prescribed. The same Divine wisdom, from which both dispensations proceeded, having designed Christianity for all nations and ages, left Christians at large in respect of those points in which variation might be desirable. But I think no *human* wisdom would have foreseen and provided for this. That a number of *Jews*, accustomed from their infancy to so strict a

ritual, should, in introducing Christianity as the second part of the same dispensation, have abstained not only from accurately prescribing for the use of all Christian churches for ever the mode of Divine worship, but even from recording what was actually in use under their own directions, does seem to me utterly incredible, unless

we suppose them to have been restrained from doing this by a special admonition of the Divine Spirit."—*Whately*.

At any rate, whether these omissions are to be attributed to the controlling power of the Holy Ghost, or the extraordinary policy of the writers of the New Testament, we arrive at the same conclusion, that, while we are required to believe, and to contend earnestly for the essential facts and doctrines of the Christian faith, which are set out with great precision and explicitness, a freedom of action is allowed on what may be deemed the subordinate and non-essential parts of the same faith. Hence we may differ on some things, without any valid impeachment of our Christian wisdom and integrity, unless we allow our difference of opinion to produce alienation of brotherly affection. When it does this, we make a sacrifice of our honour, and give a sanction to the accusation of the common adversary, that our hostile divisions are a proof that our religion does not come from a wise and benevolent Being—that it is of the earth, earthy.

[9] In 1845 Sir Robert Peel introduced a measure, and carried it, to increase this grant to nearly £30,000 a-year.

[10] When Lord John Russell was speaking in favour of the measure brought before the house by Sir Robert Peel in 1845, to increase the grant to nearly £30,000 per annum, he said—"But if you found you were doing that which was mischievous to the community, and that the religious scruples of the community would not allow of the continuance of the grant, or, with reference to civil and political reasons, you found that those you meant to be teachers of religion had become the teachers and conductors of rebellion; if I say," his lordship added, "you found from any of these causes that there was ground sufficient to refuse this grant, then I can see no valid reasons why any compact should restrain you, or why, upon strong grounds of this kind, the house would not be justified in declaring that it would give no further allowance." (See Hansard's *Debates*, v. 3, p. 92, session 1845.) The Right Hon. William Gladstone, M.P., recorded his opinion of this grant, before Sir Robert Peel brought forward his measure in 1845. "In principle the grant is wholly vicious, and it will be a thorn in the side of these countries as long as it is continued." There are several reasons, which, in the judgment of Lord John Russell, would justify the discontinuance of this grant, without subjecting our government to the charge of violating any existing compact; but I merely mention the following, which I give from the speech of his lordship: if "*the religious scruples of the community would not allow of the continuance of it.*" Now let us see how the case actually stands, and then we shall be able to form a correct judgment of what the British government and we ourselves ought to do. It is an undisputed fact, that the measure of 1845 was forced through parliament in direct opposition to the most unequivocal expression of hostility on the part of the religious community, of all denominations; and their hostility to its continuance is increasing in inveteracy and strength as time moves on in its course. I am at a loss to conceive how any one except a Roman Catholic who has a beneficial interest in this money grant, or a lukewarm Protestant, who cares no more for the spiritual religion of the New Testament than he does for the legendary tales of Popery, can come forward as its advocate and supporter. The Catholics say they are able and willing to support their own religion and its institutions. Let them do so; but do not compel us to work with them, when we believe that their religion, with its institutions, is the greatest curse that ever has been inflicted on man since the Fall; and when we believe that its clergy, if they had the power, would immediately establish the Inquisition amongst us, and at once consign us to torture and to death, if we refused to bow down and to do homage to their pontiff and his myrmidons.

[11] See vol. i. page 94.

[12] Vol. i. page 17.

[13] We find, from a document which has recently come from India (December, 1856), that some of these cruel rites are abolished in a few of the provinces; and there is now no doubt but the work of legislative humanity and enlightened policy having been begun, will steadily advance, till the triumphs of missionary enterprise in our Indian empire are complete.

"An order has just been promulgated by the magistrate of Poonah, under instructions from government, prohibiting hook-swinging and other barbarous practices throughout the Poonah Zillah. Such a measure has long been desired by all who wish for the improvement of the natives. Of old it was believed—or careless and idle minds found it convenient to believe—that it was dangerous to meddle with any native practice, however immoral or revolting, that was connected with or claimed the sanction of religion. But times are changed, and innovations which might not safely have been attempted a century or half a century ago, the age is now ripe for.

