

King, Frances Elizabeth
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THE
BENEFICIAL EFFECTS
OF THE
CHRISTIAN TEMPER
ON
Domestic Happiness.

NON MAGNA LOQUIMUR, SED VIVIMUS.

SECOND EDITION.

London:

PRINTED FOR J. HATCHARD,

Bookseller to Her Majesty, opposite Albany, Piccadilly.

1807.

TO THE
REV. RICHARD KING, M.A.

This little Work,

SUGGESTED BY

THE PLEASING CONTEMPLATION

OF THE

EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY,

ON A

SERIOUS AND BENEVOLENT MIND,

DURING

AN UNINTERRUPTED UNION OF 25 YEARS,

IS INSCRIBED

BY HIS

GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE WIFE,

F. E. KING.

PRINTED BY BRETTELL AND CO.
MARSHALL-STREET, GOLDEN-SQUARE.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE favourable Reception which this Tract has met with, induces the Author to offer a Second Edition to the Public. She concealed her Name in the first instance, from the natural diffidence of a Female, and a fear of being thought presumptuous in taking up the subject of a Prelate of such distinguished Piety and Learning, as the Bishop of London.—She now relies on the candour of the Public, to admit as her excuse, an anxious desire to engage the Attention of a Class of Females to whom a more learned and enlightened Work would be less interesting.

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for Industry have been driven from one of
their strong holds: for, the learned Irish
has proved from historical facts, that the
improvement in agriculture, the manufac-
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of late years, is not the result of the
Christianity, but of the industry and bene-
volence of the people, and not from
philosophy, as it has been repeatedly
asserted.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Writer of the following pages,
having read the Bishop of London's admi-
rable Treatise, intituled, "The Beneficial
Effects of Christianity on the Temporal
Concerns of Mankind," received from the
perusal a high degree of satisfaction; ari-
sing not only from the general good ten-
dency of the work, but also from consi-
dering that it furnishes a most powerful
antidote to some of those dangerous opi-
nions, so industriously propagated in the

present day. In this Tract, the advocates for Infidelity have been driven from one of their strong holds; for, the learned Prelate has proved from historical facts, that the improvements in society, and the amelioration that has taken place in the condition of the different classes of men, are manifestly derived from the benign and benevolent spirit of the Gospel, and not from Philosophy, as it has been repeatedly asserted.—The facts on which his Lordship's arguments are founded, if impartially examined, must necessarily carry conviction to the minds of those, who have been hitherto misled by the plausible reasonings adopted by the enemies of our Faith. This, it must be acknowledged, is a most important point gained over the adversary.

Yet there are some considerations arising out of the subject as it refers to the conduct of *Christians themselves*, that might be expatiated

expatiated upon with advantage; viz. such as relate to the Social Duties of life, as they may be affected by this benevolent principle. It is therefore to be lamented, that, in addition to the able statement of the public benefits of Christianity on the temporal concerns of mankind, the pious Prelate had not carried its precepts and beneficial tendency into Domestic Life; and shewn, how it might be made the source of our private comforts and enjoyments.

A learned Writer* on the subject of Christianity, observes that "its influence is not to be sought for, in the council of princes, in the debates or resolutions of popular assemblies, in the conduct of governments towards their subjects, or of states and sovereigns towards one another, of conquerors at the head of their armies,

* Paley's Evidences, vol. ii. page 376.

or of parties intriguing for power at home;—but it must be perceived in the silent course of domestic life.—Nay more; even *there* its influence may not be very obvious to observation. If it check, in some degree, personal dissoluteness; if it beget a general probity in the transactions of business; if it produce soft and humane manners in the mass of the community, and occasional exertions of laborious and expensive benevolence in a few individuals; it is all the effect which can offer itself to external notice.—The kingdom of heaven is within us. That which is the substance of Religion, its hopes and consolations, its intermixture in the thoughts by day and by night, the devotion of the heart, the controul of appetite, the steady direction of the will to the commands of God, is necessarily invisible: yet upon them depend the happiness and virtue of millions.”

Convinced

Convinced that this subject, even amongst Christians, has not had sufficient attention paid to it; and that much benefit might be derived from its being placed in a just point of view, the Author has been induced to throw together a few thoughts; which may be considered rather as a collection of materials for the work; than the work itself. But such as they are, she presents them with diffidence to a discerning Public; with the hope that they may at least furnish hints to some person better qualified to do justice to the subject.—She does not presume to have suggested any new ideas, but has merely endeavoured to place in a clear point of view, certain Christian duties, which there is reason to believe are not so generally practised as could be wished.

CHAP. I.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

ALL thoughtful and benevolent persons must feel the most devout gratitude to PROVIDENCE for the blessings Christianity has dispensed to the world; and with equal gratitude will they appreciate its value, in the daily occurrences of domestic life, in the constant intercourse we have with each other, and in the respective situations of Parent and Child, Brother and Sister, Husband and Wife, Friend and Relative. —In these social connexions, it may truly be said to have dispensed peace and goodwill towards men; and to have blessed society with a degree of happiness and comfort, unknown before, and which can spring from no other source.

In every age of the world, human nature has been the same;—equally under the dominion

dominion of evil passions, and bad principles; and throughout the whole of sacred and profane history, we read of little else, than vices and crimes, produced by envy, hatred, and malevolence.

The Psalms of David abound with complaints of the malice of enemies, the slander of false tongues, the oppressions of private tyranny, and the ingratitude of friends.—Immersed as he was, in the affairs of state, and extensive concerns of a mighty empire, they seem to have made much the largest part of his misery. His complaints are uttered in language so beautiful and interesting, yet so familiar to our own feelings, that we look around us for the same scenes that he describes.

But in his days, the blessed balm of Christianity had not been dispensed to mankind: David had not been taught the healing virtue of forgiveness; nor had he learned the duty of praying for his enemies. He had not heard that just and reasonable declaration, that he must expect forgive-

ness

ness of his own sins, in the exact proportion, that he forgave others their trespasses against him. Hence it may be inferred, that the bitter resentment which he expresses towards his enemies, would be a heavy crime in a disciple of CHRIST.

That the world is full of misery, is no new observation: but mankind do not seem aware, how much of that misery is of their own fabrication; at least, they do not apply the remedies, which the God of Comfort and Consolation has vouchsafed them;—they lament over the sorrow, without considering the cause, or guarding against the effects.

Most of our trials spring either from our own, or the vices and passions of others; and, for those disorders of the mind, which peculiarly bring their own punishment, the doctrines of Christianity are a certain preventative, and a never-failing antidote.

The sorrows which seem to proceed more immediately from the hand of Heaven, are
less

less afflicting, than the unjust accusation, the envious calumny, and the slanderous report. And the heart that rankles with those poisonous passions, and is torn by the "Vulture furies of the mind," envy, hatred, and ill will, is in a state of more turbulent misery, than the patient Job, when suffering under the most calamitous dispensations of PROVIDENCE:—The sorrows which spring from our vices, admit of no consolation; under these, we can place no trust in Heaven, no hopes of a future state;—all is present wretchedness, and future dread; and we are in the state described by Esdras*, suffering the straits of this world, without hoping to see the wide things of the next.

But in the afflictions which spring not from our own misconduct, but arise from causes no virtue can prevent, we have innumerable comforts and consolations; and we have the most perfect conviction, that

* 2 Esdras, chap. vii. ver. 18.—The whole Chapter is worth attention,

whatever

whatever THE ALMIGHTY sees fit to send us, is ultimately for our good: But in the miseries we make for ourselves, no alleviation could arise, till our Blessed SAVIOUR descended from Heaven with healing in his wings; till He taught us by precept and example,* to be meek and lowly in heart, and thus to find rest unto our souls; till He instructed us† how to pray for our enemies, to bless them which curse us, and to forgive, as we hope to be forgiven.

From Him we have received that blessed rule of Christian equity; that bond of peace in society, to‡ do to others, exactly what we might reasonably expect others to do to us; by His precepts, we are directed to§ pull the beam out of our own eye, before we presume to look at the mote in our brother's eye; and are taught, that as we judge others, we shall be judged ourselves; and, that with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again.

