THE

CONNEXION

OF

CHRISTIANITY

WITH

HUMAN HAPPINESS.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BOYLE LECTURES
FOR THE YEAR 1821.

BY

THE REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, A.M.
OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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CONNEXION OF CHRISTIANITY

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Chapter I.

Sect. VI.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE HAPPINESS OF PRIVATE LIFE.

"Suppose," says Hume*, "the same number of men, that are at present in Great Britain, with the same soil and climate; I ask, is it not possible for them to be happier, by the most perfect way of life that can be imagined, and by the greatest reformation that Omnipotence itself could work in their temper and disposition?—To assert that they cannot appears evidently ridiculous. As the land is able to maintain more than all its present inhabitants, they could never, in such a Uto-

* *Essay on Refinement in the Arts.*

pian state, feel any other ills than those which arise from bodily sickness: and these are not the half of human miseries. All other ills spring from vice, either in ourselves or others; and even many of our diseases proceed from the same origin. Remove the vices and the ills will follow."—Now it is self-evident, that the entire predominance of the principles of the Gospel would produce that very amelioration in our human condition, which the great sceptical philosopher considers necessary to the security of our earthly happiness. The vices would be removed and the calamities would follow. "A reformation in temper and disposition" would be effected by the grace of God, if we all piously availed ourselves of those means and instruments of spiritual improvement which have been mercifully placed within our reach; and we should

follow "the most perfect way of life that can be imagined," if under the influence of Christian love, which "worketh no ill to his neighbour, and is the fulfilling of the law*," we universally endeavoured to perform the simple precept of the Redeemer, which enjoins, that "as we would that men should do unto us, so we likewise should do unto them†."—If it were demanded of us to prescribe the rules by which the conduct of our fellow-creatures should be regulated towards ourselves, what system could we invent that should more effectually smooth our rugged passage from the cradle to the grave than that timidity in offending, that affectionate interest in our success, that lenity of judgment and rebuke, that alacrity to aid, to warn, to counsel, and to relieve, which are appointed as indispensable to the

* Romans, ch. xiii. v. 10. † St. Luke, ch. vi. v. 30.

profession of the Gospel? "They," says Hooker*, "who commend so much the felicity of that innocent world, wherein it is said, that men of their own accord did embrace fidelity and honesty, not for fear of the magistrate, or because revenge was before their eyes, if at any time they should do otherwise; but that which held the people in awe was the shame of ill-doing, the love of equity and right itself, a bar against all oppressions which greatness of power causeth; they which describe unto us any such estate of happiness amongst men, though they speak not of religion, do notwithstanding declare that which is in truth only her working. For, if religion did possess sincerely and sufficiently the hearts of all men, there would be no need of any other restraint from evil."

* HOOKER'S *Ecclesiastical Polity*, vol. ii. p. 9.

Though Christianity has not effected all that it has the power of effecting for our happiness, if mankind would piously submit to its instructions, and co-operate with the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, who has promised to assist them in their obedience:—though the influence of Christianity has been impeded by the corruptions of the human heart, still the moral regeneration of the world has been continually advancing by its means. The passions appear to have become less irresistible in their nature; great and appalling crimes are more rare in their occurrence; the mild virtues have been rendered honourable; the benevolent affections have been recommended and enforced; and, in compliance with popular opinion, their effects are imitated by those whose hearts are insensible to their impressions.—Any one who feels an interest

in discovering how much the religion of the Messiah has accomplished for the happiness of mankind, should cast his eyes upon the picture, which has been delivered by St. Paul, of the state of society in his own days, in the most polished and enlightened period of the heathen world, when the public mind had been cultivated by the speculations of the greatest philosophers, and refined by the writings of the most gifted poets; and then compare the description of the apostle* with that improved condition of morals and of manners, which has been achieved among the nations of Christendom, and which is every where proportionate to the purity of the national church and the sincerity of the national faith.

But it may perhaps savour of partiality

* Romans, ch. i. ver. 26 to 32.

to rely wholly on the authority of our own Scriptures for the vices and the impurities of the ancient world, or to estimate the moral benefits which the Gospel has conferred, by the representations of St. Paul, whose enthusiasm in the cause of virtue, by inspiring him with an exaggerated enmity against sin, may be thought to have communicated to his description some of the severe and bitter characters of a satiric indignation. We will address ourselves, therefore, to other sources, to demonstrate the superior purity of Christian to heathen times.—Hume shews in his Dialogue, that "an ATHENIAN MAN OF MERIT might be such a one as with us would pass for incestuous, a parricide, an assassin, an ungrateful, perjured traitor, and something else too abominable to be named; not to mention his rusticity and ill-manners. And having

lived in this manner, his death might be entirely suitable: he might conclude the scene by a desperate act of self-murder, and die with the most absurd blasphemies in his mouth. And, notwithstanding all this, he shall have statues erected to his memory; poems and orations shall be composed in his praise; great sects shall be proud of calling themselves by his name; and the most distant posterity shall blindly continue their admiration. Though were such a one to arise among themselves, they would justly regard him with horror and execration*."—Such is Hume's account of a virtuous Athenian; and to shew that the Romans, even in their most high and palmy state, were possessed of no superiority of sentiment or of conduct, I shall briefly recapitulate a few of those ordinary circumstances of

* HUME'S *Essays*—Dialogue, vol. ii. p. 303.

their private lives, which would have oppressed the heart of the disciple of the Saviour, whom I shall imagine as finding himself suddenly transported from the presence of the gentle manners and principles inculcated by the Gospel, to the heart of the capital of the world, in the times immediately subsequent to the promulgation of our faith.

The door of the house in which he is received, to the distress of every Christian sentiment, is opened by a chained slave*. He is conducted to the master of the house, who is at supper, and is invited to take a place at the banquet. Instead of the liberal equality which has been introduced by the general prevalence of the Christian disposition, and which has smoothed the irregularities of society, and rendered persons of a more distinguished

* OVID. *Amor.* lib. i. cap. 6.

opulence and rank attentive to the sensibilities of the poorer and more humble members of their society; he finds the inferior guests studiously reminded of their subordinate condition, removed to a distance from the luxurious table of the master of the feast, and insulted by the offensive coarseness of their entertainment*.—During a scene of the grossest gluttony and intemperance, he is oppressed, as the spirits of the party become elevated, by the most appalling licentiousness of conversation. A father speaks of the difficulty he had found in persuading his wife to the murder of their new-born infant†. The young men boast of their successful rapes‡, their perilous adulteries, or their unnatural attachments. Disgusted with these appalling circum-

* JUVENAL, 5th Satire.
† TERENCE, *Heaut.*, Act III. Scene 4.
‡ Ib. *Eun.*, Act III. Scene 5.

stances, the Christian visitor might omit remarking on the unbridled sensuality with which his new companions surrender themselves to the protracted pleasures of the table*, as if to eat were the first privilege of existence, and they had artificially increased their appetites, that they might lengthen their capacity of indulgence. Wearied of such society, he retires to his chamber, but not to rest; for his repose is broken by the noise of whips and lashes, and the cries of the chastised slaves, whom the master of some neighbouring mansion is rigorously cor-

* To prevent the bad effects of repletion, some used, after supper, to take a vomit: thus Cæsar (*accubuit προτιον agebat, i. e.*, post cœnam vomere volebat, ideoque largius edebat). CICERO, *Att.* 13. 52. DEJOT. 7. Also before supper and at other times, SUET. *Vit.* 13. CIC. *Phil.* 41. *vomunt, ut edant; edunt, ut vomant*, SENEC. *ad Helv.* 9. Even women, after bathing before supper, used to drink wine and throw it up again to sharpen their appetite. JUVENAL, 6. 427.

recting*.—In the morning he prepares to accompany his host to the exhibitions of the Circus. As they are departing from the house, an aged and half-starved slave timidly endeavours to elude their observation; he is detected; his master notices his infirmities, and orders that he should no longer be retained as an unprofitable expense and incumbrance to his household, but should be exposed to die of starvation, in recompense for the labours of his youth. On their way to the theatre, they pass a company of Patrician youth, one of whom is on the

* Seneca mentions, Epistle 122, that, regularly about the third hour of the night, the neighbours of one, who indulges the false refinement of changing night into day, hear the noise of whips and lashes; and, upon inquiry, find that he is then taking an account of the conduct of his servants, and giving them due correction.—This is not remarked as an instance of cruelty, but only of disorder, which, even in actions the most usual and methodical, changes the fixed hours that established custom had assigned for them.

point of exhibiting his dexterity in the use of the broad-sword. A poor wretch, suffering from the deep afflictions of domestic misery, has been bribed, by the offer of a few minæ, to devote himself as the victim of the barbarous experiment, on condition that the necessities of his family should be relieved by the stipulated purchase-money of his murder*.—On their arrival at the Coliseum, they find a difficulty in securing situations.—Nearly forty thousand persons are already impatiently assembled. It is a day of extraordinary expectation. Many celebrated gladiators are to be brought on the arena. It is anticipated that some

* Ephorion de Chalcide raconte (*Apud Athen.*, lib. iv.) que chez les Romains, on proposait quelquefois cinq mines de récompense à celui qui voudrait souffrir qu'on lui tranchât la tête, en sorte que la somme offerte devait être touchée par les héritiers; et souvent, ajoute le même auteur, plusieurs concurrens se disputaient la mort à ce prix.—MENAIS, vol. i. p. 380.

hundreds will be slaughtered in the various conflicts which are appointed to succeed each other in the progress of the entertainment; but a more than usual curiosity and interest is excited for those contests, in which the ill-fated wretches are to be exposed in opposition to the wild beasts of the desert or the forest, as on this occasion the lions and the panthers have been fed on human flesh, for the purpose of sharpening their thirst of blood, and stimulating the keenness of their ferocity*. Unable to sustain the sight,—while the first victim is expiring, unpitied and unregarded, amid the thunders of acclamation that reward the exertions of his competitor,—the Christian visitor of the heathen capital hastily withdraws himself from the scene of sanguinary festival. He is immediately fol-

* This was done by Caligula.

lowed by his host, who ridicules his compassion on the authority of the most approved philosophers, and interrupts his eloquent lamentations over the departure of the ancient virtue and simplicity of the Roman character, by assurances, that the people have not degenerated; that vice may have varied in its form, but not increased in magnitude; that its ratio has been permanent and equal; and that whatever enormities may have been engendered of power and luxury and refinement, at all events those ruder ages could never be deserving of regret, during which a supposed pestilence, that appeared to be depopulating the city, was discovered to be effected by the prevalency of the art of poisoning*;—a prac-

* Livy, viii. 18. One hundred and seventy women, among whom were some of the highest rank, were condemned for this crime.

tice which was so accordant to the morals and sentiments of the people, that the prætor, in a single province, after having capitally punished three thousand persons for the offence, still complained of the increasing number of the accusations *.

In the above sketch of the private morals of the ancient Romans, I have studiously cast a veil over that horrible and undisguised impurity which saturated the whole body of society; which haunted the precincts of their temples; which mingled with their religious rites and festivals; which so frequently made the subject of their conversation and their poetry; which addressed the grossness of the public mind in the signs exhibited in their streets, and in the monuments that defiled their gardens, and of which the

* Livy, lib. xl. cap. 43.

images were constantly before the eyes, to pollute and to debase the soul, engraved on the common utensils of daily existence, on their lamps and their vases and their drinking vessels.—That an improvement has been wrought on the moral condition of the nations of Europe it is impossible to controvert, neither do I comprehend how that improvement can be attributed to any other cause than the religion promulgated by the Messiah. All that philosophy could do had been tried, and the experiment had failed.—We hear of the early apologists of Christianity enlarging on the purifying powers of the faith; of Tertullian * challenging his opponents to produce from the overflowing prisons of the empire a single disciple of the Saviour, who was guilty of any other

* Quoted by Tillotson, Sermon xx. vol. 2., folio edition of his Works.

accusation than that of his belief; of Bardasanes * asserting the efficacy of the Gospel in exalting its disciples above those corruptions of sentiment and conduct which had been most intimately interwoven with the habits of their lives, and authorized by the institutions of their country. But we encounter no such eulo-

* The passage from Bardasanes of Mesopotamia is preserved by Eusebius; and as it is interesting, from the character it offers of the manners of the primitive Christians, I quote it in the words of Milner's translation. *Church History*, vol. i. p. 253.—"In Parthia polygamy is allowed and practised, but the Christians of Parthia practise it not. In Persia the same may be said with respect to incest. In Bactria and in Gaul the rites of matrimony are defiled with impunity. The Christians there act not thus. In truth, wherever they reside, they triumph in their practice over the worst of laws, and the worst of customs."—To these ancient testimonies in favour of the superior excellence of the faith, we may add the modern testimony of Voltaire, who tells us in his Correspondence, that "Stoicism produced but one Epictetus; and Christianity forms thousands of such philosophers, who know not that they are so, and who carry their virtue to such a length, as to be ignorant that they possess any."—*Cor. Gen.* iii. 222.

gies on the merits of philosophy; its benefits are as visionary as its principles. We have the authority of Cicero*, of Diodorus, of Quintilian †, and of Seneca ‡, for asserting, that its cold and motiveless and unsanctioned lessons were incapable of producing any extensive or sensible effect on the dispositions of the people:—and that they were very seldom of any efficacy in restraining the vices of their instructors themselves. However eloquently the philosopher might declaim on the beauty of virtue and the deformity of

* *Tusc. Dis.* ii. 4. "Sed hæc eadem num censes apud eos ipsos valere nisi admodum paucos; a quibus inventa, disputata, conscripta sunt? Quotus enim quisque philosophorum invenitur, qui sit ita moratus, ita animo ac vita constitutus, ut ratio postulat? qui disciplinam suam non ostentationem scientiæ, sed legem vitæ putet? qui obtemperet ipse sibi, et decretis suis pareat?"

Τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς φιλοσόφων τὺς πλείστυς ἰδεῖν ἐστι λέγοντας μὲν τα κάλλιστα, πράττοντας δὲ τὰ χείριστα. *In Excerpt. Prirese.* p. 234.

† *Inst. Orat.* lib. i. *Proœm.* ‡ *Epist.* 20.

vice; however skilfully he might prescribe the limits of human duty, his arguments had no other operation than to delight for a little while by the music of the periods with which they were evolved, or by the grace and propriety of the illustrations with which they were recommended and enforced.—This was the extent of his ability; and this perhaps was all that he designed.—His instructions never were received as the rules of life and principles of action, because they were not connected with any religious sanctions which might address them to the affections of mankind, and interest their hopes and fears in the cause of their obedience.

This want has been supplied by the wisdom of the Saviour. He has not permitted that the sublime morality of his religion should be as superfluous to the

reformation of the world as the unsupported maxims of Socrates or of Cicero. If he has communicated to us a law which would secure the happiness of society in a degree commensurate with our submission to his injunctions, he has advanced, in the belief of an Omnipresent Deity, who will hereafter recompense our actions by a correspondent retribution of good or evil, the most animating inducements to obedience. As man is a reasonable being, and actuated to perform or to forbear by the anticipation of emolument or loss, the Gospel addresses his understanding with motives to dissuade from crime, and stimulate to virtue, which appeal to the universal instincts of human nature; which, from their infinite and eternal character, can be counterbalanced by no other suggestions; and which must

constrain the conduct in proportion to the distinctness of our faith*.

This is one of the points on which the unbeliever and the Christian appear to be agreed. Nearly all the great leading infidel authorities attach the highest value to a popular belief in a future state of retribution. This doctrine constituted one of the five articles of Lord Herbert's Universal Creed†. "Without the hopes of another life," says Bayle‡, "virtue and innocence may be ranked among those things over which Solomon has pronounced the denunciation of vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." Lord Bo-

* It was said by Dr. Johnson, "that the most licentious man living would subdue his passions in the presence of temptation if hell were open before him."—BOSWELL'S *Life*, vol. iv. p. 120. To those who live by faith, heaven and hell are open before them.

† LELAND'S *Deistical Writers*.

‡ *Dictionnaire*, Art. Brutus.

lingbroke* declares, "that the rewards and punishments of a future state have so great a tendency to enforce the civil laws, and restrain the vices of man, that reason, which cannot decide for it on principles of natural theology, will not decide against it on principles of good policy." Whatever liberty of faith and conscience the infidel may arrogate to himself, there is not one, beyond the miserable band, who make a traffic of the doctrines of despair, who does not tremble at the idea of admitting the mass of his fellow-creatures to the wide immunities of his ungodliness. However he may have himself succeeded in erasing from his mind the impressions of Christianity, in withdrawing his heart from its convictions, in adopting his passions as his

* Vol. v. p. 322.

infallible counsellors, and his senses as the sovereign arbiters of their own indulgence. However the scoffer of these latter days may assume for himself an exemption from those religious inducements, which operate with others, he has seldom shewn himself solicitous to extend the perilous enfranchisement of his philosophy to those, who are connected with his happiness by any of the nearer charities, or more intimate relations of existence. If his light be the light of truth, his own experience can instruct him, that it is possessed of qualities threatening in their aspect, and destructive in their contact; that it may burn more than it can comfort, and he dreads its too general dissemination. He has learnt to contemn, as prejudices, the instructions of the Gospel, but he can estimate their utility,

and agrees with Diderot*, "that some such prejudices are indispensable to mankind." He perceives that it is the attachment of a religious importance to our actions, which gives to virtue its consecration and to vice its opprobrium. He acknowledges, that without the persuasion of an eternal consequence, the most noble sacrifices and generous acts of self-devotion would be succeeded by no permanent sense of gratifying reflection; that the most dark abominations of the guilty would be visited by no compunctions more enduring than the terrors of detection†. He regards the conception of a remunerating and avenging God as an effective accessary to the

* Il faut sans doute des préjuges aux hommes.—*Cor. de* GRIMM *et* DIDEROT, vol. v. p. 8.

† Il n'y a d'autres remords que la crainte du supplice. This maxim, so necessary a consequent of infidelity, is extracted from Helvetius.

education of his child; as a constant guard upon his absent obedience, as an additional excitement to his present exertions. He feels that faith is the most bright accomplishment of the female character, and the most firm and liberal protection for the purity of his home *. He knows that in the busy intercourse of life, a sympathy in the same religious hopes and fears is the silent preliminary to every negotiation, the stability of every bond, the confirmation of every compact, the sanction of every testimony, the source of fidelity, of honesty, and confidence; and, like Voltaire †, he

* It would be difficult to name an instance of a virtuous female infidel. Chastity is peculiarly a religious virtue, and all the examples of female unbelief, that I have read, or heard of, have been notorious for sacrificing the purity of the morals of the Gospel, when they abandoned the belief of its retributions.

† Voltaire's confidential agent was a Jansenist and a priest. The second circumstance to which I allude is very

would seek a Christian as the most secure depositary of every trust; and, like him, he would impose a timid silence on the blaspheming converse of the associates of his unbelief; lest his domestics become attainted by the contagion of their principles, and murder him as he sleeps.

There is an unimaginable inconsistency in the conduct of the chief apostles of infidelity. While they agree with the heathen philosopher *, or the Christian divine, in admitting, that no man can be steadily virtuous unless he live under the continual remembrance of an immortal destination; they delight in shew-

commonly related. Among other places, in which it may be found, is Abernethy's Lectures in answer to Lawrence.

* *Plato de Legibus.* Rousseau was of the same opinion. "Je n'entends pas que l'on puisse être vertueux sans religion. J'eus long-temps cette opinion trompeuse, dont je suis bien desabusé.— *Lettre sur les Spectacles.*

ing, that every human argument is insufficient for the foundation of so elevated a trust. While they acknowledge that this necessary belief must ever rest upon religious impressions for its strength and efficacy; they exhaust every engine of sophistry or ridicule, in endeavouring to eradicate a faith, which establishes this sacred truth as the paramount object of its announcements, and which, by the public and attested resurrection of its author, has left the immortality of the soul no longer a subject of variable and inconclusive speculation, but a demonstrable fact and an historic certainty. While they confess, that whoever impairs the stability of such sentiments, would deserve the execration of his fellow-creatures; they rush forward to volunteer the ignominy, which they have themselves denounced against the preach-

ers of annihilation. While they assert the importance of the faith to the regulation of human conduct; they labour to demonstrate its insignificance, by ostentatiously comparing the virtues of a few professed infidels with the vices of some of the nominal disciples of Christianity.

I should not have delayed any longer upon this head, had it not been with an intention of offering a few remarks, to shew the futility of those arguments by which the unbeliever strives to invalidate his own admissions.

There are several* who would persuade us to yield no credit to their assertions, when they speak of the support which vir-

* Pomponatius, Cardan, Bayle, are named by Bishop Warburton as the three great assertors of the non-importance of religious faith; and the opinion is now very prevalent.

tue derives from the belief in a future state of rewards and punishments, because they tell us a few solitary individuals have passed honourably through life, without any such preternatural dependance.—With regard to these vaunted instances of morality, independent of religion, who are represented as moved by a disinterested love of virtue, as living in unbelief as if they lived in faith, as walking in the solitudes of atheism, as if they walked in the continual presence of their Creator and their Judge; it is evident, that if any such examples have ever had a local habitation and a name, their good must have originated in some rare peculiarity of character, and not in the inducements of their infidelity. We know that in ordinary life, the passions are predominant over the reason; that the reason can only acquire and maintain its

ascendency by the aid of accumulated motive; that, however weak may be the faith in the retributions of eternity, and faith admits of every gradation, from the slightest suspicion to the most complete assurance, still even a suspicion of this fact is an additional inducement to resist the evil seductions of the heart; that if others, possessing all the human dissuasives from transgression, which are attainable to the unbeliever, with a superior religious argument, from which he is excluded, are overpowered by the temptations that assault them, while he remains invincible, his firmness can only be attributed to some rare endowment, or extraordinary deficiency of nature;—to the supernatural force of his understanding, or the adamantine frigidness of his temperament.

But is it true that any such instances of

infidel virtue have existed? Where are the scenes which their benevolence has cheered? Where are the charitable endowments and the great works of public utility, which they have left to indemnify posterity for the traditionary evil of their instructions? In the earlier ages of the world we know that there was no such unintelligible division between the principle and its consequences. The best were ever those who had the most secure dependance on an eternal destination. Socrates was most celebrated by the heathen world, for wisdom and for virtue; and he expired, while endeavouring to animate the mourners of his fate with the prospects of immortality. Scipio is represented as declaring, that he was the more vigilant in the career of honour from anticipating heaven as his reward*.

* *Somnium Scipionis.*—CICERO.

Cato is described as acknowledging, that he should never have undergone his patriotic labours in the service of his country, had he not conceived the conclusion of this life to be succeeded by the commencement of a brighter being*.

If the persuasion of the immortality of the soul, and a future retribution, has thus been followed by superior excellence of individual virtue, this leading article of religious faith has never been generally discredited by any sect or nation, without producing a proportionate deterioration of character. Previously to the Gospel revelation, we are distinctly acquainted with two sects of considerable importance and duration, who had rent asunder those invisible alliances by which man is united to his Maker; who

* CICERO *de Senectute.*

had placed the tomb as the boundary of their spiritual vision; and who refused to find in this their transitory dwelling any connexion with an imperishable state. Though their authors flourished in different regions of the earth; though seas divided their disciples; though they existed amid different forms of life, and various modifications of national habit and opinion; this malignant sympathy of creed moulded them, in defiance of every subordinate contrariety, into a dark similitude of soul, and stampt them with the impress of a kindred degradation. Of the one, the votaries, by their obscene and incredible licentiousness, have debased the name of Epicurus into an everlasting epithet of reproach. Of the other, of those Sadducees, whom the Scriptures mention as denying the resurrection of the dead, we distinctly know on the authority of Josephus *, that their actions were correspondent to their institutes, and that they were tyrannous and sensual, perfidious and inhuman.

These instances are sufficient for the establishment of one point.—They prove that irreligion is destructive to the morals and the affections, when it has obtained any general prevalence over a sect or nation; and when each individual may find a countenance for his excesses in the enormities of his associates. While Atheism, or Deism:—for Deism is as bad as Atheism, unless it be connected with those operative doctrines which are assured to us by revelation, and which I shall hereafter shew to be most miserably uncertain, when deprived of its convictions:—while Atheism is only the error

* Josephus, lib. ii. chap. 12. *de Bello Judaico.*

of a few scattered literary speculatists, the virtue of their lives would not at all impeach the arguments that assert the demoralizing tendency of their principles. It may be very easily comprehended that a few such men might resist the deteriorating influence of their faith, and might continue to preserve so much of that moral decency and external propriety of conduct, as would be demanded by their situation in society. They might fill their station in the world with credit and reputation.—They might "eschew evil," but I doubt whether they would be active in "doing good." It is not at all made out that any one of these apostates from the faith has attained to that degree of diligent and forbearing virtue, which in a Christian would appear to warrant, through the atonement of his Saviour, any happier confidence of his salvation.

But if any one or two had been thus blest and innocent in their impiety, how does it demonstrate that evil would not result from the more general diffusion of their doctrines?—Diagoras or Pliny, Vanini or Spinosa, may have lived as guiltlessly as Bayle would represent them to have lived; but what relation is there between their circumstances and their temptations, and the circumstances and the temptations of ordinary men? While they imagined the dethronement of their God, the retirement to which they withdrew themselves to contemplate, to combine and to adapt the systems of their blasphemy, removed them from those ardent competitions of the busy, by which the fires of the passions are elicited. Their parental attachment to the theories which they had invented and promulgated, would withhold them from those grosser immoralities that

might cast an opprobrium on their institutes. When they had displaced the restraints and motives of religion, and asserted that human reason was sufficient to maintain the integrity of the conduct, they would feel themselves obliged to exemplify in their lives the truth and the efficacy of their principles. But these inducements perish with the authors of each particular code of unbelief; and the moral character of the master has very seldom operated further with his followers than to afford them a miserable excuse for the adoption of the opinions by which they were depraved.

But are we not engaged in a discussion without having previously agreed upon the premises which are necessary to our arriving at any just conclusion?—Before we can speak of the virtue or the vice of the teachers and disciples of infidelity, is it

not first requisite to be informed by what scale their conduct is to be measured?—When a man professes himself a Christian, we can compare his performance with his obligations, and discern between his rule and his obedience. The Gospel affords a distinct and invariable standard by which its votaries may be censured or approved. But it is not so with the apostates from the faith; they have no common and consistent code of principles. Each is a law unto himself: and he so adapts its form that it may not too rigorously press upon the free movement of his prevalent inclinations. In the schools of infidelity all vices are not infamous.—Voltaire may live in habits of the most shameless adultery*; he may profess the greatest cordiality for the aged President

* It were impossible for charity itself to doubt the nature of his connexion with Madame du Châtelet.