"Another barbarous custom, also prevalent at Jejooree, is interdicted by the proclamation of Mr. Davidson. A man runs a sword through the fleshy part of his leg for about a foot, and, drawing it out, sprinkles the blood on the entrance of the temple. For this feat he receives large free-will offerings; and the right to perform it is vested, as a valuable privilege, in a body of about fifteen families, to each individual of which it comes round once in about six or seven years. These men, however, long ago declared that they would be glad to discontinue the practice (which some think is a remnant of the rite of human sacrifice) if their incomes could be assured to them."

[14] Dr. Bogue's Essay on *The Divine Authority of the New Testament*.

[15] Vol. i. page 232.

[16] The author has transcribed, from Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, nearly the whole of this chapter and the subjoined prayer, as he conceives they will prove very acceptable to

those of his readers who have not the original work.

- [17] The author is indebted to the late Rev. Mr. Simpson for these testimonies.
- [18] An intelligent gentleman, who had served the office of constable in a large midland town, once remarked to the author, "I observed the number of prostitutes was considerably increased very soon after the opening of the theatre; many also coming from neighbouring towns during the theatrical season." Strange, indeed, if the stage be the school of virtue, that these pests of society should always be found existing near it! When we see the vultures flying towards any particular spot, there we may expect to find death and corruption.
- [19] See a *Treatise on the Work of the Holy Spirit*, by the celebrated Robert Hall, of Leicester.
- [20] Vol. i. page 12.
- [21] The author is indebted to a work of the late Rev. A. Fuller for the quotation with which this chapter closes.
- [22] Vol. ii. p. 177.
- [23] The author knows a lady who, when young, requested her pious father to permit her to learn to dance. "No, my child," he replied, "I cannot consent to comply with a request which may subject me to your censures at some future period." "No, father, I will never censure you for complying with my request." "Nor can I consent to give you an opportunity. If you learn, I have no doubt but you will excel; and when you leave school, you may then want to go into company to exhibit your skill. If I then object to let you, as I most likely should, you would very naturally reply, Why, father, did you permit me to learn, if I am not permitted to practise?" This reply convinced her that her father acted wisely, though he opposed her inclination: and though she did learn, yet, not having his consent, she never ventured to expose herself to the dangers of the assembly-room; as she well knew that she could not do it without grieving her affectionate father. She is now become a parent; has often mentioned this occurrence as having had a powerful moral influence over her mind in her young and thoughtless days; and has incorporated this maxim in her system of domestic management—Never to comply with a request which may subject her to any future reflections from her children.
- [24] The author has known some professors of evangelical religion who have occasionally frequented these scenes of amusement; and though he would not condemn them as insincere in their religious profession, yet he cannot conceive how they can approve of their own conduct. If they go occasionally, others will feel at liberty to go habitually; and though they may go, and retire without sustaining any material injury to their principles, yet they know not how much injury their example may do to others, and especially their own children.
- [25] Miss Moss was a young lady of rare accomplishments—the only child of a pious and affectionate mother. Shortly after leaving school, she succeeded, with much difficulty, in obtaining her mother's reluctant consent to go *once* to the assembly-room, just to see the parties. She was dressed most elegantly; and having a graceful form, and a fine open countenance, glowing with health, she excited considerable attention. One gentleman, who had been very polite during the evening, and who was her superior in rank, solicited the honour of conducting her home, which was granted. Having ascertained the usual time and place of her evening walk, he met her—made her an offer, which she accepted; when, having secured her affections, he accomplished her ruin, and left her. This broke her mother's heart, and eventually broke her own; and the parent and the daughter were buried in the same grave, at the distance of about six months from each other's funeral, each deploring, when too late, the danger resulting from the assembly-room. Nor is this an uncommon instance. At these places the spirits of evil resort, availing themselves of the freedom of intercourse which is tolerated; and having marked their victim, they proceed, with all the cunning and duplicity of the author of all evil, to accomplish their unhallowed purpose. If, then, parents wish to preserve the honour of their children uncontaminated, or if females, who are grown to years of discretion, wish to avoid the snares in which others have been overtaken, they ought to shun the resorts of the licentious and impure, as no one can be safe in their society.
- [26] Vol. ii. p. 129.
- [27] In connection with the above subject, the author may be permitted to narrate the two following cases which occurred a few years since in the town where he then resided:—The chief actors in the scenes to be described were persons occupying a respectable station in society, and who habitually associated with intelligent and pious people. He and his wife accepted an invitation to dine with a large party. The dinner was laid out in first-rate style, grace was said with becoming solemnity, and we took our seats in due form, when our hostess rose suddenly and rushed out of the room, pale and affrighted, as though the turkey which she was preparing to dismember had suddenly metamorphosed itself into a hobgoblin. We then heard her exclaim, when she found herself alone in the hall, nearly breathless with terror, "O dear, O dear! there are thirteen!" I looked at my wife and she looked at me, in utter amazement, wondering what presage of coming evil could lurk under the number *thirteen*. At length our good-natured host said to one of his daughters, "Eliza, you must retire, and we will send your plate to you in the other room. You know your Mamma's objection to sit down at the table with such an unlucky number." Eliza quietly withdrew, and then her mother silently entered, almost as pale as a corpse, but her natural colour returned soon after she commenced her carving labours. *Thirteen* an unlucky number! How odd! I could not make it out, and continued to puzzle my head with it during dinner. However, we were informed, before the party broke up, that one person was sure to die very soon after eating a hearty dinner with *twelve*, however hale and vigorous they might all be.