* Matt. xi. 29.

† Matt. v. 44.

‡ Matt. vii. 12.

§ Matt. vii. 1—5.

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These wholesome restraints on the human passions, were the specific law of CHRIST himself; though never, before His time, forming so particular and distinct a code:—many of their attendant virtues, indeed, were held in high estimation, previous to our SAVIOUR'S appearance.—The world, in its earliest stages, seemed to acknowledge the comfort and benefit of restraint and forbearance; and considered *them* as wise and prudent regulations, before they became Christian duties.—Solomon observes, that “a soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up strife;” and David, under his various provocations, offers up many prayers for the correction of his own turbulent passions: and there are various passages, precepts, and examples in the Old Testament, to enforce, what we now call *Christian duties*.

As one of the most remarkable, I would here recommend to notice, the conduct of Joseph towards his Brethren: this most beautiful and interesting narrative, affords an

an example of forbearance and forgiveness, not only very uncommon in those days, but such as is seldom indeed equalled even in these; it affords also an instance of the fatal consequences of unrestrained envy and malice.

The Brethren of Joseph, first, doomed him to a dreadful death, and then consigned him to perpetual slavery; thus they plunged their aged father into the most bitter grief for the loss of his darling child, and themselves into the deepest distress and anguish.—And why? because they envied Joseph their brother, for being his father's favourite, and were offended at the prognostics of his future greatness.—But what was Joseph's return for all this? When his Brethren bowed themselves down before him in distress, he kissed them, and wept on their necks; and when their hearts were torn with bitter remorse for their guilty conduct, he relieved the burthen of their self-reproach, with a delicacy and address, not only equal, but even superior to modern refinement; by referring the events

events of his life to the hand of God.—
 “Now therefore, be not grieved, nor angry
 with yourselves, that ye sold me hither;
 for, God did send me before you, to pre-
 serve life:”—“so now it was not you that
 sent me hither, but God.”*

And what was the consequence of this
 benign and heavenly temper? what were
 the effects of this forbearance of injury to

* Profane History furnishes a similar story:—Athenais, a Grecian virgin, of obscure origin, but of great beauty and merit, was driven from her country, by the injustice of her father, and the singular cruelty and avarice of her two brothers. She fled to Constantinople, and sought refuge with some relations; and, by a singular coincidence of circumstances too long to relate here, she captivated the reigning monarch, Theodosius II., and was raised to the imperial dignity. The first use she made of her influence with the sovereign, was to procure the highest places of profit and honour for the two brothers, who had been to her such bitter enemies; and on their testifying surprise and confusion, she said, “Had you not compelled me to leave my country, I should never have visited Constantinople, and consequently, not have had it in my power to confer on you these marks of sisterly affection.”—She died about the year 393 of the Christian æra.

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the family of Jacob?—Instead of the increased misery, of violence, bloodshed, revenge, and perpetual enmity, the once-happy family was restored to peace and comfort, with affections riveted and confirmed by the trials they had respectively suffered, and the forgiveness they had experienced; and the poor old patriarch had the delight of ending his days in the bosom of an affectionate family, restored to him in love and harmony.

The duties which this history exemplifies, are now, under the Gospel, more strongly pressed upon us, from having been since formed into a complete code of laws by the Great AUTHOR of our Salvation; and the observance of them is made the particular condition of our own acceptance, through His merits and propitiation. It behoves us therefore, as we value our eternal welfare, attentively to study, and diligently to follow, these divine precepts: and if every individual conscientiously performed his part, we should have a foretaste on earth, of that future state of bliss,
 for

for the enjoyment of which, the practice of these duties is meant to train us, and the happiness of which, we are taught to believe, will consist, in the exercise of the benevolent affections, and the absence of malevolent passions.

But as, unfortunately, in this state of imperfection, human beings will occasionally fall from their duty, the blessed effects of the Christian temper cannot be felt in their full force. — Yet its blessings to individuals, every person is capable of securing to himself: and I would refer any one to his own experience, to judge of the self-inflicted misery, which springs from the envious, turbulent, and unforgiving temper, which, “like the troubled sea, can never be at rest, but is perpetually casting up mire and dirt;” and contrast this wretched state of mind, with the peace and comfort of benevolent feelings, and the blessing of mutual interchanges of kind and friendly offices.

We shall ever find, that happiness is reflective;
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flective; and that, in proportion as we communicate it to others, we shall enjoy it ourselves: and there are no vices of the human mind, that seem in so remarkable a manner to carry along with them their own punishment, as envy and malevolence; which are marked by a disquietude and distaste for every comfort and blessing. This observation is strikingly exemplified in the character of Haman, in the Book of Esther; who, we read, assembled his household to display to them his magnificence, his riches, his honours, his favour with the king, and all his enviable distinctions, and prosperity; concluding with this bitter and degrading confession; “Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew, sitting at the king’s gate.*” A mere trifling privilege possessed by an humble unambitious individual, was sufficient to destroy the entire peace, comfort, and enjoyment of this great and pro-

* See Blair’s Sermon on the “Disorders of the Passions;” vol. i.

sperous man. In the sequel of this history, we read of the punishment that pursued those crimes, which had their rise only in an envious feeling. “*Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!”

Envy may be called a weed of the human mind, which, like other weeds, grows with far greater rapidity, than useful and wholesome plants; it is a weed too of that rancorous quality, that it poisons every thing within its reach; and, if not rooted up to the very foundation, it destroys, eventually, every seed of virtue, and every germ of human happiness.

And let people be careful not to deceive themselves, in the rise and progress of this disease of the mind; and to watch it narrowly in all its approaches to the heart. Let them, as St. Paul enjoins, “†Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep;” and let them, by

* James iii. 5.

† Rom. xii. 16.
promoting

promoting these sweet sympathies, as Christian duties, resist every sensation of uneasiness, at the happiness or prosperity of another; resting assured that such a sensation implies a vicious disposition, that will prove the certain destroyer of their own peace.

It is the duty of every person individually by his example, and endeavours, to dispense as much as possible of the blessed spirit of Christian love, in his own circle, and to possess his own soul in that patience and peace, which it will secure to himself. —Our Blessed SAVIOUR calls the peacemakers the children of GOD; and promises His mercy to the merciful*; and to all His faithful followers, He dispenses “that peace, which the world cannot give:”—“My peace I give unto you;—not as the world giveth, give I unto you†:” He gives it not in the shape of worldly prosperity, gratified ambition, and pampered pride; He gives it, in the humble and un-

* Matt. v. 7 & 9.

† John xiv. 27.
aspiring

aspiring mind, the gentle and forgiving temper, and in the benevolent and affectionate heart. Having briefly traced the good effects of these virtues in promiscuous Society, I shall proceed in the next Chapter to take a short view of them in the near and dear connexion of Parent and Child.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

ON THE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILD.

THE learned Prelate before mentioned, observes, at page 13 of his Work: "One would conclude that nature, by planting in our breasts a most passionate fondness for our offspring, had effectually provided against every act of inhumanity towards them, and made the force of Parental Love, a sufficient barrier against the encroachments of Parental Power." — But in this indeed, as in a thousand other instances, we see human passions surmount even the feelings of nature: and the pagan history which he produces in exemplification of this subject, proves that mankind are too corrupt to be trusted even with their own offspring, without the restraint of Divine and human laws. — But we have no necessity to refer to antient history, or even to other nations, in search of instances of tyranny and oppression, practised in domestic

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tic life, by those, who are unrestrained by an awful sense of an account *hereafter*; and though we may hope that, in this age of enlightened Christianity, instances of gross cruelty, are more uncommon than formerly; yet it must not be dissembled, that much private misery still exists in families, from inattention to Christian duties in *trifles*; — the severe look, the harsh expression, the unjust suspicion, the cold neglect, and the too rigid discipline, will frequently poison the enjoyment, and gradually undermine the affections of families, otherwise happy.