Henault, and at the same time libel the old man in anonymous pamphlets*; he may violate the most sacred duties of

* The passage alluded to was introduced in a pamphlet, entitled "Examen de la nouvelle Histoire de Henri Quatre, de M. de Buri, par le Marquis de B."—It was proved, almost to demonstration, to have been the production of Voltaire. Henault was upwards of eighty years old, and his friends endeavoured to conceal the malicious paragraphs from his knowledge. This would have defeated the malignity of the author,—and, says Madame du Deffand, "Il y a six semaines, ou deux mois que le Président reçoit une lettre de Voltaire qui lui parle de cette brochure et lui transcrit l'article qui le regarde, et un autre qu'on peut appliquer à une personne bien considérable. Nous fumes bien déconcertés; le Président ne fut point aussi troublé que nous l'appréhendions. Il fit une réponse fort sage; Voltaire lui a écrit trois lettres depuis cette première; il veut absolument qu'il réponde, et comme le Président persiste à ne le vouloir pas, il lui offre de répondre pour lui; le Président y consent pourvu que Voltaire y mette son nom. Voltaire lui a d'abord dit qu'il croyait que l'auteur de cette critique était la Beaumelle; depuis il lui a dit que c'était un Marquis de Belestad, lequel ne sait ni lire ni écrire; ce n'est ni l'un, ni l'autre, on en est sûr; mais savez-vous qui on soupçonne avec juste raison? Voltaire, oui, Voltaire lui-même. C'est de cela qu'on peut dire cela est *ineffable*.—Oh! tous les hommes sont fous ou méchans, et le plus grand nombre est l'un et l'autre. —*Lettres de* MAD DU DEFFAND, vol. i. p. 275.

hospitality and honour by clandestinely breaking open the private letters of his guests*; he may revenge the cause of his vanity by the invention of the most injurious calumnies against the reputation of Mademoiselle Raucourt†; he may pander to the grossest passions of mankind by the publication of obscene poetry, after polluting his own soul by the strenuous impurity of composing it‡; he may cherish the most illimitable vanity, and dare demand of his attendant sycophants

* This infamous practice is disclosed in the letters of Madame de Grafigny. This breach of domestic probity seems to be a favourite vice among infidels; and Voltaire only revenged on his unhappy and opprest guest the wrongs of the same kind which he had himself received under the roof of Frederic the Great.—"Le Roi ouvrait toutes mes lettres."—*Memoires de* VOLTAIRE *écrits par lui même.*

† The success of Mademoiselle Raucourt was the cause of delaying for a short time the representation of one of his tragedies; I think the "Lois de Minos."—This anecdote is related by the Baron de Grimm.

‡ I need not name the works that give an infamous celebrity to the name of Voltaire.

whether Jesus Christ* were more intellectually gifted than himself; and his adultery, his duplicity, his meanness, his dishonour, his falsehood, his slanders, his obscenities, his profaneness, shall diminish nothing from the brightness of his renown. He may still receive the incense of adulation from his cotemporaries, and be embalmed by the eulogies of successive generations of atheists, as if the single quality of his unbelief was an all-sufficient atonement for the atrocity of his conduct and the baseness of his heart.

As all vices are not infamous among the disciples of the new philosophy, neither are all virtues meritorious. There are scarcely any two of their instructors who appear to be agreed on their moral appreciation of the same human actions and affections. With many humility, loy-

* "Croyez-vous que Jésus Christ eût plus d'esprit que moi?"

alty, constancy and devotion, are no longer viewed with any sentiments of approbation. For every infringement of those rigid precepts of temperance and chastity which are respected as venerable by Christians, they are excused by the very dogmata of their philosophy, which has taught them that "no gratification, however sensual, can of itself be esteemed vicious*," and granted them a dispensation from all restraints of mortification or self-denial†."—They avowedly emancipate the will from all those stricter limits of temperance, which one of their greatest instructors has classed upon the proscribed catalogue of monkish virtues, and allow themselves a liberty of indulgence, which, in a disciple of the Redeemer, they would be among the first to visit

* HUME'S *Essay on Refinement.*

† HUME'S *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals,* Sec. 9.

with reproach: as far as their inclinations urge them, and the regulations and the forbearance of society will permit a scope for action, we generally find that they avail themselves of the ample privileges of irreligion; and if they be temperate in vice, their moderation must be accounted for upon principles which are not only independent of their infidelity, but which exist with a stubborn rectitude in opposition to its demoralizing influence.

There are many transgressions from which the unbeliever would be defended, by the terror of reproach and the hazards of detection; and as long as the ascendency of his bad affections is thus counterbalanced and abridged, he may persevere in the steady course of duty; but where there is neither shame or punishment to be apprehended, we have been experimentally informed that the mere,

cold, speculative estimate of the malice of an action will never be sufficient to prevent its perpetration.—It is unnecessary to revert to ancient or remote authorities to substantiate this truth. Take Hume as the example.—He is one of the most celebrated instances of modern heathen virtue;—famous in his life, and recorded in his death*. There is a passage in his works which evinces that he was perfectly aware of the criminality of publishing the lessons that he inculcated. He makes no attempt to extenuate this wickedness, but fairly estimates the measure of his guilt; and declares†, with reference to the great fundamental doctrine of religion, that "those can never be considered as good citizens who would endeavour to disabuse mankind" of their

* See ADAM SMITH'S *Letter on the Death of Hume.*

† *Essay on Providence and a Future State*, vol. ii. p. 155.

expectations of a future state of retribution. With this conviction upon his mind, in opposition to his acknowleded perception of what was right, conscious, as he must have been, that his name would be authority for error, where his arguments would be perfectly unintelligible, he voluntarily commits a sin against his country, of which the effects will be as permanent as the memorials of his genius; and, seduced by the paltry claims of his literary vanity, has inscribed this little sentence of condemnation against himself as the moral of an elaborate essay, which was designed as the annihilation of our eternal hope. Hume was, by his own confession, a bad citizen. The highest possible human motive, the love of his country, could not induce him to overcome the slight temptation of exhibiting his argumentative ingenuity, though

he distinctly apprehended the guilt of the exhibition.—But this example, which exposes the fallibility of the unsupported and disputable conclusions of mere human ethics, when adopted as the only barrier against crime, may be encountered by another, which demonstrates the potency of those principles that are derived from the Gospel, and are sanctioned by the motives of religious faith.—"If," said Dr. Johnson*, "I could have

* I transcribe the whole conversation from which this sentence is taken.—"We can have no dependance upon that instinctive, that constitutional, goodness which is not founded upon principle. I grant you that such a man may be a very amiable member of society. I can conceive him placed in such a situation that he is not much tempted to deviate from what is right; and as every man prefers virtue, when there is not some incitement to transgress its precepts, I can conceive him doing nothing wrong. But if such a man stood in need of money, I should not like to trust him; and I should certainly not trust him with young ladies, for *there* there is always temptation. Hume, and other sceptical innovators, are vain men, and will gratify themselves at any expense. Truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity; so they

allowed myself to gratify my vanity at the expense of truth, what fame might I have acquired. Every thing which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote."—Here the efficacy of those motives, which are respectively acknowledged by the Christian and the infidel, may be scanned, and measured and appreciated.—They are brought into a fair comparison.—Two persons are presented

have betaken themselves to error. Truth, Sir, is a cow, which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull. If I could have allowed myself to gratify my vanity at the expense of truth, what fame might I have acquired. Every thing which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote. Always remember this, that after a system is well settled upon positive evidence, a few partial objections ought not to shake it. The human mind is so limited, that it cannot take in all the parts of a subject, so that there may be objections raised against any thing. There are objections against a *plenum*, and objections against a *vacuum*; yet one of them must certainly be true."—BOSWELL'S *Life of* JOHNSON, vol. i. pp. 302, 303.

before us as engaged in the same literary career, ambitious of the same recompense, aware of the same easy opportunity of distinction, tempted to the commission of the same act, and dissuaded by the same consciousness of its offence. With the Christian, indeed, the temptation is enforced by arguments from which the infidel is delivered.—He has the *res angusta domi* to second the suggestions of his vanity, and is solicited by the urgent claims of poverty, which has so frequently seduced the most endowed among mankind to corrupt the purposes of genius, and pervert the energies of heaven to prosper the interests of hell:—but in the conflict between the desire of celebrity and the sense of duty—notwithstanding the more rigorous circumstances of his trial—we find that the Christian only is triumphant, and that the unbeliever is defeated. And

when the moral speculatist himself thus falls, in all the pride of his philosophic strength, and in defiance of its own convictions, is it to be anticipated that the large and unreflecting body of society would derive a security from ignorance, which to him was unattainable by knowledge?—It is certain that there exists an inseparable connexion between virtue and wisdom; that the voice of revelation has appointed for us a rule of action, of which experience demonstrates the perfection. But the great excellence of the Gospel is, that it does not condescend to any discussion on the motives and principles of conduct. It "speaks with authority and not as the scribes." It does not depend, for the influence of its morals, on any of those elaborate and subtle and complicated disquisitions, which must be unintelligible to the majority of the people,

and of which, while the arguments that condemn the sins of others are admitted without dispute, those that arraign our own are rejected by the partiality of the heart, and controverted by the deceitful sophistry of the passions.

It was said by La Harpe*, who was long the companion and the disciple of the French infidel philosophers, though he was eventually reclaimed from his impiety, that "their principles never were adopted but from the love of sin."—And if sin be the parent of unbelief, religion may with some confidence be asserted as the unacknowledged origin of the diminished virtues of the unbeliever. The infidel is indebted to revelation for whatever of lingering merit he may possess;

* Cette philosophie n'avait d'influence que comme ami de toutes les passions, et ennemi de tout ce qui les reprime.—*La Harpe sur l'Encyclopédie.*

to the apprehension of the laws, which in every Christian country have been modelled upon the precepts of the Gospel; to the love and dread of popular opinion, which by the general diffusion of the Gospel has been compressed into a consistent approbation of excellence and an uniform abhorrence of iniquity; and to some remaining sentiments of faith, which, according to the joint confession of Bayle and of Voltaire, can never be absolutely eradicated from the human heart*.

With respect to the vices which are found to pollute the external members of the Christian faith, it may very easily be shewn that they do not militate at all against the necessity and importance of

* "Presque tous ceux qui vivent dans l'irreligion ne font que douter," says Bayle, in his Dictionary *Art. Bion.*; and Voltaire, in a letter to Horace Walpole, repeated the same sentiment, when he declared that for the last forty years he had done nothing but doubt.

religious sanctions for the foundation and the support of virtue. It is certainly a very melancholy subject of reflection that the sublime motives and the awful restraints, which are revealed to us by the Gospel, should maintain so divided and so circumscribed an influence upon our actions; that the majority of those by whom the lessons of the Redeemer are nominally adopted as the institutes of life, should regard his laws with a frigid estimation of their wisdom, without any ambition of accomplishing their perfection; and that the multitude should pretend to aspire to the glories of an immortality which they are continually postponing to the pleasures, or setting at stake against the perishable interests, of the world.—But that the empire of the faith should be thus partial and confined was not unnoticed by the predictions of

the Messiah. He has unequivocally pronounced, that of the "many who are called, there are few who should be chosen:" and, on a comparison of the character of the Gospel with the dispositions of mankind, a more extensive prevalency could not have been reasonably anticipated.

Man is summoned by the Gospel to do violence to those corrupt and vicious inclinations, which make a part of his unalienable birthright; to emancipate himself from the direction of those passions which appear the very principles of his existence, and supply the animation of the heart with a tide of holier impulses and more purified affections; to sacrifice the urgent claims of selfishness to the gratification of an uncontaminated benevolence; to exalt himself to a higher rank in the order of the creation; to cast aside

every low and animal propensity, and live spiritually for the service of his God; to disdain the human properties of his being, and vindicate to himself a more intimate participation of the angelic nature.—This is a task that requires of us no ordinary efforts. Its accomplishment demands the constant and undivided exertion of those faculties with which the Almighty has so pre-eminently endowed us, and is opposed by the fascinations of the earth, by the temptations of Satan, by the incitements of passion, and by the persuasions of the senses. No inducements inferior to those which are presented as the object of religious hope, in the unimaginable beatitude of the elect, would arouse the indolence of the heart to attempt its execution; neither could any assistances, inferior to those which are communicated by the graces of the

Holy Spirit, fortify the infirmity of the heart in perfecting its achievement.—If the majority, therefore, should follow the direction of their nature, and cling to earth, rather than aspire to heaven, we may lament their blindness; but it can afford no just occasion of astonishment; for we have seen them, with a similar improvidence, squander away the respectability of their manhood, and the reverence of their age, for the turbulent vices of their youth; and barter health for ignominy, and wisdom for indolence.—If others vacillate between the services of God and Mammon, and are betrayed into all the inconsistencies of a wavering faith, which is allowed to exercise an intermittent and casual control over the affections of a worldly heart; this incoherency of practice with profession is no more than might be expected from the

opposition of powerful motives, each counteracting the influence of the other, or, from time to time, acquiring a transient superiority from the co-operation of extraneous circumstances:—and, if a less imperfect and a less fluctuating ascendency be yielded to the faith by a few only of the more devout disciples of the Saviour, this is as much as, with any reasonable confidence, could have been expected from the present conditions of our existence, and the violent elements that are mingled in the constitution of our being. But that it does possess this efficacy in peculiar instances no one can have the temerity to dispute.—No one can retrace the lives of such men as Taylor, or Wilson, or Fenelon, or Hooker;—no one can read of the indefatigable benevolence of such men as Vincent de Paul, or Howard, or Bernard Gilpin, or

Henry Martyn;—no one can have witnessed the incredible exertions of her active piety, who, disdaining the repulsive terrors of the prison-house, has uttered the effectual exhortations to repentance, and delivered the glad tidings of redemption amid the darkest haunts of spiritual despair;—no one can meditate on these instances of exalted faith without acknowledging that religion is an instrument of very powerful and important operation over those by whom it is seriously and fervently embraced.—"To assert that it is useless," says Montesquieu, "because it is not universally effective, were as absurd as to argue against the necessity of human laws on the plea of their frequent violation*:" and it was very justly argued by Rousseau, that the transgressions of the nominal disciples of Chris-

* *Esprit des Loix*, liv. xxiv. c. 2.

tianity "do not prove that religion is superfluous, but that very few persons are religious*."