The other case is as follows:—A friend of the author had been married, and he and his

wife went to pay the customary wedding visit. The sister of the bride was in waiting to receive the company; her mother keeping watch, to see that everything was done in due order. There was a goodly muster of persons, including uncles and aunts, first and second cousins, and friends and acquaintances almost without number. At last the uncle of the bride, a fine portly man, made his appearance, and was in the act of entering the parlour with his hearty congratulations to his niece, when the door was suddenly and rather unceremoniously slammed to by his sister, as though he had been some grim demon, bent on mischief. "Daniel, don't come in; Daniel, you must not come in; Daniel, you shan't come in," exclaimed the lady. "What's the matter now?" said Daniel, who apparently was as much surprised at not being permitted to see us as we were at not being permitted to see him. "What's the matter!" re-echoed his sister; "*why, you have got your black coat on!*" Daniel was obliged to doff his black coat and put on a blue one, made for a much smaller man, and then he appeared amongst us. Moving nearly as gracefully as a man would do in a strait waistcoat, his appearance was a severe tax on our gravity. The mystery of the black coat rejected, and the blue coat honoured by a presentation, still remained unsolved to my wife and myself, till we overheard a grave matron say, "It was very lucky, as the dear creature wouldn't die now." That is, as was more fully explained afterwards, the black coat would have betokened the death of the bride, if she had seen it. Alas! poor human nature. What a specimen of its absurdity and folly! The black coat of the author was invested with no fatal presage, as he belonged to the clerical order; otherwise, like Uncle Daniel, he must have changed it before he could have tasted a bit of the wedding cake.

- [28] See vol. i. p. 313.
- [29] The reader is referred to vol. i. p. 249.
- [30] Vol. ii. p. 297.
- [31] Vol. i. p. 544.
- [32] Vol. i. p. 421.
- [33] Vol. i. p. 451.
- [34] Vol. i. p. 410.
- [35] Vol. i. p. 152.
- [36] Vol. i. p. 110.
- [37] Vol. i. p. 420.
- [38] Vol. ii. p. 94.
- [39] Vol. i. p. 94.
- [40] Vol. i. p. 13.
- [41] Vol. i. p. 69.
- [42] Vol. i. p. 224.
- [43] Vol. ii. p. 440.
- [44] Vol. ii. p. 240.
- [45] Vol. i. p. 380.
- [46] Vol. i. p. 187.

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#### **Transcriber's note:**

Minor typographical errors have been corrected without note. Irregularities and inconsistencies in the text have been retained as printed. Quotation marks are inconsistent; mismatched quotes are not fixed if it's not sufficiently clear where the missing quote should be placed.

The illustrations have been moved so that they do not break up paragraphs, thus the page number of the illustration might not match the page number in the List of Illustrations.

Page 174: The missing word "it" has been added by the transcriber: "we are satisfied that it is our duty to hear the gospel".

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