The comfort of the Parent is by such means as completely destroyed, as that of any one in his house: and if, instead of following the impulse of tenderness and affection, he exercise his just prerogative of authority *only* as an instrument of coercion and oppression, such a man's foes will be "those of his own household*;" he will lose the first blessing of life, — their

* Matt. x. 36.

affection

affection and confidence, and the sweetest of all friendships, — that of the Child for the Parent.

Against this evil, Christianity, by various injunctions, has provided. — "* Fathers provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged:" — but "† bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord:" Which precepts have a manifest regard for the happiness, as well as the discipline of young people: for, besides restraint, they want incitement, and encouragement to good; and should be convinced, that the power delegated to the Parent, is intended only for their benefit; while the Parent should prove, by unremitting tenderness and affection, that the happiness of the Child is his only object, and that discipline is exercised merely with a view to attain this end.

The nurture and admonition of the Lord is a beautiful simile of parental love:

* Colossians iii. 21.

† Ephesians vi. 4.

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The admonitions of our HEAVENLY FATHER are always so happily mixed with nurture, and kindness; *His* corrections and blessings are so mercifully blended, that, while we bend under His chastisement, we kiss the rod, and feel him at once, our Father, our Friend, and our Protector.

If the Parent be thus piously guided in training his Children in the paths of virtue and Christianity, their mutual happiness and advantage must necessarily spring from it: and it will ever be found that, in the proportion in which the Parent preserves the affection of his Children, he will maintain his influence over them; and that his own example of moderation, gentleness, and benevolence, will work much more powerfully and effectually on them, than precepts, however excellent in themselves, harshly delivered, and sternly enforced by authority.

I have thus far addressed myself only to Parents: but I must now speak more particularly

particularly to my *younger readers*, and entreat them not to misunderstand me, or suppose that I mean to lessen, in the smallest degree, that power, delegated to the Parent by Heaven itself, for the wisest and most important purposes:—Let my young friends consider, that they have a duty of still greater importance to perform;—a duty so essential to their well-doing, and to their happiness *here* and *hereafter*, that THE ALMIGHTY was pleased to make it one of those important Laws, dispensed to the Jews, long before the Christian æra; which our Blessed SAVIOUR, who came to fulfill the Law, has confirmed by precept and example.—HE, the Holy and Blessed SON of GOD, “without spot and without blemish,” was subject to His earthly Parents, and till thirty years of age, (we have reason to believe,) He was as bright an example of filial duty, as He was of every other divine virtue; and, by the mouth of His holy Apostles, He has said: “* Children, obey your Parents in THE LORD; for, *this*

* Ephesians vi. 1, 2.

is right. Honour thy Father and thy Mother; which is the first Commandment, with promise." — "* Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing unto THE LORD."

Though all the commands of our Heavenly FATHER AND REDEEMER, are to be implicitly obeyed, without reference to our own will, and wishes; yet those commands will be most cheerfully complied with, the expediency of which is evident to our own senses. The duty of a Child, to a Parent, is not so immediately the work of Nature, as that of the Parent to the Child. Instinct (if I may presume to adopt the word) works in many different ways for the welfare and happiness of one's offspring: but one of the earliest dispositions which an infant shews, is that of self-will, and an impatience of controul: and this continues to have such a strong hold of our nature, that to counteract it, is a part of

* Colossians iii. 20.

education,

education, which should begin with our very existence.

The necessity of the Parent's authority over the Child, is evinced more particularly by two considerations, viz. the inexperience and folly of youth, and the knowledge of the world, experience, and judgement, which increasing years give the Parent:— He has passed a life of business, exertion, and trial; he has seen human nature, in various points of view; he has marked causes and effects, events and consequences; and he knows, that impetuous youth may, by one single and rash act, sacrifice the happiness of their whole lives.

How thankful, therefore, should the young be, for those monitors who have trod the path of life before them; who can distinguish the right and the wrong track, and point out the shoals, and the quicksands, which so often make shipwreck of virtue and innocence! A Parent is that kind monitor, whose affection excites the tenderest anxiety for the welfare of his Children,

Children, and whose vigilance is ever most attentively employed to protect them from danger.

There is a case above all others, my young friends, in which I most earnestly entreat you to be on your guard,—against the dangerous doctrines of modern Philosophy, which inculcates, amongst other improper instructions, that a Parent's authority may be set aside in your choice in Marriage.

I have frequently heard miserable arguments brought forward to prove, that a Parent has nothing to do with the Matrimonial Connexions of their Children; that it is an affair of the heart; and that they are the best judges of what will make them happy. — The consequences of acting on this reasoning, from consulting the heart only, and not the judgement, have been evinced in numberless unhappy marriages, undertaken from a transient affection, without thought, experience, or foresight.

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This is a case, above all others, where a Parent's judgement and influence are of most importance; where a degree of caution, prudence, and knowledge of the world, is absolutely necessary, — which young people cannot possess: — From the Parent's knowledge of character and judgement unbiassed by partiality, he sees the symptoms, and foresees the consequences, of vices, bad habits, and evil tempers; and he knows (what a young person cannot know) what are the requisites of happiness and comfort, in a world, where he has perhaps himself suffered from the want of them.

It rarely happens, that wisdom is taught by any means but experience; and in these unfortunate cases of inclinations, where the wishes of young persons are in direct opposition to those of their Parents, it is the duty of the latter to remonstrate, with all Christian gentleness:—If that fail, it then becomes absolutely necessary to exert the authority which PROVIDENCE has given, to prevent every thing, that threatens
to

to be injurious to the happiness or virtue of the Child.—But there the Parent's authority ceases; though he has a right to forbid one connexion, he has no right to urge another, though it is happy for both Parent and Child, where the wishes of each can be brought to coincide: And here the Christian precepts will have their effect, by disposing both parties to bend as much to the wishes of each other, as the happiness of the object in question will admit.

I have digressed a little on a subject rather foreign to my purpose, to introduce a few observations, which the increasing licentiousness of the present age has rendered worthy of the serious consideration of all young people.—It remains therefore to sum up in a few words, the respective duties of Parent and Child.

It behoves the Parent to be as affectionate, kind, gentle, and forbearing, as is consistent with the discipline, occasionally necessary for headstrong youth: and the duties

duties of Children are obedience, submission, respect, and gratitude, for the blessing they enjoy, in a friend and monitor, thus able and thus willing to assist, protect, and instruct them.

In the performance of these reciprocal duties, Parents and Children would secure to each other, a domestic blessing, which those who have deserved, and possess it, will know how to estimate: it is a pearl of that price, which is well worth the trifling sacrifices that purchase it.

I shall make some reflections, under another head, on the forbearance and patience, which the neglect of duty in others calls for; and, in my next Chapter, address myself, to the younger members of a family, united under the relationship of Brother and Sister.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT BETWEEN BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

UNDER the Jewish dispensation, the happiness of family affection was well understood, and its duties frequently enforced, as many texts in Solomon's, and other of the Sacred Writings, testify. David thus expresses himself in Psalm cxxxiii: "Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity." But, though the comfort of family harmony is universally acknowledged, the means of preserving it is not sufficiently studied:—the evil tempers, the vanity, and self-interest of young people, living together on familiar terms, are very apt to clash; and the love of power creates continual struggles for superiority. To correct these disorders, Christian precepts must be carefully impressed on the mind; and every member of the family, as he values the best blessings

blessings of life, must study and obey them.—In many families, where there is no actual vice, much misery may arise from unrestrained petulance, groundless jealousy, and competition for trifles.—All this may be the result of mere infirmity of temper, even where mutual regard, and a general desire to please, exist: but let young people remember, that the germ of affection will eventually be destroyed by these poisoners of family peace, the comforts of which can only be preserved by a constant attention to all the minutiae in conduct, which contribute to the happiness of others, and secure their confidence and good opinion. All the Christian precepts, contribute to this desirable end, and none more, than that valuable rule of "doing to others, as you would wish others to do to you."

The learned Prelate, in the treatise above-mentioned, observes, at page 11, that "perfect equality must produce everlasting contests for power." Such being the case, PROVIDENCE has wisely excluded

it from society: whatever modern philosophers may assert, no such thing as *equality* can exist; even amongst brothers and sisters, where no particular qualification gives superiority, it is always delegated to the eldest, and so on in succession.