But never let it be forgotten, that when we speak of the limited operation of the Gospel, we speak with reference to the vastness of the instrument, and the extent of its capacities. Its effects are, in fact, incalculably great. It acts very perceptibly upon those who apostatize from the faith, or who subscribe and yet appear to sit most loosely by their profession. They dare not greatly derogate from the example of the more worthy members of society. They will strive to imitate the virtues which conciliate popular approbation. That cold belief, which is sufficient to justify the condemnation of its possessors, but is deficient in the vitality that may preserve them, acts as

* *Emile*, tom. iii. p. 199.

a barrier against many vices to which they are but lightly tempted; and when the first ardour of a passion has been exhausted in fruition, it mingles with less sacred arguments to persuade the abandonment of its excesses. There is every variety of belief from the faintest suspicion to the most inflexible assurance of the truth; and each individual will be obedient to the precepts of his religion, in proportion to his reliance on its certainty. As the virtues of the sceptic may be attributed to some unextirpated impressions of faith, so the vices of the Christian may be attributed to some occasional emotions of scepticism; and for that distrust and its attendant immoralities he is presented, by the teachers of infidelity, with both the instruction and the precedent.—"It were a sad fallacy," says Necker, "to represent the general decay

of the spirit of religion as an evidence that that spirit has but little influence upon human conduct. Rather ought we to remark how efficacious that power must be, which, even in the abatement of its force, forms so indispensable an accessary to the maintenance of public order!—Well should we be warranted in exclaiming: What would not the whole be worth, if the part be thus excellent in its advantages*."

* "On auroit tort également de nous présenter l'affoiblissement général de l'esprit religieux comme une preuve que cet esprit a, de nos jours, très-peu d'influence sur la morale; il faudroit plutôt remarquer combien ne doit pas être efficace une puissance qui, dans la dégradation même de ses forces est encore suffisante pour concourir au maintien de l'ordre public; on seroit autorisé à dire: que ne vaut pas le tout, si l'on reçoit tant d'avantage d'une simple partie?"—*De l'Importance des Opinions Religieuses, par* M. NECKER.

Chapter I.

Sect. VII.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE HAPPINESS OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

On a survey of the precepts and the institutions which have been consecrated by the diffusion of the Gospel, and on a comparison of the advantages which they have severally communicated to the regenerated nations of the earth, it might be difficult to particularize any single object, for the possession of which the gratitude of man is more peculiarly due. But if there be any one of the lessons of the divine intelligence which has more favourably operated than another to ameliorate the condition of the social world,

and to promote and to confirm its happiness, it is that which has restored the legitimate equality of the sexes, vindicated the weakness of woman from the tyranny of man, and revived one of the first original laws of our Creator, by insisting on the inviolable sanctity of the marriage-bond.

By rendering every violation of the nuptial tie obnoxious to the judgment of the Almighty; by denying to his disciples all possibility of a divided union; by suppressing every facility of divorce; by casting his injunctions even on the vagrancy of the desires—on the wandering eye and the licentious inclination—the Messiah has displayed his consummate knowledge of the properties of that heart, into which himself had breathed the spirit of existence. He has cut away from the human soul the vain emotions, and the

exhausting exuberances of passion, that it may bear the profitable fruit of the affections*. He has dispossessed the habitations of his disciples of the inflictions of those evil spirits that exercise a violent dominion in the dwellings of the ungodly. He has emancipated woman from the oppression of distrust and the apprehensions of desertion. He has delivered man from the agitations of jealousy, and afforded him, with the security of his tenderest interests, that calm of mind and complacency of heart, which is most favourable to the prosecution of enterprise, the advancement of intellect, and the cultivation of virtue. He has concentrated the affections, that they might become the sacred and enduring

* "The heart of man naturally submits to necessity, and soon loses an inclination when there appears an absolute impossibility of gratifying it."—HUME'S *Essay on Polygamy and Divorce.*

motives to exertion. He has converted those very desires into instruments of strength, which, in their original state of turbulence and mutability, act as the impediments to perseverance, and prove the unprofitable channels by which the energies of the soul are wasted and dispersed. —And while, by thus insisting on their inseparable union, the Messiah has wrought for the happiness of the parents, he has prepared an asylum for the reception of the infant, and secured to him the permanent support of the authors of his being, which had otherwise been as precarious as the caprice, and as frail as the corruption of their nature. A home is thus created for the child, where his wants are the claims for tenderness, and his weakness is the guarantee for protection; where every error is leniently rebuked, every little merit partially regarded, every light at-

tainment uninvidiously approved; where every early sorrow finds the ready sympathy of a sister's tears, and every schoolboy wrong is answered from some elder brother's arm with the immediate redress; where the heart, educated at the foot of the affections, is refined by the intercourse of female gentleness, and fortified by the example of the manly virtues; where in the centre of relatives and friends the youth grows up beneath the cheering influence of those domestic charities, which, co-existent with the dawn of being, create his safety and his happiness on earth, and, imperishable as the immortal spirit, appear to promise in the re-union beyond the grave no inferior part of the beatitude of heaven.

That the perfect developement of those invaluable affections, which unite to form the happiness of the Christian's home, is

unattainable under any combinations of society which do not rigorously insist on the inviolability of the marriage-vow, may be demonstrated by the experience of those nations in which the permission of polygamy, or the facility of divorce, has allowed a scope to the licentiousness of passion. Public morals have never been attainted by either of these vices but the destruction of domestic happiness has been the invariable result.

Wherever polygamy maintains, the degradation of the female sex must necessarily ensue. The husband becomes elevated into the master and the tyrant. In the multiplicity of objects all the attributes of love are lost, except its watchfulness and its suspicion. The mingled and the countless progeny of many mothers are mutually severed by the opposition of their rival parents. Brethren are more exasperated against each other by

maternal jealousies, than they are united by the blood of their common father:—while that lordly sire, disdaining his paternal duties, abandons his promiscuous offspring to the care of slaves and mercenaries, and considers all the offices of his divided tenderness sufficiently performed when he has once stored his memory with the catalogue of their names *.

If these are the miserable consequences of permitting a participation of the marriage-bed, the other mode of violation by which the nuptial institution is opposed—the allowing the possibility of capricious and voluntary divorce—is, perhaps, even more destructive to the existence of the domestic affections. It kills where the other only wounds. It concludes in the extirpation of the rite. It tends to eradicate all

* "Barbarism appears from reason as well as experience to be the inseparable attendant of polygamy."—HUME'S *Essay on Polygamy and Divorce.*

family connexion. "On this point," says Hume, "no one will pretend to refuse the testimony of experience. At the time when divorces were most frequent among the Romans, marriages were most rare; and Augustus was obliged, by penal laws, to force men of fashion into the marriage state:—a circumstance which is scarcely to be found in any other age or nation *."

But if there be no other basis on which the fair fabric of our domestic happiness can be raised than that of the unity and the sacredness of the nuptial bond, it may also be asserted, on the authority of the same indisputable experience, that there is no other protection by which the institution can be maintained thus holy and entire, but by its alliance with the sanctions of religion.

Human law alone is insufficient to esta-

* HUME'S *Essay on Polygamy and Divorce.*

blish and to sustain the purity and the durability of marriage. The weakness of all that mere legal ordinances could effect has already been demonstrated by the ignominy of a defeat. That constancy and integrity of wedded love, which is consecrated by the injunctions of the Gospel, was also meditated by the wise severity of the ancient laws of Rome. The wonderful harmony which this inseparable union of interests produced between married persons, "while each of them considered the inevitable necessity by which they were linked together, and abandoned all prospect of any other choice or establishment," is recorded by the eulogies of Dionysius the historian*; and, for the first five hundred years of the Republic, while the cove-

* Lib. ii., quoted by Hume in the *Essay on Polygamy and Divorce.*

nant was hallowed to the consciences of either party by their faith in the existence of the deities, who were invoked to ratify the engagement, the institution was maintained without injury or reproach. But the rite no sooner was deprived of its religious confirmation, by the failure of so salutary a superstition, than the arm of legislation became affected with a sympathetic debility. Its nerves appeared shrunk and withered, and its forces paralyzed. The feeble instrument, supported as it was by the recollections of past benefits, was unable to contend against the impetuous desires of the heart. Every barrier it interposed was insidiously undermined, or violently overthrown. The potency of its ordinances became invalidated by the corruption of the manners of the people; and all its faint and dying efforts to render itself heard were

drowned amid the clamour of their passions.

The same enemies, which in ancient Rome were so unhappily, but so successfully, exerted to procure the revocation of those valuable ordinances that give birth to the tranquillity and the happiness of families, are constantly operating among ourselves. They still retain all the vigour and the intemperance of youth, and have acquired nothing in the lapse of ages but inveterate pertinacity of error. Experience of evil or of good is equally addressed to them in vain. They are limited in their scope of vision, and are conscious of no objects that lie beyond the narrow range of their circumspection. —The passions, without any recollection of the past, or providence for the future, still persevere in their unremitting enmity against the sacred rigour of the marriage-

tie; they are continually endeavouring to desecrate its vows, to extenuate its respect, and to defeat its influence. The validity and force of that holy institution, in which the existence of all our domestic happiness is involved, is wholly dependant on the Gospel. It will prevail or fall with the ascendency or the depression of the faith. It has no stability independent of its religious associations; and the sentiments, the opinions, and the reasonings, of mankind have never interfered with the divine appointment, but with an intent of mitigating the strictness of its conditions, and of opening a breach for the admission of licentiousness.

The arguments of the world, in this respect, have been so powerfully supported by the silent eloquence of our corruption, that even the professed disciples of the Saviour have begun to doubt the letter,

and to trifle with the sanctity, of the Gospel institution.—The Almighty, studious of the welfare of his creatures, has designed, that a powerful, but not an irresistible, solicitation of nature should urge every individual to the formation of those sacred ties, which, by connecting us with objects of tender and increasing interest, and placing us in the centre of undoubting and confident affections, seem to promise to us the brightest prospects of happiness on earth. The desires, reformed and regulated by the sense of religious duty, were designed to operate on the enthusiasm of youth as the springs of enterprise and the motives to honourable perseverance. Love, looking to marriage as its end, was intended to concentrate the ardours, and give direction to the energies, of the young; and—while it refined the soul by the exercise of self-

denial and of constancy—to stimulate the faculties to continued and diligent occupation. The hope of securing that certain place and independence in society, which might allow the engagements of affection to be ratified, was calculated to counteract the thoughtless prodigality of vice, and engender prudence in the heart, which was already consecrated to the generous virtues by the very nature of its motives and attachments. To a people rigorously and conscientiously existing according to the purity of the Gospel, those tendencies which now conduce, in the most important period of human life, to the waste and ruin of the health, the faculties, the sentiments and the affections, would constitute the most effectual instruments in inducing an early and virtuous stability of character.—Marriage would be the impulse

of exertion to their youth—the happiness of their manhood—the safety and consolation of their decline. These purposes we have attempted to reverse by the immunities which are permitted to the dawning passions, and by the seductions which are suffered to address them. In the stronger sex chastity has been denounced as an antiquated and exploded virtue. The very children of our public schools would conceal their purity as a crime, and blush at the affectionate praise which named it among their meritorious qualities, as at some egregious and scandalous imputation. The desires are forced into a precose maturity by licentious books and conversations, by bad precedents and the contagious vicinity of guilt; they are turned from their good and legitimate purposes by the facilities afforded to their forbidden gratification;

they are palliated by high examples and authorities; and they are extenuated and recommended by the maxims of those who represent the licentious vices as necessities of nature, and the consequences of an inherent passion which is too imperious to be controlled by the visionary restraints of morals. Under the influence of such principles the young are withdrawn from the solid happiness of life. They are seduced from their permanent good by the very counsellors who appear most solicitous of their ease. No enduring attachments are formed. The heart dissipates in rapid and illimitable change. The purposes of Providence are thwarted. While loose and unhallowed habits are acquired by the eye and the imagination, which, when some arguments of a selfish and ignominious expediency shall, at length, persuade the voluptuary

to connect himself in more permanent engagements, render him incapable of performing the obligations he has assumed, and with which he has invoked his God to witness his compliance.

Having thus listened to the seductions of passion in their early years, and allowed, in opposition to the word of the Almighty, a license of inclination which it is afterwards found difficult to abridge, mankind have had recourse to another attempt to prevaricate with the restraints of the Gospel, and have imagined a world of sophistry to defeat the benevolent purposes of the Redeemer. They would render the covenant unjust by imposing on the weaker party all the strictness of the ordinance, and permitting an unlimited impunity to the will and the transgressions of the stronger. According to the prevalent opinions of the world, a

kind of unchristian dispensation has been granted to the offences of the male adulterer. It has been devised,—according to some system of comparative iniquity, in meditating on which the heart is presented with the gentlest declivity to sin, and the most flattering unction to allay the painful sensibility of the conscience, —that conjugal infidelity is less criminal in man than woman: and the privileged and licensed party has allowed himself to dwell on this supposed inferiority, till the sin has at length appeared to be deprived of its enormity, and to shew itself as insignificant and venial, and rather as a manly grace than as a moral deformity.

To this error Johnson has unintentionally afforded the sanction of his venerable name. Speaking of the heinousness of adultery, he affirms, that "as confusion of progeny constitutes the essence of the

crime, a woman who breaks the marriage-vow is much more criminal than a man who does it*."—This sentence of our great moralist is very frequently alluded to, in a manner which he never could have anticipated. It seems to be imagined that he designed to extenuate the offence. But this is a gross misapprehension. The observation of the author of the Rambler implies no more than that the vice, which is so deadly in the man, acquires a deeper taint in the transgressions of the female.—But even of this opinion let us "sift the verity." Is the proposition true, which the corruption of the heart has shewn itself as anxious to substantiate on the authority of its passions, as if the inferiority of the guilt was an apology for the commission of the offence?—In the first place, as Christians,

* Boswell's *Life*.

all disputes on the proportionate degrees and the comparative magnitude of crimes to us are irrelevant and vain. Our duty lies in the narrow compass of obedience to the laws of the Almighty; and, beyond the knowledge of his will, we can have no interest to induce inquiry. Now, if we derive our sense of virtue and of vice from the uncorrupted letter of revelation, we are informed, that with God there is no such distinction of persons.—If we look to "the essence of the crime," we shall not find that it consists in "confusion of progeny," but in the breach of conjugal confidence, which, if once impaired, can never be restored to its original integrity; in the wrong committed against the tenderest and most susceptible affections; in the infliction of a wound, which bleeds inwardly, and murders sleep and peace, and in comparison

to which death itself were a mercy and a deliverance;—and more than all, "the essence of the crime" consists in the severing of a holy contract, which was made at the altar of the Deity, which was solemnly witnessed in his presence, and of which the violation will indiscriminately stamp either of the offenders with the guilt of perjury*.—Again, if we look to

* Payley says, in his *Moral Philosophy*, vol. i. p. 304, that the vow by which married persons mutually engage their fidelity *approaches* the nature of an oath.—An oath "is a promise corroborated by the attestation of the Divine Being." And if the marriage-vow fall not under this definition, I do not understand what does. The terms of the vow are "witnessed before God and the congregation."—The Almighty is therefore as much invoked as the invisible and guardian witness to the bond of mutual constancy, in a religious sense, as any of the visible witnesses are in an earthly sense. That nothing may be wanting to give solemnity to the contract, it is finally pronounced as covenanted between the parties "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."—Do not these things constitute "a promise corroborated by the attestation of the Divine Being?"—As to "approaching the nature of an oath," it is impossible for such a half-consecration to exist. The Deity either is not, or is, called upon to attest the promise.—There can be no medium.—If he is not, the promise is a simple promise; its conditions binding to the conscience, its violation obnoxious to the guilt of falsehood and deceit.—If the Deity is called upon to attest the promise, it then acquires the more sacred character of an oath, and idly to engage in it is blasphemous profanation, and its violation is perjury—which is the guilt of every offence against the marriage covenant.

the consequences of the sin, in what respect is the crime of the male culprit really less pernicious than that of the female?—I will not dwell upon the coldness, the silence, the abstraction, which mark the adulterer in the bosom of his family; his eagerness to quit, his tardiness in returning to them; his severe reproofs and constrained approval; his fretful rejection of those gentle offices of duty and attention, by which his wife and children endeavour to conciliate his unkindness, and reconcile the stranger to his home; his indifference to their amusements, their occupations, their studies

and their improvement, which betrays the characters of a mind dissatisfied with itself, and agonizes the hearts of those who are dependant on his affections, by the afflicting consciousness that his soul is continually intent on some dearer and clandestine interests, and that they are irrelevant to his happiness.—" Chastity in wedlock," says Bishop Taylor, " is the security of love, and preserves all the mysteriousness like the secrets of a temple. Under this lock is deposited the security of families, the union of affections, the repairer of accidental breaches. That contract, that is intended to be for ever, is yet dissolved and broken by the violation of this; nothing but death can do so much evil to the holy rites of marriage as unchastity and breach of faith can*."—But, without referring to the

* Sermon on the Marriage Ring.

wretchedness that the adulterer inflicts on those of his own house for the proof of the enormity of his offence, it must be remembered, that if the institution is worthy of being preserved at all, it must be preserved entire.—Domestic happiness does not depend on the virtue of one, but on the virtue of both the parents;—and the extension of the evil principle, which is, at the present day, so unblushingly acknowledged, ultimately tends to the dissolution of the rite itself. Unless the female sex be again degraded to that subordinate condition, from which they have happily been raised by the operation of the Gospel, they will never consent to become the parties in so unequal and disproportionate a contract. They will not believe that a transgression which is venial in the husband, can be deeply guilty in the wife. They will be

seduced by example more than they will be restrained by the faint persuasions of a duty, which they perceive on one side to be violated without reproach.—It will be in vain to dwell upon the inferiority of the husband's crime.—A crime it is; and the virtuous will either separate themselves from all communion with the sinful, or will eventually become depraved by the association.—The heart, agitated by conflicting passions, stung by the wrongs of its affection, hardened by the bitter consciousness of desertion, and insulted by the preference of another, will not pause to investigate the nice degrees, and calculate the minute distinctions of offences that are apparently the same.—And this pretended inferiority of guilt, in what does it consist?—Why is the transgression of the adulterer to be considered as a light transgression?—With respect

to the confusion of progeny, on which such an important stress is laid by every unchristian moralist, it is one of those lesser accidents which hardly deserves consideration from any man who contemplates the offence in its severer characters; who does not prize the temporalities of the earth before the blessings of eternity; or estimate the misappropriation of an inheritance before loyalty in love, and chastity of mind, and purity of heart, and the reverence of a solemn oath, and the favour of Almighty God.—But, in this venial and light transgression of the adulterer, it must not be forgotten, that if the associate of his sin be wedded, his crime is also followed by the confusion of progeny;—if otherwise,—is fornication, with all its attendant consequences of attainture to the heart and the imagination; with the evil precedent that it af-

fords to the younger and less responsible members of society; with the few years of wicked and luxurious indolence, succeeded by an age of disease and poverty and shame, which it entails upon its victims, to be ranked upon the catalogue of light transgressions?—Fornication may be aggravated by the darker iniquity of seduction. And is seduction a light transgression? Is it a light transgression to corrupt innocence to guilt, and modesty to shame—to blast a life and destroy an immortality? Is it a light transgression to become the father of a child, who, if he be not abandoned by his unnatural parent to track the deteriorating progress of his mother's wretchedness, and derive subsistence from the wages of her guilt, must, under the most prosperous circumstances, be born to infamy, and live the subject of reproach, and be destined

to experience all those torturing ills of bastardy, which will never be estimated among the inferior calamities by those who remember the pathetic and the eloquent lamentations of Savage.—In opposition to these malignant consequences, it were difficult to discover any arguments that might substantiate the adulterer's pretensions to impunity.—Man may challenge to himself an exclusive privilege of guilt, while he endeavours to enclose the female within the severest confines of virtue. It is natural that these immunities should be claimed; that the strong should be impatient of a compact, which places him on an equality with the weak; that he should avail himself of every opportunity of establishing the tyrannous ascendency of FORCE; that in the plenitude of superior power, he should exclaim, as Judah did, when he received

intelligence of the incontinency of Tamar: "Bring her forth, and let her be burnt*;" and behold!—he is himself the occasion and the partner of her iniquity. —But, in fact, if any extenuation could be admitted for the perpetration of a crime, which strikes so deeply at the foundation of our social and domestic happiness, that lenity, as in every other instance, is to be conceded to the sex of those whom the laws of God and nature have addressed to our tenderness, and submitted to our protection†. "In the

* Genesis, ch. xxxviii. ver. 24.

† Dans ce siècle même, au nombre des forfaits
Je compte d'un époux la volage inconstance.
Pour les femmes enfin j'aurais plus d'indulgence.
Par le sentiment seul leurs jours sont agités;
Consacrant à lui seul toutes leurs facultés,
L'histoire de leur cœur est celle de leur vie.
Mais les hommes, voués à servir leur patrie,
De mille soins divers s'occupant tour-à-tour,
Peuvent plus aisément s'arracher à l'amour.

MADAME DE STAEL, *Sophie.*

grace of chastity, it is fit that the wisdom and severity of man should hold forth a pure taper, that his wife may, by seeing the beauties and transparencies of that crystal, dress her mind and her body by the light of so pure reflections; it is certain he will expect it from the modesty and retirement, from the passive nature and colder temper, from the humility and fear, from the honour and love of his wife, that she be pure as the eye of heaven: and, therefore, it is but reason that the wisdom and nobleness, the love and confidence, the strength and severity, of the man should be as holy and certain in this grace, as he is a severe exactor of it at her hands, who can more easily be tempted by another, and less by herself*."

The indulgence, which is now challenged for the nuptial infidelities of man,

* BISHOP TAYLOR'S *Marriage Ring.*

even by many of the nominal disciples of the Saviour, is unwarranted both by reason and revelation; and if the passions, in opposition to revelation and to reason, have instructed the Christian in an indulgent sophistry which would dissipate the very spirit and efficacy of the Messiah's institution, we cannot be surprised that its severity should appear peculiarly obnoxious to the champions of infidelity. They have directed their most vigorous efforts to destroy this great palladium of our happiness. This is in the natural course of human action.—When men have renounced their hopes of immortality, sensuality becomes their sovereign good, and they are impatient of every restraint that limits their indulgence.—Hume has illustrated the advantages which result from a strict exclusion of all polygamy and divorce in an essay,

which is a perfect eulogy on the Christian ordinance; but he has only dwelt upon it that he might manifest himself the advocate of human passion in opposition to the convictions of his reason. He has first proved the need of inviolable constancy in marriage, and then deserted his conclusions to countenance the dissemination of principles which would annihilate all the sacredness—all the dignity—all the confidence of wedlock; which would destroy all the reality, and leave no residue but the empty semblance of the institution. He would instruct us to believe, that "adultery is but a slight offence when known, and no offence at all when secret; that it must be practised if man would obtain all the advantages of life; that if generally practised it would in time cease to be scandalous; and that, if practised secretly and frequently, it

would, by degrees, come to be thought no crime at all*."—The spirit of unbelief, since the days of Hume, has acquired an audacity in the avowal of its sentiments. It no longer prevaricates with the virtues of the Gospel, or feels it necessary to continue its equivocating tone of insinuated censure and doubtful approbation. A younger and more intrepid adventurer in the fields of ethical speculation, has advanced yet farther the standard of demoralizing principle, and stigmatizing the sacredness of marriage as the origin of depravity†, would annul

* Bishop Horne's *Letter to Adam Smith*, p. 33.

† As a specimen of the ravings of infidelity take the following extract from the Notes to *Queen Mab*.—"Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than intellectual sensuality: it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law."—It is said that the notes of this volume were not written by the author of the poem. They have been attributed to a younger and less experienced hand, whose

all the reciprocal obligations of husband and of wife; all that confidence which naturally subsists between those whose interests are inseparably united; all security of permanent protection and support for children; all the peace and holiness and serenity of home, and erase the vices of seduction and adultery from the moral code, to merge the gracefulness of virgin purity, and the matron dignity of wife and mother in the polluted mass of general prostitution.

Not content with these attacks on one of

name I will not blast with so disgraceful an accusation on so vague an authority as that of popular report. It is indeed melancholy to reflect, that two persons of such talents, as these authors manifest, should be so blind to every prospect of their eternal happiness or misery. But it is not wholly uninstructive to ourselves, to survey how widely from the course of right even the most gifted intellects may wander on the wide sea of speculation, when they have once been tempted to cast aside that helm and compass of the mind, which the Almighty has so mercifully conceded to us in the lessons of revelation.

the most benevolent of the Almighty's ordinances, infidelity has meditated another infringement upon the sanctity of our domestic morals, and the happiness by which they are accompanied.—In our homes, at least, Christianity had prepared for us an asylum where the storms of life were silenced; where we were surrounded by sanctified affections; where the names of father and of mother were hallowed to our souls as the appellatives of sacred ministers, by whose means the providence of God had distributed to our childhood the blessings of love, of instruction, and of support; where the names of brother and of sister were answered in the heart by affections purified of all the solicitudes of rivalship, and all the agitations of passion; where, flowing in their lawful course, and within the bounds prescribed by the Almighty, the quick emotions of our nature

adorned and fertilized the hours which, in other scenes and among less holy associations, they have been allowed to contaminate and to disturb.—Ungodliness would invade these precincts; it has grown envious of the religious serenity of our homes; it cannot bear that there should be any intercourse on earth independent of the thraldom, and undisturbed by the turmoil, of the passions; and it has begun to level its attacks against those sacred principles of domestic purity, which religion has inspired, and which, inculcated with the opening of our reason, appear to us as the involuntary instincts and the original impressions of our nature.—The new school of unbelief has endeavoured, by palliating the enormity of incestuous guilt, to deprive mankind of every pure affection, and lay open the liberal intercourse of families to the suspicions of the

credulous, and the insinuations of the base.—Here guilt was warded off, and our happiness, which ever must be dependant on our virtue, was secured by a defence far firmer than any of mere mortal temperament could possibly afford.—Too secure against every open hostility, the enemies have attempted to insinuate the vice by stratagem into the sanctuary. They have not directed their attacks in the shape of argument, which might look repulsive to the many, but have cast about the bad instruction the attractive witcheries of song, that it might obtain a more universal access and a less discriminating reception. It was deemed, perhaps, that the barriers of our domestic virtue might fall before the hymnings of the host of Satan, as the walls of the unrighteous city fell before the trumpet-blasts of the army of the Lord.—There

is a story of Italian guilt, over which Dante has cast the deepest shadows of his genius. It was a tale of horror, and the Christian poet clothed it in all its appropriate circumstances of darkness and of gloom. An infidel author of our days has addressed himself to the same argument*. It appeared susceptible of being

* Mr. LEIGH HUNT. The allusion here is to the story of Rimini. In the Preface to another volume of poems, this author informs us of the object which he had in view in undertaking his longer poem.—In the 17th page of Foliage he says, "My creed, I confess, is not only hopeful but cheerful, and I would pick the best parts out of other creeds too, sure that I was right in what I believed or chose to fancy, in proportion as I did honour to the beauty of nature, and spread cheerfulness and a sense of justice among my fellow-creatures. It was in this spirit, though with a more serious aspect, that I wrote the story of Rimini—the moral of which is not as some would wish it to be—unjust, bigoted, and unhappy, sacrificing virtue under pretence of supporting it; but tolerant and reconciling, recommending men's minds to the consideration of *first* causes in misfortune, and to see the danger of confounding forms with justice, of setting authorized selfishness above the most natural impulses, and making guilt by mistaking innocence."

made the vehicle of moral corruption. He has decked it in light words, and arrayed the sin in roses, and demanded our sympathy for the transgressors.—He has publicly avowed that the latent object of his work was to extenuate an incestuous adultery with a brother's wife.—Our modern infidel literature has exhibited another and a more daring innovator in the schools of ethical impurity *.