St. Peter, in his first Epistle*, says: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another and be clothed with humility: for, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

By an attentive cultivation of the Christian virtue of humility, most of our turbulent passions would disappear; and, instead of the perpetual contest for superiority, we should feel only an incessant wish to promote each other's interest and welfare; and the only contest would be, who should contribute most largely to the general stock of domestic happiness, and excel

* Chap. v. 5.

most

most in those Christian graces, that would promote it.

In order to sum up the social duties of Brothers and Sisters, let us refer to the fountain-head of all our precepts.

In the 13th Chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, is a divine summary of these blessed virtues.—Charity, which, in the original, signifies Love, is there the general term for Christian graces; and we are told, that every other virtue, without Charity, profiteth us nothing:—"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: Bear-eth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."—This Charity, or Christian love, though necessary in all social intercourse, forms a particular part of our domestic duties; and without it, no happiness or affection can subsist.

Let

Let it therefore be the rule of conduct for every member of a family; let them bear, and allow for, each other's failings and infirmities; let them be kind and attentive to each other's comforts; and let them avoid envy, ill-will, and competition, as destructive of virtue and social happiness: " * For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."—Let them behave to each other with gentleness; cultivating a meek and humble temper, seeking each other's happiness and interest in preference to their own; restraining peevishness, and resisting provocation; rejoicing in the prosperity and success of each other, and " † bearing one another's burthens," in sickness and sorrow; hoping every thing good, and believing, and trusting in the virtues and affections of each other, and, as St. Paul instructs the Philippians, " † Being like-minded; having the same love; being of one accord; of one mind: Let nothing be done through

* James iii. 16.

† Philippians ii. 2.

† Galatians vi. 2.

strife

strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than himself. Let this mind be in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS." And " * Let brotherly love continue." " † Let all bitterness and wrath, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST's sake hath forgiven you." " Finally, Brethren, farewell:—Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind; live in peace; and the GOD of love and peace shall be with you."

* Hebrews xiii. 1.

† Ephesians iv. 31, 32.

† 2 Corinthians, xiii. 11.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE CHRISTIAN DUTIES OF A WIFE.

I COME next to that social connexion, which, being the most intimate, and most indissoluble, more than any other demands the exercise of Christian virtues, and is a state of such a nature, that neither happiness nor peace can exist without them.

In all these cases, I presuppose as much reasonable virtue in both parties, as human nature will admit, though I believe, in a general way, the scale of virtue oftener preponderates on the female side.

We have no reason however to suppose, that Religion is of *any sex*; or, that dereliction of principle or virtue will be forgiven in one, sooner than in the other: and yet men in general act, as if they thought it *would*; as if their souls were of less value, or, Heaven would be attained by them,

them, with less virtue, patience, and less self-denial, than by the female world.

This observation is particularly applicable to one detestable vice, which, in a woman, is justly the total sacrifice of her reputation, but in a man, makes little or no difference, in his situation or estimation in society.—Political motives may suggest something like a reason for this; but no part of Scripture furnishes any authority for the distinction; and we have just ground to believe that, in the sight of our MAKER, the crime is just as great in the one, as in the other.

In the practice of religious duties, and the exercise of patience and humility, there seems also, to be a distinct character between the sexes; the circumstance is accounted for, in their different modes of education, and habits of life: but it appears an awful question, and well worth consideration, whether this difference will be admitted in excuse at our great account.

Certain

Certain it is, that women, from this cause, have a great advantage over men, in the quietness of mind, the gentleness of temper, the religious habits, and patient endurance, which, from their cradle to their grave, they are generally under the necessity of exercising, which produce to them their greatest happiness, and most animating hopes: the few exceptions that occur of these qualities in women, only prove their necessity: for, a woman, without religious habits, a quiet mind, and a gentle temper, is the most wretched and most contemptible of beings.

To them therefore, I shall address myself, in this chapter, on the cultivation of Christian virtues in the married state.

It has been before observed, that in no situation can absolute *equality* exist; and in that of Marriage, there is a manifest and decided superiority on the part of the Man, established by GOD himself, for very wise and obvious purposes.

Men

Men are by nature superior in strength of mind, judgement, and experience; THE ALMIGHTY Himself hath said, "Thy husband shall rule over thee;" and our SAVIOUR has confirmed this law, both in his own doctrines, and by the mouth of His holy Apostles.—And here I request my readers, to refer to the exhortation at the end of the Marriage-Service, which, if it has ever been read to them, may have been heard without attention, or perhaps never remembered or referred to since. It is extracted from the different Scriptures on the subject; and that part of it addressed to the Woman, first enforces the absolute duty of subjection to the Husband,* next of reverence and respect; and these lessons are repeated from different parts of the Epistles.—St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians†, and St. Peter, in his 1st Epistle‡, extend the duty of Wives, to the qualifications of a modest and virtuous woman; and suppose that the example of

* Ephesians xv. 22, 23.

† Chap. iii. 19.

‡ Chap. iii. 19.

such

such a character may have influence sufficient, over a depraved and unbelieving Husband, to reclaim him to the paths of duty and Religion.—This indeed, would be a most blessed and happy effect, and what would produce the most inestimable reward, to a good and affectionate Wife.

To accomplish this desirable end, let her remember, that gentleness can only acquire influence over the Husband, and example alone can make it efficacious.

The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of great price in the sight of God,* brings its own reward to the possessor; and is not only the duty of a woman, but her most prudent resource.

Her domestic comforts are more within her own reach, than she is aware of; for, supposing the Husband's conduct not such as to secure them, her own impatient resistance can only serve to irritate him, and

* 1 Peter, iii. 4.

swell the sum of domestic misery; and supposing him, on the contrary, to be a man of good temper, and correct morals, the gentle and Christian conduct of the Wife, must greatly add to their happiness, and rivet his affections.—Women have in general, less merit in bearing the petty evils of life than men, and are apt to seek relief and redress in complaints. This habit is a never-failing poisoner of the sweets of domestic life.—Trifling vexations, unless there are obvious and easy means of removing them, must be carefully concealed: the Husband expects a cheerful countenance, an obliging manner, and an apparent happiness and contentment in the state, in which he has placed his companion; and if, from any unfortunate cause, she sours the comfort of his domestic life, her own will most assuredly be the sacrifice.

What then is the summary of the duties of a Christian Wife?

Constant subjection to her Husband, in every thing which is not inconsistent with her

her duty to her MAKER; the highest respect for his character and conduct, to the utmost extent she can preserve it; forbearance with his faults, follies, and failings; mildness and cheerfulness in her manners and conversation; and a minute attention to every article connected with his happiness, comfort, and interests; regular precepts and example, to train his children and servants in the paths of holiness, and daily prayers to Heaven for his welfare, and grace to perform the duties of a good and Christian Wife.

Such a woman's prayers, united with her earnest endeavours, will undoubtedly find favour with THE ALMIGHTY, and He will dispense to her the best blessings of life, peace of mind, and an approving conscience; and any discouragements or trials which must arise occasionally from things human, will serve but to increase her virtue, and animate the only hope, on which the mortal eye can rest with any permanent satisfaction.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE CHRISTIAN DUTIES OF A HUSBAND.

TO the Husband though I address myself last, I would speak with still greater freedom and earnestness; for, from the habits of life into which men generally fall, and their deficiency in the religious duties of patience and forbearance, I believe domestic happiness is more frequently interrupted, than by any defect on the part of the Wife: and, though the duties incumbent on the Husband are of a different nature, they are not the less essential to domestic comfort, and to future salvation.

And here I must again refer my readers to the *exhortation* at the end of the Marriage-Service, stating the duties of Husbands: — these are extracted from the Scripture; and they enforce, first, the most tender love of the Wife, exemplified in the love of CHRIST for His Church, for which He

He sacrificed his life*, with the same degree of interest, anxiety, and affection, there specified; Men are commanded to love their Wives, even as their own bodies; for, the love of the Wife is considered as loving themselves, which every human being sufficiently does, taking care to nourish and cherish himself. — In the same degree, he is commanded to love and cherish his Wife: and, that she may be the principal object of his affection, he is commanded to leave his father and mother, and cleave to her, that they may be one flesh.