* Mr. BYSHE SHELLEY.—"In the personal conduct of my hero and heroine, there is one circumstance, which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life. It was my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions, on which established institutions depend. I have appealed therefore to the most universal of all feelings, and have endeavoured to strengthen the moral sense, by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions which are only crimes of convention. It is because there is so great a multitude of artificial vices that there are so few real virtues."—Preface to *Laon and Cynthia*, p. 21.—The new virtue which this discoverer in the regions of moral philosophy is desirous of promulgating is the incestuous union of a brother and sister. The author adds, in a note upon this passage, "The sentiments connected with, and characteristic of, this circumstance, have no personal reference to the writer."—It is rather extraordinary to find the inventor of a new system of ethics, thus apprehensive of sharing the imputation of a conduct which he would recommend to the practice of his countrymen.

There is one who, inspired with the terrible ambition of philosophizing away all the healthy virtues of existence, has begun to send abroad his visions of what he would persuade us to regard the moral regeneration of the world; and, as the first and paramount discovery of his ungodly speculations, he would annihilate those mysterious sentiments of kindred blood, which unite and sever the children of one family. He would inculcate among the institutes of antichrist an emancipation on which it were terrible to dwell, and which, among its lighter evils, would leave the female without a single unsuspicious protector of the stronger sex, and make a brother's house no longer an ho-

nourable asylum for an orphan sister*.—In the heathen world the highest honours ever were attributed to those who had prescribed a limit to the savage liberty of nature, and confined its impetuosities within the bounds of legal institution. The disciples of unbelief appear to have abandoned this sentiment of admiration, and to imagine that the praise and reverence of mankind shall be conciliated by tearing down every salutary barrier, and re-delivering the earth to the exterminating subjection of the passions.—Their research only seems to be directed to the invention of new methods of debasement; and, in the lowest deep, they appear to exercise themselves in no other occupation than the search after some

* Are some passages in Lord BYRON's *Cain* designed to support the incestuous theory of his friend Mr. Shelley?—Or, if they have not that purpose, what is it that they do imply?

lower deep, which they may reveal to our shuddering inspection.

It used to be objected to the enemies of religion, that "while every one was acquainted with what they wished to overthrow, no man could tell what they desired to establish as its substitute*."—They have most egregiously vindicated themselves from this reproach. We have received a communication of their purposes. Having outraged our religious reverence by their impious doubts of the truth of the Redeemer:—having accustomed our most sacred feelings to tolerate the defamation of their best dependencies, they have possibly conceived, that, after this gradual and cautious preparation, we might at length endure to meditate the precepts by which they would supersede

* *Deism Revealed*, vol. i. p. 41.

the Decalogue, and reverse the purity of the Sermon on the Mount.

Lucretius, in the bitter spirit of his material philosophy, made it a reproach to the idolatrous superstition of his country, that it had instigated one dark act in the immolation of a daughter by a father's hand.

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum *.

This was evil:—but religion in its errors:—most appalling as may be the horrible exactions of blood and terror which they demand; most mournful as may be the blight with which they chill and wither the better impulses of the soul:—yet religion, in all the wildness of belief, with which the imagination has corrupted the principles of eternal truth, and depraved the conception of the Deity, has never claimed so inordinate a sacrifice, as that which has been premedi-

* *De Rerum Naturâ*, Book I. l. 81—102.

tated for itself by the genius of atheism. Superstition may have bound the living wife to the husband's funeral pile—it may have bade the parent offer up his child to appease the anger of an offended Deity, and "give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul."—But if these things were presented to the remorseless idol, it was because these things were dearest. Atheism has contemplated a more egregious sacrifice.—It refuses the solitary victim, and lays its claim upon the fond affections by which the victim appeared hallowed for the altar. It does not crave the object of our love, but would exhaust the sources of all love. It requires as its appropriate offering the severing of every sacred tie, by which man is more closely knit with the inmates of his dwelling, that each individual may exist a forlorn, a friendless and an isolated being, and

feel himself alone amid the peopled solitudes of creation, a thing irrelevant to the providence of God, and abandoned by the benevolence of his kind.

That such is the miserable state to which mankind would be reduced by the entire predominance of infidel opinions, is not a subject of mere visionary speculation.—The Deity has imposed upon us the salutary restrictions of his laws; but the moment we cease to reverence those restrictions as divine, they will be overborne by the impetuosity of the passions; and the apostles of unbelief will furnish the deceitful arguments to palliate their violation.—France at this very hour presents to us the page in which we may contemplate the demonstration of these truths.—The names of God and the Redeemer are yet heard within her churches. The morals of the Gospel are still familiar as a topic of discussion. From the influence of early prepossession they involuntarily have a certain action upon popular conduct. "The form of Godliness" is still retained in the national worship, and "the power" is yet resident with a few. These things cannot exist without conferring something of their purity to the apostate nation that contains them. While the temple still remains there will be found a kind of safety in its precincts. But to the many Christianity is indifferent, neglected, or despised.—"It intervenes in the occurrences of the world merely as an additional form in the more important transactions of social life: but it no longer bears to the unfortunate its consolations or its hopes. Its morality no longer directs the understanding through the straight and difficult passage of existence."—Such is the ac-

count which a modern French writer has presented to us of the spiritual corruption of his countrymen. He proceeds to detail the consequences.—" A chilling egotism has dried up all the springs of sentiment. The domestic affections are extinct. There is no longer any respect, or love, or authority, or reciprocal dependance. Every man lives for himself, and for himself alone. No one any longer enters into those valuable and wise connexions by which the present generation is united to the generations which are to come*."—To this dark portraiture let the few, gloomy, and tremendous traits of national character delivered by Mennais be added, and we have the proof—as far as experience can be proof—of the inseparable connexion that subsists between the domestic charities and the reverence of Christianity. " Domestic crimes, poisonings, parricides, the murder of husbands by their wives, and wives by their husbands, are almost as common as larcenies were wont to be*."

Such is the miserable destiny, by which the chaste and purified affections, that mingle to complete the tranquillity of our homes, would wither and decay before the depopulating breath of infidelity.—They avoid the presence of ungodliness, as

* La religion n'intervient que comme un usage dans les actes les plus solennels de la vie ; elle n'apporte plus ses consolations et l'espérance aux malheureux ; la morale religieuse ne guide plus la raison dans le sentier étroit et difficile de la vie : le froid égoïsme a desséché, toutes les sources du sentiment ; *il n'y a plus d'affections domestiques*, ni de respect, ni d'amour, ni d'autorité, ni de dépendances reciproques, chacun vit pour soi, personne ni forme de ces sages combinaisons, qui liaient à la génération future les générations présentes.—From Dr. ESQUIROL, quoted in the *Quarterly Review* for December, 1820.

* Les crimes domestiques, les parricides, l'assassinat des femmes par leurs maris, des maris par leurs femmes, les empoisonnemens, le suicide, sont dévenus presque aussi communs que le simple vol l'était autrefois.—MENNAIS *sur la Religion*, vol. ii. p. 20.

in the human heart the graces of the Holy Spirit are expelled by the invasion of the passions of the world. They are born with religion, and they perish with religion. They are indebted for their tenderness, their permanency, and their confidence, to those everlasting sanctions by which the marriage-covenant is purified, and consecrated and confirmed.—Their extinction has always been commensurate with the prevalence of unbelief:—and oh! my God,—if thy Scriptures be not the emanations of eternal truth, and if there be no bourn beyond the grave, let the morals of the ungodly be ascendant, and emancipate the will from those hallowed and venerable restrictions by which the happiness of the Christian is originated and secured. If it be, indeed, decreed that the soul shall perish with the body, and the affections cease with

the pulsations of the heart, there is a kind of barbarous and degrading wisdom in the vagrant sensuality of the godless. The abolition of all mutual obligations to constancy, and all tenderness of kindred blood, is for the repose of perishable man. —It is as an act of self-defence that the infidel rends asunder the ties of parental, of filial, and fraternal, love; it is for the preservation of his tranquillity on earth, that he is solicitous to sever every alliance the instant it is formed; it is to secure to himself a portion of mitigated pain, that he endeavours to seal up the avenues of his breast against every sentiment which may not be suddenly consumed in the fires of the passions, lest, by the familiarity of many years, by the companionship in pleasures that are past, by fond associations and by long remembrances, by the acquired similarity of taste

and feeling, by tenderness to pain and by watchfulness in sickness, by fidelity in sorrow and by sympathy with success, his soul should entertain too intimate and undivided an attachment; and the object of his pure and his unalienable affection be regarded as the dearest benefit of an existence, which it ever more and more imbitters, by adding to the terrors of the grave the apprehensions of an eternal separation.

Chapter II.

Sect. I.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE HAPPINESS OF INDIVIDUALS FROM THE TERMS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE.

However the destinies of mankind may externally be varied, the difference is more in appearance than reality. On a more close and minute consideration, the various conditions of society are not found to be so partially allotted as the mind might at first be tempted to conceive. As long as we are supplied with the decent necessaries of life, it very little interests our personal enjoyment whether we are the inhabitants of the palace or the cottage. Those adorned and exag-

gerated descriptions of the old pastoral poetry, which pretend that innocence of mind and tranquillity of heart are inseparably connected with the unambitious occupations of the peasant, do not stray more widely from nature and from truth, than those invidious imaginations which imbitter so many moments of the poor man's life, by representing happiness as a necessary attendant on pre-eminence or wealth. Either fortune inherits its peculiar anxieties. The rich become satiated of their superfluities; the poor occasionally suffer from privations. The rich are weary of their indolence; the poor of their labours. The rich are agitated by the restlessness of energies unemployed; the poor are harassed by exertions that overcharge them. If the laborious languish for the repose and the banquet of the affluent; the affluent pine under the

want of that strenuous action which is necessary to render the banquet and the repose delightful:—but with respect to the great mass of their days, neither can with much confidence pretend to any peculiar exemptions from the calamities, or any exclusive admission to the felicities, of existence. There may be an outward distinction of the garments. The rich may cast an ermined robe about the sorrow which in the poor is open to every observation; but this is, indeed, a valueless distinction.—The constant tide of human happiness or misery is ebbing or flowing at the heart. There it is that every individual, in his human nature, participates in a common property of hopes and fears, of desires and regrets, of affections and disappointments; and there it is,—as far as we are dependant on our own resources,—that the unfailing

principle is resident which will assert for every man his legitimate equality of care. But, while all are thus impartially condemned, as fellow-sufferers under the torturing subjection of the passions, Christianity affectionately advances to claim an emancipation for its disciples, to reveal the nature of their connexion with the earth, to inform them of the real interests and the eternal import of their existence, and to confer upon them "the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

Look down awhile upon that wide and beaten path-way of the world, on which such innumerable multitudes have arisen and contended, flourished and disappeared. From the myriads who are wandering there—in the valley of the Shadow of Death—direct your view towards the infidel and the Christian. Survey them as they are mutually liable to the general

dispensations of Providence; as they are moving in the same scenes, and conversant with the same circumstances; and observe with what a happy alchymy the votary of the Gospel can convert into accessions of joy and hope and consolation, those events which inspire the unbeliever with sentiments of despondency and sorrow.

To the infidel the very tenure by which life is held, affords a subject of continually increasing discontent. Every moment of more serious thought overcasts the spirit with the shadows of melancholy reflection. It is scarcely possible to conceive any state of torment more skilfully devised than that which this world must prove to those who are excluded from the prospects of immortality. If the most ingenious malevolence had presided at the creation of our race, and most curi-

ously contrived the gratification of its spleen, could it have invented any additional aggravations to the wretchedness of its victim? Could it have conceived any severer penalty than to provide him with the deep affections of the human heart, and multiply around him the objects that might attach them;—than to inspire him with the anxious forecast of the human mind, and bid him read upon the tombs of his companions, that a period is rapidly approaching, when all that is most exquisite and beloved shall become as superfluous to him as the trappings of his funeral, or the sun-beams that may repose upon his grave?