The love of the Husband for the Wife is to be of a kind peculiarly tender and indulgent; all bitterness and asperity †, is to be particularly excluded, and he is commanded to consider her, with that benevolent compassion, which renders every object still more endearing; she is the weaker vessel ‡, a tender being, requiring assistance, encouragement, protection, and

* Ephesians v. 25.

† 1 Peter, iii. 7.

‡ Colossians iii. 19.

support;

support; and being heirs together of eternal life, he is enjoined to pray for her, and to assist her in the great work of her salvation.

I fear, the generality of married men, trying their conduct by this touchstone, would find themselves greatly deficient. One reason for this seems to be that they consider women, as given them solely for their comfort and convenience; hence, too often they extract from them all the services and benefits, they want; making scarcely any return on their part for the attentions they receive.—This conduct arises from a habit of selfishness, into which men fall imperceptibly, from feeling their own power, and superior influence in society:—And to this cause, perhaps more than to any other, the happiness of the Wife is sacrificed.—Men seem also to be in the habit of expecting too great perfection; and even those who enter into the marriage-state with the greatest affection, perhaps raise their ideas on this subject to a pitch, that nothing human can reach; hence

hence must inevitably spring disappointment, which will necessarily produce disgust:—And thus, defects and errors are magnified into crimes; and the Husband avails himself of the privilege of reproof, with a warmth, and sometimes with a degree of bitterness, which the Christian precepts absolutely forbid.—To prevent, or remedy this evil, I should recommend, reasonable expectations, and candour in judging; with that allowance for circumstances, which the conduct of well-disposed persons always admits.

He, “who thought it not good for man to be alone,” has particularly blessed and sanctified the matrimonial state, and endowed it with as much happiness and comfort as any condition in this world can afford.

But there is a kind of compact between Man and his MAKER, that *certain* blessings are to be purchased by the performance of *certain* duties; and if Man breaks the covenant by neglecting the one, let him

him not complain that he has lost the other.

Let a Husband therefore who would possess himself, and communicate to his Wife, that happiness, with which PROVIDENCE has blessed the married state, attend to all those rules of Christian equity, which subdue selfishness in the human breast; let him consider his Wife as a part of himself; and make her comfort, interest, and character, equally dear to him with his own; let him treat her with tenderness, gentleness, and attention, administering his reproofs with candour and indulgence, and with the sole view of her happiness and improvement; always feeling and expressing the highest value for her virtues, and approbation of her good conduct.—Let him comfort her in sickness and distress, protect her from injury and calumny, and conscientiously discharge the duties he promised at the altar in the presence of THE ALMIGHTY, to love, comfort, and cherish her.

These duties conscientiously performed, will most assuredly bring their reward *here* and *hereafter*.—And let not either party suppose, that a failure of duty in the one, can authorize any deviation in the other.—Let each adhere strictly to their own particular duty, faithfully trusting, that **HE** who seeth in secret “their labour of love,” Himself shall reward them openly.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE BLESSINGS-OF THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER IN SOCIETY.

THE two great banes of human virtue and peace, are the corruption of the heart, and the unrestrained indulgence of the tongue: “the heart conceiveth falsehood, and the tongue uttereth it.” The first “is deceitful, and desperately wicked;” its movements are constantly inclined to evil, and requiring a strict watch and discipline: “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life*.”—“The tongue,” saith the Apostle, “is a fire; a world of iniquity, that defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of hell:”—“The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly member, full of deadly poison†.”

* Prov. iv. 23.

† James iii. 6. & 8.

David frequently laments these evil propensities in himself. — “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips; O, let not mine heart be inclined to any evil thing*.” — “Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me†.”

That divine code of Christian laws, given by our SAVIOUR, in his Sermon on the Mount, should be the constant study of every sincere believer: and we shall there see, even the crime of adultery traced to the heart‡. — And in all His precepts, HE inculcates restraints on the first advances of sin.

Envy, hatred, and revenge, have their first beginning in the evil thoughts of the heart: our SAVIOUR therefore provides against the greater evil, by forbidding the less: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry

* Psalm cxli. 3, 4. † Psalm li. 10. ‡ Mat. v. 28.

with

with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgement; and whosoever shall say, ‘Thou fool,’ shall be in danger of hell fire*.”

Here, the evil motion of the heart, and the bitter language of the tongue, are both absolutely forbidden.

Against resentment, hatred, malevolence, harsh judgement, and censure, the most awful punishments are denounced: for we are told, that as we judge others, we shall be judged ourselves; and with what measure we meet, it shall be measured to us again: that if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our Heavenly FATHER forgive ours†.”

In that divine prayer, left us as a model for our devotions, we ask forgiveness of our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.

* Matt. v. 21, 22.

† Matt. vii. 1, 2. & vi. 15.

I should suppose there are few people that call themselves Christians, who do not repeat this prayer on their knees, at least once a day; — but I fear, they do not reflect, that if they repeat it, with an unforgiving temper, and a heart rankling with malice and ill-will; — if there is a single trespass against themselves, for which they feel even resentment; they invoke the judgement of HEAVEN on their heads, with their own lips; for they pray that THE ALMIGHTY will remember and punish *their* sins, as they at that moment remember and resent the sins of *another* against them.

It therefore behoves every one that would escape the wrath to come, to clear his heart of every sensation of unforgiveness against another, before he presumes to approach THE ALMIGHTY with any petition for himself; and this is our SAVIOUR's express command: — "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest, that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way;

way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*."

We are not only commanded by our SAVIOUR to forgive our enemies; but to love and bless them; to pray for them; to do them all the good in our power: and we are expressly told, there is no virtue in loving our *friends*, and being kind to *those* who are kind to us; and that it is not benevolence, to lend and give to those from whom we expect an equivalent†; we are to lend and give to those, from whom we expect no recompence; and to look for our reward *only* in Heaven. The Christian doctrine of forgiveness of injuries; is a most essential one to Salvation; and yet I fear it is very little understood, and still less regarded.

Mankind deceive themselves, not only with respect to the virtue itself, but the state of their own hearts concerning it; — instead of cultivating it, as a restraint on

* Matt. v. 23, 24.

† Luke vi. 32—35.

the passions, and making it an active, self-denying, Christian duty, they make it a mere negative virtue; and think that, if they refrain from positive acts of resentment, and do their enemy no injury, the duty is performed. They also connect with the act of forgiveness on their part, repentance and apology on the part of the delinquent: but, however desirable such conduct may appear, the example of CHRIST does not justify us in making it the terms of our forgiveness: HE prayed for his enemies, at the very moment of the bitter and agonizing death, to which they had doomed Him; and, at the very instant that they were swelling the catalogue of injuries, by gross insult, and bitter language! — And He too was suffering for well-doing; — even the thief upon the cross by his side, exclaimed, “This man hath done nothing amiss;” — we perhaps ourselves are receiving but the due reward of our deeds, and may have provoked and deserved, the injury which we cannot forgive.

One

One source of our bitter resentments against our enemies is, that we look on every event with a sensual and worldly eye; we do not sufficiently raise our thoughts to the *Great First Cause*.

Every affliction and trial, through whatever channel it comes to us, or in whatever shape it is sent, is equally the work of HEAVEN; and “the ungodly is as much a sword in the hands of THE ALMIGHTY*,” as “the pestilence which walketh in darkness,” or “the sickness which destroyeth at the noon-day†.” — The passions and vices of men are instruments, which our MASTER uses, to work out our Salvation, to perfect our patience, to correct our evil tempers, and to exercise our faith and virtue.

“Offences must come,” saith our LORD: “but woe to him by whom they come†!” Though PROVIDENCE directs the blow, He will punish the hand that inflicts it.

* Psalm xvii. 13.

† Psalm xci. 6.

† Matt. xviii. 7.