The woes of Tantalus are but as the fabled emblems of the real sufferings of the unbeliever.—In his childhood and his early youth he becomes enamoured of an existence which is to him as

cheerful as the song of morning birds, and careless as his heart, and various as his young imagination; but he has scarcely learnt to appreciate its benefits before he is awakened to the reflections that imbitter them. He is taught to love his being only that he may endure the miserable apprehensions of its decay. While the universe is beaming with delight, and every sensation is alive to pleasure; while every young attachment seems as imperishable as ardent; while, in the spring-time of his being, the earth seems prodigal of its flowers, and every flower is redolent of sweets, consideration—like an evil angel coming—suddenly envelopes the sunny scenes of nature in a noonday darkness, and casts a withering blight upon every blossom that is so luxuriantly springing up beneath his feet. The dreary prospect of his decline is

perpetually present to his imagination. Every symptom of decay, the blanching of a hair, the waning of the purple light of youth, the traces of the lines of time upon his brow, are intimations that are observed with sorrow, for they emphatically declare the transitory nature of those gifts in which, according to his limited estimation, all the advantages of life are centred. As his destiny is more favourably endowed, his apprehensions of its failure are increased. His path is beautifully adorned; but he knows no pleasurable emotion from the fair abundance of the present, for his heart is continually oppressed by the anticipation of the dreary desert to which it must inevitably tend. The shadows of approaching age are continually before him; and they lengthen and deepen as the sun declines; and they cast their darkness over

all the space that intervenes. He has recourse to the relief of dissipation; and the very banquet to which he flies for a refuge against himself; the intemperance by which he would overwhelm every importunate recollection of his end; the goblet, which he seeks to drown—the song, which he invokes to dissipate—the roses, which he would shower round him to banish from his mind the reflections on his decay, only operate as suggestions that insult, and as intimations that aggravate, his despondency. He cannot exclude the thought, that amid these things old age is insidiously advancing*.—He perceives in them the emblems of his perishable state; and, in the failing zest of pleasure, in the wasting goblet, in the

* Festinat enim decurrere velox
Flosculus angustæ, miseræque brevissima vitæ
Portio, dum bibimus, dum serta, unguenta, puellas,
Poscimus, obrepit non intellecta senectus.—JUVENAL.

dying song, in the fading coronal, he looks with sadness on the images of his own deteriorating existence, and the memorials of his own mortality.

I am not guilty of any exaggeration in thus describing the spiritual wretchedness which ever clings to the mind of the unbeliever; which, by oppressing the imagination, urges him to expel the apprehensions of the future in the tumult of sensuality; and which still pursues him to the clamorous haunts of his debauchery with sentiments that alarm his riot. In every feature of the sketch I am warranted by the authority of the present and the past. Its truth is seen by the solicitude with which the idolizers of the world endeavour to conceal from others and themselves the natural encroachments of their years. It is heard in the tone of impatience and regret with which they

vent their sorrows over the departing endowments of their youth; and it is read, not only in the works of modern infidels, in the gloomy spirit of their poetry, and the sullen monotony of their discontented prose, but in the remains of a more venerable literature.

Whatever is transmitted to us of the familiar feelings of the ancient Greeks, may, perhaps, be most correctly found in those brief observations upon human life, which are handed down to us in their serious epigrams. That portion of the Anthology, which is of a graver character, lays bare to our observation the moral sense and the internal sentiments of enlightened and cultivated man, when he is uninformed of the eternal import of his being, and is aware of no other benefit in life than as it affords the means of sensual indulgence. These poems express

the passing emotions of his heart and the reflections of his solitary hours; and they are indebted for all their beauty to their tone of evident truth and unexaggerated simplicity. They are of various kinds, and treat of various subjects. With maxims of philosophy, and pathetic lamentations over the brevity of youth and the insecurity of life, and epitaphs for the good, the beautiful and the renowned, we are addressed by exhortations to sensuality, that would gather its provocatives from the vicinity of the tomb, and from among the corruptions of the dead. But all those which are of a moral cast are stampt with the same melancholy impression. They are universally of a desponding character. The cause of this undeviating sadness, is eloquently given by an author who has made a selection of their fairest specimens, and transmitted them to our

language with a taste and harmony more than commonly in unison with the grace of the originals. — "To those," says Bland*, "whose notions of a future state were perplexed, dark, and uncertain; whose belief in retribution was unsettled and wavering, and rather an object of speculation than a ground of hope or satisfaction, this present life must have appeared the boundary of all human hopes and fears: and the very uncertainty of its duration, and the dark and miserable gloom which involved every thing beyond it, will of itself account for the continual complaints of the sad lot of humanity to be found in the ancient poets. These ideas followed them in solitude, and crept in upon their banquets; and such are the remains of Mimnermus the poet of love and pleasure."—

* *Translation of the Greek Anthology*—Preface, p. 7.

Now as we rise from the reviving wave,
Braid we our locks, my Prodice, with flowers;
Drain we deep bowls of wine, and wisely save
From slow-paced care youth's transitory hours;
For withering age upon our path attends,
Joys drop by joys *;—

But if, in the absence of the hope of immortality, the earlier period of our residence on earth is saddened by the threatening aspect of the infirmities that accompany its conclusion, it must not therefore be supposed that the infidel, when that state of infelicity arrives, will find his affections weaned from life in proportion to the abstraction of its enjoyments. It is no uncommon error of the sensualist to conceive, that he should esteem it as a valuable privilege, after his faculties have become impaired and his favourite indulgencies less accessible, to be discharged of all that cheerless residue of privation and infirmity that

* *Greek Anthology*, p. 17. H.

must succeed. But, when such views are formed, the soul knows not how dearly it is attached to the mouldering tenement of clay that holds it. Life is loved, simply as life, long after all its perceptible advantages have perished. The term in which man would be willing to depart, like the horizon, ever flies before him. In the most complicated ills that "age, ache, penury, or imprisonment, can lay on nature," the old still shew themselves unwilling to be deprived of that slow, weak and lingering remnant of existence, which in their youth they would have been so ready to resign. We know the saying which Seneca has reported of Mecænas *,—"that life was always sweet, and that he should still desire its continuance, though he had been broken upon

* SENECA, epist. 101.—Debilem facito manu, debilem pede, &c.

the wheel, and should be at last condemned to hang upon a gibbet."—The same results follow the same principles, at Rome or in Paris, with the disciples of Epicurus or of Voltaire.—"Why is it," exclaims Madame du Deffand, in her age, her blindness, and her hopeless unbelief, "why is it that I hate to live and yet fear to die*?"—As the years of the infidel increase he changes the nature of his apprehensions; but still there is an apprehension to agitate and oppress. It is no longer the morning of his being that meditates with pain on the encroaching obscurities of eve; it is the eve solicitously husbanding the last faint glim-

* Dites-moi pourquoi détestant la vie je redoute la mort; rien ne m'indique que tout ne finira pas avec moi; au contraire je m'aperçois du délabrement de mon esprit ainsi que celui de mon corps. Tout ce qu'on dit pour ou contre ne me fait nulle impression: Je n'écoute que moi, et je ne trouve que doute et qu'obscurité.—*Letter to H. Walpole*, vol. i. p. 312.

merings of day, and shuddering at the approaching horrors of the night. There is no longer a distinct and certain evil to be contemplated—an evil which the eye may scan and the intellect may measure; but there is something of portentous, inscrutable and undefined, which—veiled in awe and mystery—is ever present to the mental vision of the unbeliever, and makes him cling with agony to life, rather than encounter the unintelligible fears, by which the inmost instincts of his nature are appalled, at the names of Death and of the Grave.—Though all the poetry of life is over—all its fascinations scattered—all its enchantments dissipated; though he stands, as in a dreary solitude, with all his early associations severed, and every attachment of his youth buried in the tombs around him; though all that is attractive upon earth has become irrele-

vant to him; though disabused of every vision which his young imagination had conceived, and which hope had promised to achieve, still—with nothing for the mind and heart to rest upon but the cold realities of his loneliness and his decay—still he trembles at the prospect of his departure. His forlorn condition may be regarded as pitiable by others, but to him it still is precious; for there is nothing else that interposes against the utter extinction of his being. Even pain itself is welcome, while it convinces him that he yet retains a habitation and a name among the things that are;—

> "For who would lose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
> To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
> In the wide womb of uncreated night,
> Devoid of sense and motion*?"

Oh! the soul does indeed shudder at

* *Paradise Lost*, book ii. l. 146.

destruction.—The whole human race, says Plutarch, Παντες και Πασαι*, would rather undergo the punishment of hell itself, than be bereaved of their hopes of immortality. Nay:—it has been imagined, that to be deprived of consciousness—to become as they had never been is the punishment which the Almighty has reserved as the retribution to be heaped upon the heads of the most abandoned criminals†. The unbeliever suffers all the bitterness of this infliction. He has no delight in the present liberalities of his Creator; for to him, as to Atticus, the day and night are haunted by the images of death‡.—He pours on his own head

* Page 1104—Edit. RUALD.

† Some of the Jewish Doctors have so interpreted Tophet—Abaddon—the Vale of Slaughter, &c. &c.

‡ Quæ enim potest esse in vitâ jucunditas cum dies et noctes cogitandum sit jam, jamque esse moriendum.—CICERO, Tus. Dis. 1.

the vial of severest wrath;—he voluntarily exhausts the vengeance of the Deity, and prevents the rigours of his justice.—Life may be misery, but then its end proposes nothing but despair; for that end is annihilation:—and how terrible the dread of that annihilation is, we may learn from a multitude of witnesses; from those who have turned apostate from the faith of their fathers; from their lamentations over the want of a religious dependance*; from the eagerness with which they fly in every hour of peril to seek a late protec-

* Mais de bonne foi, peut-on nier que la philosophie n'ait fait quelque tort à nos plaisirs et à notre bonheur, en affaiblissant le ressort de l'imagination, en refroidissant l'âme, en nous ôtant de douces illusions, et en nous forçant à secouer le joug *de plusieurs préjugés utiles à la multitude*?—Se déchaîner contre le siècle parcequ'il est le siècle de la philosophie, c'est se déchaîner contre les arrêts de la necessité, c'est se revolter contre la loi qui régla, de toute éternité, la marche et la conduite de l'esprit humain—tout cela ne nous persuade point encore que ce soit une chose si douce et si désirable que d'être d'un siècle philosophe. S'il est vrai

tion from the God they had blasphemed*; from their hideous tenacity of life; from the terrors of the death-bed of Voltaire;

que le monde ne devient sage qu'en vieillissant, comment nous applaudir de notre profonde sagesse, sans regretter un peu les douces erreurs du bel âge, sans craindre sur-tout d'approcher bientôt du terme où l'on ne fait plus que radoter?—*Corréspondance littéraire*, &c., de Baron GRIMM.

* Se voyant sur le lit d'infirmité, où l'irreligion ne leur est plus d'aucun usage, ils prennent le parti le plus sûr, celui qui promet une félicité éternelle, en cas qu'il soit vrai, et qui ne fait courrir aucun risque, en cas qu'il soit faux.—BAYLE, *Art. Bion. Dictionnaire Critique.*

S'ils sont assez fous, ils ne sont pas assez forts; ils ne lairront pas de joindre leurs mains vers le ciel, si vous leur attachez un bon coup d'épée dans la poitrine; et quand la maladie aura appésanti cette licencieuse ferveur d'humeur volage, ils ne lairront pas de revenir et de se laisser manier tout discrètement aux créances et exemples publiques. Autre chose est un dogme sérieusement digéré, autre chose ces impressions superficielles lesquelles, nées de la débauche d'un esprit démanché, vont nageant témérairement et incertainement dans la fantaisie. Hommes bien misérables et écervelés, qui tachent d'être pires qu'ils ne peuvent.—MONTAIGNE.

The Abbé Menuais has given a list of those infidels of celebrity, who have on their death-bed endeavoured to alleviate the horrors of their departure, by seeking a reconciliation with their God through Christ. The passage is curious, and I transcribe it.—" Boulanger, Toussaint, Boulanvilliers,

from the faint, shrill earnestness of his dying cry—of that *faites-moi vivre*—which uttered through the stillness of his chamber so emphatic and intelligible a warning to the attendants of his parting moments.