It

It is of the utmost importance, that we should rightly understand, and correctly practise every duty necessary to our eternal Salvation; we should therefore carefully try and examine ourselves, whether any evil tempers, or self-deceit, impede this Christian work, — forgiveness of injuries. There are certain tests by which we might ascertain the state of our minds on the subject. — The Author of the admirable “Sermons on the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity” says, that one touchstone of our Christian forgiveness is, whether we can sincerely, and with our hearts, pray for our enemies. — We may also ask ourselves, Can we not only readily *seize*, but anxiously *seek* every opportunity of doing them service? can we labour for their benefit, and reformation; and make sacrifice of our own comfort and interest, to promote their good? do we rejoice sincerely in their happiness, and mourn over their sorrows, and disappointments?

If, on weighing ourselves in this balance, we find we are wanting, we have cause to tremble

tremble for the state of our souls; we are very far from that perfection of Christian forgiveness, that can allow us ground to hope for our own; and there is yet lurking in our depraved hearts, some fatal impediment to the performance of those duties, which the doctrines and example of **CHRIST** have enjoined.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY IN FORMING THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

To strike at the root of corruption in the human heart, is the most important work of the zealous Christian: and on a diligent examination of the source of our sins, it will be found, that *pride* is the greatest enemy of our virtue and peace.

Opposed to this vice, is the virtue of *humility*, so strongly and repeatedly enforced by our SAVIOUR, and his Apostles. Almost all Christian perfection rests upon it: but here again, self-deceit misleads us, and we place to the account of virtue, what is in itself a vice. — Many people fancy they possess humility, when nothing is further from their hearts; nay, the very pride of being humble, is one of their sensations.

I once

I once heard a female say, “I am of such an humble temper I cannot bear reproof; I want praise and encouragement, I require to think better of myself than I do; the good opinion of others is necessary to me, I can do nothing right without it.” — It may however be truly asserted, that the virtue of humility formed no part of her character; on the contrary, the most absurd and overweening pride and vanity were her predominant qualities.

Genuine humble Christians know, that their lives and conduct, are little else than imperfection; that they are constantly requiring reproof and admonition; that it is *always* good for them; they will be thankful for it, in whatever shape, or from whatever source it comes; and they will shrink from praise and admiration, as from their greatest enemies. And, should some reproofs reach them, which they may think are unjust; they will always remember as a balance, how much, that is wrong in themselves, escapes the notice of others.

3

On

On an humble sense of our own imperfections, is founded that tenderness and forbearance towards the imperfections of others, which is the source of peace and good-will.—A censorious and proud spirit sows dissensions in society; and “who art thou that judgest another?”* a miserable sinful creature, hourly rebelling against a good and merciful God, and disobeying the precepts of thy Holy Religion; and though possibly free from the sin thou condemnest in another, daily committing sins of a different nature, as offensive, and perhaps more so, in the sight of thy MAKER.

“Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?”† Shall we be perpetually cavilling at the mote in our brother's eye, and forget the beam in our own? *Humility* would teach us to be more

* Romans xiv. 4, 10, 13.—See also the second chapter of Romans.

† Romans ii. 21.

anxious

anxious to extract the one, than to remove the other.

A just sense of our own imperfections, would have the desirable effect of increasing our good opinion of, and affection for others; and from these benevolent feelings spring our sweetest mental happiness.

An humble and Christian temper will defend us from those prisoners of peace and comfort,—envy and competition: the first will teach us, that others are more deserving than ourselves, and the latter will enable us to rejoice in their prosperity.

By humility, we shall be spared those turbulent feelings of ambition, and those corroding cares of anxiety, which so embitter, and distract our existence; and by humility we shall be saved from those contests about the trifling gratifications of the world, which sow discord in society.

Humility

Humility must be the leading virtue of a Christian character; it was constantly exemplified in our SAVIOUR's conduct, and the frequent subject of His exhortations: He promises rest and comfort to the meek and lowly,* and pronounces a distinct blessing on the humble state of mind.

A rigid examination of our actions, and their motives and springs; and, above all things, an attentive observance of the movements and thoughts of the heart, are the best incentives to humility: but here, self-love and partiality produce self-deceit; we are very apt to examine ourselves by a comparison with others, instead of searching the Scriptures, and comparing our conduct with their precepts. We may think ourselves superior to the generality of our acquaintance, and yet be far from the way of Salvation; and such a comparison may serve to excite our pride, instead of increasing our humility.

* Matt. xi. 29.

Let

Let us examine ourselves by the strict letter of the Christian law; and the best of us will find, that "all men sin, and fall woefully short of the duties they are called on to perform." Every one will find that he has some particular besetting sin, the enemy of his Salvation, which he must daily and hourly fight against; he will perceive, that every thing he does, is imperfect; and that the Christian life is a constant warfare and struggle with bad passions, and corrupt inclinations. We are told we must *strive* to enter into the kingdom of Heaven: for, merely *seeking* it, will not attain it;* and that we must watch and pray continually.†

I am well aware of one popular expression, that has lately been opposed to the labours of zealous Christians, for the good of society,—“that all this is too strict; it cannot be attained.”—No human being, I

* Luke xiii. 24.

† Matt. xxiv. 41.—See Bishop Huntingford's admirable Discourse on this text; Vol. I.

should

should imagine, would presume to say that the Bible is too strict, or that the precepts contained in it, are too difficult to follow: I therefore entreat my readers, to refer to the texts of Scripture I have marked in the notes, and judge themselves, whether I have strained a single precept above its pitch.

Then, it is urged again, "we cannot attain all this; we must be short of perfection."—The knowledge of this unhappy truth, is only applied by pious Christians in one way,—to increase their humility and self-abasement; and their faith in, and gratitude for, the GREAT PROPITIATION for the sins of the world.

For such sinners, CHRIST died; not for the careless and worldly-minded, who, admitting the necessity of imperfection, make no stand against it.

We are told to "be perfect, even as our FATHER which is in Heaven, is perfect;"*

* Matt. v. 48.

life

life is to be a constant labour to attain it; and if we use our unceasing and earnest endeavours, the merits and mediation of our SAVIOUR will atone for the rest; the best of us, after having been "sober and vigilant," to the best of our power, must "cast all our cares and hopes on HIM."*—I have rather wandered from my subject, but I hope not uselessly; and will, in the next chapter, take a brief survey of the Christian Character.

* 1 Peter, v. 7, 8.

H.A.P.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUMMARY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

THE precepts of our SAVIOUR inculcate a meek, lowly, and humble temper; forbearance, gentleness, and an universal benevolence, a constant desire, and labour to promote the interest and happiness of mankind. A diligent restraint is enforced on all the passions, on the thoughts of the heart, on the expressions of the tongue, on the sins of the eye and the hand; which we are commanded to pluck out, or cut off, if it impede our Salvation.*—This is figurative language, implying the zeal and exertion with which we are enjoined, at the expence of indulgence or inclination, to root out every bad passion from the heart.

We are to love mankind, and do them all the good in our power; to pray for them,

* Matt. v. 29, 30.

to

to assist them, to lend, and to give, to our enemies, as well as to our friends; we are to be merciful, if we hope for mercy; we are to forgive, if we expect forgiveness; and, as we would that men should do unto us, even so are we to do unto them.*

If every action towards another, was weighed in this balance, and this latter precept made the constant rule of our lives; every Christian virtue would spring out of it; we should be just, merciful, kind, forgiving, and gentle; because we expect and wish others to be so to us.

Next to the study of our SAVIOUR'S Sermon on the Mount, I should recommend a serious attention to the 13th chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, as being equally applicable to general social duties, as to particular ones.—It is an excellent summary of those Christian graces, from which so much peace and harmony spring; it inculcates humi-

* Matt. vii. 12.

lity, benevolence, and forbearance, in impressive and beautiful language*.

Amongst the many virtues of Christianity, productive of our own happiness, and that of others; few are so much so, as that species of forbearance, which is not "easily provoked, and thinketh no evil."

If we trace most of our provocations to their source, we shall find them generally originating in mere trifles;—a hasty word, a sarcastic look, or a cold inattention; each perhaps the momentary effect of some bodily infirmity, or mental distress, foreign to the subject, and, if passed by unnoticed, would produce no lasting uneasiness. Provocations very often arise from a still more trifling cause than this;—from a false report, that may have originated wholly in mistake, or, perhaps, like the travelling snow-ball, have gathered a little, at every turn it has taken, through the incorrect

* See also the 12th chapter of Romans, for a most admirable system of Christian Duties.

repre-

representation of every retailer, till, a mere *mole-hill of folly* has swelled into a *mountain of injury*.

By such means, are chief friends separated, and misery and discord sown in society.

In such cases, the most prudent resource, is an immediate application, in gentle and Christian terms, to the fountain-head of the calumny.—" * Admonish a friend; it may be he hath not done it: and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admonish thy friend; it may be he hath not said it; or if he have, that he speak it not again. Admonish a friend; for many times it is a slander: and believe not every tale."—
" † Finally, let us be all of one mind, having compassion one of another, let us love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering railing for railing, but, contrariwise, blessing.—For he that will love

* Eccl'us xix. 13, 14, 15. † 1 Peter, iii. 8, 9, 10, 11.

life,

life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."—"* Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see THE LORD."—"† With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the SPIRIT in the bond of peace."—"‡ The fruit of the SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. And let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another."—"§ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

* Hebrews xii. 14.

† Galatians v. 22, 26.

‡ Ephesians iv. 2, 3.

§ James iii. 18.

CHAPTER IX.
ON CHRISTIAN CONDUCT UNDER INJURY
AND OPPRESSION.

A VARIETY of complaints will, without doubt, be adduced of the discouragements attending the performance of Christian duties, occasioned by the unkind and unprincipled conduct of those with whom we are connected.—But it is this which renders Christianity a labour and warfare: To teach us to surmount these difficulties, our SAVIOUR dispensed to us His precepts; and exemplified them, in His own conduct; and on these trials, CHRIST and his Apostles have pronounced the most distinguished blessings.—“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for MY sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in Heaven.”*

* Matt. v. 11.

The necessity of patiently enduring evil treatment when the discharge of our duty calls for it, is so great, that our SAVIOUR considers the neglect of it, as a proof of our unworthiness; HE constantly exhorts us to be above the reproaches and insults of a wicked world; and that we may not be too anxious for the praise of men, He has passed a censure on those, of whom "all men speak well."*

In various parts of the Gospel, particular rewards are held out to those who suffer for well-doing; and the Apostles frequently repeat this doctrine:—"For, what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but, if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.—For hereunto, were ye called; because CHRIST also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not

* Luke vi. 26.

again;

again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to HIM that judgeth righteously."*

We have a variety of other passages in Scripture to enforce the necessity of these trials, to perfect our faith and patience. It is allowed that human nature must revolt at the idea of injustice, ingratitude, and persecution; and that they are the most difficult of all trials to bear; but here, as in all human events, if we constantly "remembered the end, we should never do amiss."

We are sent into this world to perform a great and important business; we have to work out our Salvation, by subduing our passions and evil tempers; by perfecting our patience, and establishing pious and Christian habits of mind; this is that "holiness, without which no man shall see THE LORD;"—and this can only be attained by exercise in those trials and disappoint-

* 1 Peter, ii. 20—24.

ments,

ments, which purify our motives, and raise our hopes of reward, to that "better and more enduring substance, reserved in Heaven."

There is a dangerous error, into which thoughtless people fall; which is, thinking that the neglect of duty in *another*, justifies a similar neglect in *them*; and that the harsh expression, at least, excuses the virulent retort. So far from it, that this is one of the temptations we are commanded to resist; and from the resistance of temptation, our virtue springs; for, if we are never tempted, tried, or provoked, where would be the merit of acting right? if we are kind only to those who are kind to us, what thanks have we? and if we receive no injuries, how are we to exercise the great Christian virtue of forgiveness?

The argument for neglecting our duty, because others neglect theirs, may be put in a ridiculous, as well as a sinful point of view. It has been sufficiently proved, that the indulgence of the malevolent passions, equally

equally destroys the happiness of individuals, as the peace of society: If therefore, my enemy sacrifices his peace and comfort to envy, malevolence, and irritability of temper; can that form any excuse for my destroying all my enjoyments, by admitting the same feelings into my mind?—Surely not!—On the contrary, happy are those, who, from Christian principles and self-command, can stem the tide of human passions in themselves and others: exemplary is such virtue, and great its reward, *here and hereafter*.

On this we may firmly rely, that THE ALMIGHTY wisely disposes events in this life,—not with a view to our temporal gratification, but to our eternal interests. HE sees what discipline our peculiar tempers require; and He sends it in the most useful form; whether it be in the perverse temper of a companion, the ungrateful returns of a friend, or the calumny of a malevolent world.—HE knows, that the wounds of an enemy are more healthful to the soul, than the most flattering caresses
of

of a friend: and it is through such tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven:—through “evil report, and good report;” through persecutions, unjust accusations, and ungrateful returns:—These are to sanctify our hearts, and to purify our motives;—this is that “strait gate, and narrow way, that leadeth unto life;” and which few find, because so few can submit to the terms of admission,—the patience, forbearance, and humility, which the Christian Covenant demands.

In most of the trials we encounter from the evil tempers of others, a worldly resource may be looked for in change of situation, and removal from the objects that cause our uneasiness; particularly in our early family-connexions, which are generally interrupted; and, when not happy, frequently dissolved.

But there is *one* connexion, that admits of *no* dissolution, but death:—it therefore behoves us, to form it with caution, and preserve it with discretion, meekness, and mutual

mutual accommodation: for when, by the vice, or folly of either party, it is rendered unhappy, it produces a species of wretchedness, as bitter as this world can inflict.—But I should hope it is a degree of unhappiness, not very common; and where it does exist, that it is often the result of previous indiscretion, or bad motives, in forming the connexion.

If a married couple unite themselves, from interested motives *only*; if they set out in life, with the hope of drawing all their comfort from wealth and splendour; let them extract from those sources all the good they are capable of bestowing; but let them not expect to find their happiness, where they did not intend to seek it: Or, if they have thoughtlessly united themselves with vice, they must submit to pay the price of their unprincipled folly.

Possibly so trying an event may occur, as a disappointment in our domestic happiness, even when due caution and pure motives seem to have guided us in the choice.

choice. In such a case, the sufferers must rest all their comfort on Religion, and all their hopes on a future state. “* Nor let them sorrow, as those without hope;” if their duties are well performed, and their trials patiently borne, “† all things shall, for them, work together for good.” — “‡ Their light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall work for them, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:” and the review of a life of patient piety, and their hopes of its future reward, shall afford them more real comfort, than all the enjoyments of prosperous pleasure, or pampered luxury. — To them I should address a beautiful little allegory in a popular publication§; stating, that a traveller was passing through a dreary country, with two pieces of coin in his possession, a guinea and a shilling; by some accident, he dropped one of them: on discovering his loss, he searched for it all around him,

* 1 Thessalonians, iv. 13.

† 2 Corinthians, iv. 17.

§ Cheap-Repository Tracts.

† Romans viii. 28.

in

in the tufts of grass, and part of the ground he had passed; but finding his search in vain, and that it was only the shilling he had lost, he proceeded in thankfulness, that he had yet the guinea in his possession.

Those, who, from indiscretion, or misfortune, have made shipwreck of their happiness in this world, I would exhort to set a double value on the inestimable blessing yet in their power,—the happiness of an *eternity* to come. — “* And what is our life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away!” — At best, it is but a troublesome journey; and, at the close of the last stage, it matters not whether it has been rough or smooth: when we sum up our great account, the question will not be, whether our lives have been happy and prosperous, but whether they have been virtuous and useful? and our past sorrows will then only be felt, as a source of re-

* James iv. 14.

joicing;

joicing; for they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy: “* He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.”—

In all our sorrows and trials, it is a worldly spirit that embitters them to us.—If we could constantly keep in mind, what a dream this life is, and what trifles they are which usually excite our interest, and disturb our minds, we should fix our anxiety more on those joys, “which no one can take from us.”

This world offers little else to our contemplation than the bustle of an ant-hill; a perpetual contention about trifles; none of which could be material to us, many years; and some, that even a few months, days, or hours, would render of no importance. Nay, more than that; quarrels and unhappiness have ensued from mere difference of opinion,

* Psalm cxxvi. 6, 7.

which,

which, if established, would not add in the smallest degree, to the comfort, or respectability, of the victor in the argument.

It is a heavenly mind, as well as a Christian temper, that we want; a superiority above the trifles that occupy worldly people; a constant desire to attain, and a longing after that “inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*.”

The longest life appears short, when it is past; and no middle-aged person, can look back on the last twenty years, without fancying it the dream of a night. Can any one, at any age, presume to look forward to twenty years more of existence? Is any one, beyond the prime of life, so secure in health and strength, as to expect to be spared for so long a period? Certainly not! But granting it likely, can any one know, that twenty years only awaits

1 Peter, i. 4.

them,

them, of such rapid flight as the last, and not feel awfully impressed with the idea, that this is all that shall be granted, for the immense work that is to be performed; —repentance, and its only beneficial consequences, reformation; for subduing the passions that have hitherto misled them; for repairing the injuries their unchristian tempers have caused; for establishing pious habits, and weaning themselves from a world, which has hitherto held them in such abject slavery? —For such a work, the labour of a long life, from the dawn of reason to the last hour, would scarcely be sufficient; yet we waste our time in contentions about the trifles of a moment, or the pleasures of the present day!

CHAPTER X.

THE CHRISTIAN'S VIEW OF DEATH.

FREQUENT reflections on that awful period, which must arrive to all human beings, is the best antidote to those worldly feelings, which a perpetual attention to petty cares will excite.

Most people, in the course of their lives, have experienced a dangerous sickness, and have known what it is to believe themselves on the brink of Eternity.

Those that have, will recollect what were their feelings, on conceiving that all the objects of their anxiety hitherto, were suddenly vanishing; and that they were entering on an awful and unknown change, and doubtful whether it shall not consign them to an eternity of misery: For the best of us cannot look, with any thing like confidence, to a state, for which, we are

are repeatedly told, so much purity is required; — a long and a very pious life, or a departure in early youth, are the only cases, in which a well-founded hope can be indulged.

What then must be the death-bed of one, whose life has not, uniformly, been directed by the Gospel precepts? I speak not to profligates, but to the worldly-minded and the thoughtless; — what must be the feelings of those, who are entering on this awful change, with a heart charged with the love of this world, and whose thoughts have rarely been directed to that unknown state, the view of which, even in the season of health, excites such dismay; — these ideas too assailing them, when the mind and body are weakened with disease and pain, and when it is too late to diminish their terrors, by any human effort!

If such has ever been the state of any of my readers, let them recollect, what their feelings were at that time; with what contempt

contempt and aversion, they looked on all the petty cares and concerns of this world; how awful were their thoughts of Eternity, and how new and wretched their state of mind!*

In such a state, how gladly would they compromise for one year more of existence, to evince their repentance by their amendment; and how gladly would they resign every comfort this world can bestow, to be allowed a little longer period here, to endeavour to “work out their salvation!” they would live in poverty, disgrace, and sickness; so they might but live again, only for a little time!

From this state, they are snatched as by a miracle; they are placed, by the mercy of PROVIDENCE, again on the busy theatre of this world, and with all their former comforts around them!

* See an admirable letter on this subject; the first in the second volume of the Rambler.

But,

But, do they now retain all their fears of the wrath to come? — do they yet feel all their pious resolutions, all their contempt of this world in its full force? and do they live up to the resolutions they have formed? — Alas! in general, I fear, their return to this world is but a return to all their passions and evil habits; the same petty objects of contention possess them, and Eternity, with all its terrific fears, fades from their view.

Such is their ingratitude to Heaven, for having heard, and granted, the ardent prayer of their expiring hopes; such the fascinations of this world, of sin and temptation!

Yet from some I will hope better things, and will suppose a pious and humble Christian, who has been constantly “striving for the mastery” over sin and temptations, and who has made a *future state*, the general object of his thoughts and anxiety; who has studied the Sacred Scriptures, and made the example of CHRIST and His Doctrines, the rule of his life:—I will
imagine

imagine such a one really arrived at the confines of “that bourne, whence no traveller returns;” and in such a case, I mean not to represent that confident satisfaction, of which I have heard many boast, on the view of death;—such vain-glory is the feeling of a superficial believer, who knows not the difficulty of the work he has had to perform; such ideas do not possess the mind of the truly pious and humble Christian: he who has best studied his duty, is most aware how deficient he has been in the performance of it; and he who has done most, will always know how much more he ought to have done.

Such ideas, though they do not banish hope, will place it not on his own well-doing, but on the merits and mediation of our Blessed REDEEMER, who died for the sins of his faithful followers; of those who, believing and trusting in Him, and loving Him above all things, have endeavoured to “resist the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil;” and, constantly keeping Him in view, have tried, as
much

much as possible to follow His precepts and example.

Such a Christian, on his death-bed, will humbly hope in the mercies of his God, and draw comfort from the assurance, that He will never leave or forsake those, that trust in Him.

On the review of his life, though he will see much error and imperfection; much left undone, which ought to have been done; and many things done, which ought not to have been done; and that he must acknowledge himself a miserable sinner;—yet in all his transactions, the love of God has prevailed over the love of the world, and the hopes of a *future* life, over the cares and anxieties of *this*.—In his intercourse with his fellow-creatures, though his passions have been occasionally excited, he has constantly struggled against the improper indulgence of them; and has so far subdued them, that he has been enabled to practise in a degree, the duties required of him;—he has been in general, meek,
 1 forbearing,

forbearing, and gentle; has forgiven every injury; has sincerely prayed for his enemies, and returned them good for evil; has made the doing to others, as he should wish others to do to him, the constant rule of his actions; and has therefore been kind, benevolent, and attentive to the happiness and interest of his fellow-creatures, whom he has studied how to serve, and assist, by every means, with which PROVIDENCE has blessed him;—if he has been endowed with wealth, he has dispensed to them temporal comforts; if he has been denied those advantages, a more valuable gift has been in his power, he has “* distributed to the necessity of the Saints,” and administered to their spiritual good; he has given instruction to the ignorant, and comfort and religious hopes to the distressed; he has nursed the sick, and assisted the helpless;—“† has visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and kept himself unspotted from the world.”

* Romans xii. 23.

† James i. 27.

At the concluding scene of life; such a Christian may say, with humble trust in his SAVIOUR, "I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith." He has, through the grace of God, fought manfully against his passions and besetting sins; he has finished a course of benevolence, and kindness to his fellow-creatures; and has kept his faith, steadily fixed on HIM who is mighty to save; and he may add with humble hope and pious trust, "* Henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous Judge, shall give him at that day."

I will conclude this interesting subject with a beautiful and appropriate extract from the Bishop of London's Poem on Death.

And at that hour when all aghast I stand,
(A trembling candidate for THY compassion,)
On this world's brink, and look into the next;
When my soul, starting from the dark unknown,

* 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

Casts

Casts back a wishful look, and fondly clings
To her frail prop, to all her 'custom'd joys,
And all the lovely relatives of life; —
Then shed THY comforts o'er me; then put on
The gentlest of THY looks; then deign to cheer
My fainting heart, with the consoling hope
Of Mercy; Mercy at THY hands! And THOU,
Whom soft-ey'd Pity once led down from Heaven,
To bleed for Man,—to teach him how to live,—
And, (oh! still harder lesson!) how to die;
Disdain not then to smooth the restless bed
Of sickness, and of pain: Forgive the tender tear
That Nature drops; calm all her fears;
Fix her firm trust on THY triumphant Cross; —
Wake all her hopes, and animate her faith,
Till my rapt soul, anticipating Heaven,
Bursts from the thralldom of incumb'ring clay,
And on the wings of ecstasy upborne,
Springs into liberty, and light, and life!"



J. BRETTELL, Printer,
Marshall-Street, Golden-Square.