While the constant ordinance of Almighty Providence, by which we are conducted from youth to age and from age to death, through a passage of graduating shade, till we arrive at the impenetrable darkness of the tomb, afflicts the unbeliever as the decree of an implacable and

Le Marquis d'Argens, Montesquieu, Maupertuis, Buffon, Dumarsais, Fontenelle, Damilaville, Thomas, Bouguer, de Langle, Tressan, Mercier, Palissot, Soulavie, Larcher.—Diderot voulait se confesser, on lui en ôta les moyens. *Sans moi*, disait Condorcet, parlant de d'Alembert, *sans moi il faisait le plongeon.* Il paraît qu'on se précautionna également contre la *faiblesse* de Voltaire, qui mourut, au rapport de Tronchin, dans les convulsions de la rage ; Jean Jacques, selon toutes les vraisemblances, termina lui-même sa vie. Il avait écrit en faveur du suicide, il avait écrit contre, et il finit par l'autoriser par son exemple."

rigid destiny ; to the Christian, on the contrary, this condition appears to be appointed by the counsels of an intelligence infinitely wise and infinitely benevolent. The Gospel interprets to him the symbolic language of creation, and discloses to him the purposes of its author. It instructs him, that this earth is but as a passing trial of his obedience. It reveals to him a higher state of being, to which the present is designed as a preparation; and this important lesson reconciles every opposite testimony in the records of nature, and harmonizes every apparent dissonance in the Almighty's dispensations towards mankind. Through the merits of the Redeemer heaven is open as the recompense of his faith and virtue. This animating truth is perpetually before him. The dependence on his immortality is the restraining, the mode-

rating, the predominating principle of his affections. The natural consequence of this sublime persuasion is a holy disengagement from the world, and the pleasures and the vanities of the world. The steady light, which beams from beyond the grave, sheds its radiance over the long perspective of his existence, and consoles him for the gradual extinction of the bewildering meteors of the earth.—"He remembers his Creator in the days of his youth*." He knows that the passions which tempt him from within, and the seductions that allure him from without, are the ministers and the instruments of his trial; and his heart is steeled against them, lest he fail in the terms of his covenant, and become enamoured of the things that may destroy. "He remembers his Creator in the days

* Ecclesiastes, ch. xii. v. 1.

of his youth:"—and, even in this life, he receives the recompense of his faith; for to him "the evil days do never come, the years never do draw nigh, in which he says he has no pleasure in them*."—It is to the sensualist alone that the decay of the faculties of life are painful. The Christian can bear to part with the endowments of his corporeal nature;—he can complacently remark the encroachments of his decline; for his soul is instinct with immortality, and he can smile upon the ruin of those frailer properties, that lie wrecked, on either side, upon the banks and shoals of time. His gaze is fixed upon the upward soaring of the column of eternity; and what are to him the things that crumble into dust about its base?—Age is to him a period rather of pleasing

* Ecclesiastes, ch. xii. v. 1.

expectation than of dread*.—He contemplates it as an easier state of his probation, when his temptations shall be diminished; when every rebellious emotion shall be less importunate; when the violence of passion shall be enfeebled; when the spirit shall be elevated by more affluent communications of charity and hope and faith; when duty shall be rendered more delightful by the relaxation of the holds of nature, by the increasing fervours of religious love, by the facility of habitual obedience, and by the increasing confidence of salvation. He

* Sir William Jones, that sincere and excellent Christian, in his *Bioscope*, considers, if I remember right, from sixty to seventy as the period of human happiness. Could Sir Thomas Barnard's book on the *Pleasures of Old Age*, have been written by any but a Christian? It must be remembered that the *De Senectute* was written on the supposition of the immortality of the soul—an opinion which Cicero adopted or renounced, as it suited the immediate purpose of his declamation.

looks without dismay upon his end; for to him death has lost its sting, and the grave has been bereaved of victory. The Christ has gloriously triumphed for his deliverance. The tomb, to which he is advancing, presents to his contemplations no afflicting or intimidating prospect; and he surveys the narrow mansion of the dead as the consummation of his hope, as the womb of his immortality, and as the passage to the land of promise.

To the disciple of the Messiah there is a source of joy and hope in every object, from which the infidel derives a pain and a solicitude.—In the close of autumn, and in the dawn of spring, all the appearances of external nature are so entirely similar, that the eye can trace no single circumstance of distinction. There are the same naked trees, the same moist

landscape, the same soft stillness in the air, the same gray unbroken canopy of clouds, the same pale and yellow glow on the horizon. There is no outward mark of variation; yet with what opposite emotions does the heart interpret to the song of the ruddock, as, in either season, he carols lustily from among his leafless branches.—Even so it is with life to the perceptions of the disciple and the despiser of the Gospel.—The object is the same, yet how contrary are the sentiments which it awakens. The scenes that they inhabit, their human station, their personal endowments, are equally and impartially allotted. But these kindred circumstances do not inspire in their breasts a single kindred feeling. Each contemplates them as connected with different associations. Each surveys before him the same inevitable destiny in the

decrepitude of age, and in the cold obstructions of the tomb; but each derives from them his train of appropriate and distinct reflection. To the unbeliever they are frowning signals of the decay:—to the Christian they are cheering harbingers of the revival of his being.

Chapter II.

Sect. II.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE RELIEF OF THE CALAMITIES OF LIFE.

Without the convictions of the Gospel life must be wretched from the very terms of its tenure. To the infidel, in possession of no certain hopes of immortality, his existence upon the earth is a state of graduating darkness: while to the believer it is a state of graduating light.

This advantage Christianity possesses over unbelief, even when the stream of life flows smoothest, and its current is disturbed by no gales of adversity or affliction. But it must be remembered that "man is born to sorrow as the

sparks fly upwards*."—This important fact must surely be forgotten by those who meditate the abolition of our faith. It must surely be forgotten by them, that the being, whom they would thus wantonly bereave of every supernatural dependance and abandon to his own resources, is obnoxious to innumerable calamities, which no foresight can divine, no precaution obviate, no efforts of human wisdom can repair. It surely must be forgotten, by those who would deprive mankind of their religious confidence, that the earth does not always yield its increase to the labours of the industrious; that the blossoms of the spring may fall before the lingering inclemencies of winter; that the harvest may be scattered by the violence of autumnal tempests; that the affluent may be suddenly deprest, and, rejected

* Job, ch. v. ver. 7.

by the troops of friends who courted his prosperity, may lament the privations of poverty as the least piercing and afflicting of his sorrows; that while the young is moving upon the earth with the most assured security, in all the pride of beauty and of strength, a single breath of heaven may in a moment taint the springs of nature, and pour infection through the veins, and leave him, in useless and querulous imbecility, a burthen on the tenderness of his relatives, and a living admonition to the levity of his late associates. It surely is forgotten—by the apostles of infidelity, that the holiest and most devoted affections of this world may be violated or severed; that confidence may be betrayed; that the most fond attachments may be wronged by the ingratitude of their objects, or abandoned to pine and grieve under the perception of

their indifference; that the course of nature is not always equal; that the sapling may be suddenly cut off ere the trunk from which it sprung has withered; that the trembling steps of the parent may follow in the slow procession of her child's funeral; and that, where a sympathy of love and youth appeared to form another Paradise on earth, and to flatter hope with the promises of its continuance—even in that favoured home—one may in a moment perish, and leave no other companion to the widowed heart than the sense of loneliness and the tomb of the departed. Oh! indeed, it must be the happy only, who could dare promulgate the merciless and the hopeless lessons of unbelief, and their spirits must have been nursed to pride by the too rare and constant prodigalities of fortune!—they must have closed their eyes

against the afflictions of their fellow-creatures, and hardened their hearts to pity; they must have persuaded themselves into an obstinate delusion, that the chances of others are irrelevant to them; and, like the wicked, "boasted themselves in their heart's desire, and said they should never be cast down*;" or they would tremble, thus rashly to cut away the only anchor of their hope, while the ocean is lashing itself into wrath around them, and the storms are collecting over-head.

"I shudder," says Rousseau, in one of his letters to a disciple of Diderot, "I shudder to witness your continual attempts against religion. Dear Deleyre, distrust your tendency to satire. Learn at all events to reverence religion; humanity itself demands it. The great, the rich, the happy, would be delighted to hear

* Psalms, ch. x. ver. 3 and 6.

there was no God; but the expectation of another life is in this the only consolation of the commonalty and the afflicted. —What cruelty to exclude them from that hope*!" Bewildered with sophistry, and darkened with prejudice and passion, as Rousseau's understanding was, it did not overlook the existence of those calamities by which we are so frequently reminded that this world is not intended as a state of enjoyment and of repose, but of purification and of trial; and he was ready to confess, that a philosophy, which had been so long perplexed by unprofitable speculations on the origin of the evil, was

* "Je tremble de vous voir contrister la religion dans vos écrits. Cher Deleyre, défiez-vous de votre esprit satirique. Surtout, apprenez à respecter la religion; l'humanité seule exige ce respect. Les grands, les riches, les heureux du siècle, seraient charmés qu'il n'y eût point de Dieu; mais l'attente d'une autre vie console de celle-ci le peuple et le miserable. Quelle cruauté de leur ôter encore cet espoir.—*Œuvres de* ROUSSEAU, édit. de Paris, 1788, tom. xxxi. p. 202.

not likely to exhibit any great proficiency in the means of its alleviation. He had measured the troubles of his breast with the consolations which might be afforded by the arguments of man, and he had witnessed their inability to aid. As he suffered, perhaps, the faint presentiment of the suicide*, to which their unmitigated irritation eventually impelled him, he endeavoured to interpose his arm against the more violent aggressor, and would have saved the temple, in which he did not yet despair of finding an ultimate asylum. While he acknowledged that Christianity was the only effectual means of consolation, like that highly-gifted and unhappy woman† whom his

* There is every reason to believe that Rousseau was the author of his own death.

† Madame du Deffand; in a letter to Voltaire she says,—"Si vous ôtez à ces sortes de gens leurs préjugés, que leur restera-t-il?—c'est leur ressource dans leur malheurs—et *c'est en quoi je voudrais leur ressembler.*" Again, to Horace Walpole.—"Ma sante est médiocre mais je n'en désire pas une meilleure, je serais fachée d'avoir plus de force et d'activité, mais ce que je voudrais, ce serait d'être devote, d'avoir de la foi."

lessons had assisted to delude, he longed for the tranquillity of mind, which could only be communicated by religion, and which he envied as a protection against the afflictions of the world, while he despised it, in the pride of human intellect, as the effect of superstition and of ignorance.

We have already noticed several features of resemblance between the modern infidel, and the ancient heathen, philosophy. Each is also consistent with the other in considering despair as an essential attribute of sorrow; "professing themselves to be wise, they have equally become as fools*." There is between them only one circumstance of distinction. The folly of the unbeliever has its origin in presumption and in crime; the

* Romans, ch. i. ver. 22.

folly of the heathen was the consequence of natural incapacity and error. The teachers of the new philosophy, by rejecting that religious superiority which has been mercifully conceded to them by the Messiah's revelation, have reduced themselves to the same miserable state of darkness, which the teachers of the old philosophy had in vain endeavoured to disperse by the insufficient light of the understanding. Refusing the alliance of the Gospel, after infinite toil of meditation, the modern infidel has discovered that man is born to sorrow, and that all his sorrows are irremediable. Before the day-spring from on high had shed its animating rays about the world, the most gigantic faculties of antiquity had, in the same manner, been employed in imagining a relief for our afflictions, and had arrived at the same desperate conclusions. Like the most skilled and subtile of the modern teachers of ungodliness, the most endowed and erudite of the heathen world had acknowledged that there was no happiness attainable to man, independent of the possession of health, good fortune, honour, and riches. These things were esteemed as indispensable, and they could invent no consolations for the indigent. Every state of disease, abasement, or distress, was a misery that allowed of no alleviation; and in this solitary sentiment the grossness of Diogenes sympathized with the refinements of Plato, and the acuteness of Aristotle*.

* Solon lamenting the death of his son, one told him, "you lament in vain;"—"Therefore," said he, "I do lament, because it is in vain." This was a plain confession how imperfect all his philosophy was, and that something was still wanting. He owned that all his wisdom and morals were useless, and this upon one of the most frequent accidents of life. Plato himself, with all his refinement, placed happiness in wisdom, health, good-fortune, honour, and riches; and held, that they who enjoyed all these were perfectly happy; which opinion was, indeed, unworthy of its

—It afforded, indeed, a splendid theme of declamation to defend the omnipotence of virtue, to assert its superiority over the malice and the wrongs of fortune, to declare that in every condition of existence it was its own reward, and sufficient to its own enjoyment; but the fallacy of these pretensions was honestly and unequivocally confessed. It was granted by "the wise and the scribe and the disputer of this world," that their virtue became unnerved and powerless in every severer grapple with affliction*;

owner, leaving the wise and good man wholly at the mercy of uncertain chance, and to be miserable without resource. His scholar Aristotle fell more grossly into the same notion. —Nay, Diogenes, from whose pride and singularity one would have looked for other notions, delivered it as his opinion, that "a poor old man was the most miserable thing in life."—SWIFT's *Sermon on the Wisdom of this World.*

* Virtue alone does not constitute happiness. A man possessed of virtue may be asleep or inactive. He may never through life have an opportunity of exhibiting his good qualities—and, notwithstanding these qualities, he may frequently be involved in the greatest disasters; such a man was never, *except for argument's sake*, pronounced happy.—ARISTOTLE, *Ethics*, book i. p. 246. Gedde's Translation.

and that the vulture would prey upon the heart, however the stoic might endeavour to conceal its lacerations by casting over them the ample garments of his pride.

In the hour of unalloyed felicity, the philosophers of the world may argue like the sage in Rasselas, and "exhort their hearers to lay aside their prejudices, and to arm themselves against the shafts of malice and misfortune, by invulnerable patience; they may pronounce that "this state alone is happiness, and that this happiness is in every one's power*;"—but, when the moment of their sorrow comes, they will find, like him, "that truth and reason can afford no comfort:" affliction will reveal to them "the emptiness of rhetorical sound, and the inefficacy

* *Rasselas*, ch. xviii.

of polished periods and studied sentences;" —it will instruct them not to look down upon the earth for succours that can only be derived from heaven, or solicit from the aids and arguments of man, those alleviating influences which proceed as emanations of divinity.

The Christian inherits a consolation for every calamity. If he be reduced in fortunes—why poverty is but a removal from the vanity and the temptations of the wealthy; it is a deliverance from many incumbrances and many dangers; it is to be clad in coarse habiliments*, "to feed on simple fare, to work and take some pains, to sit in a lower place, to have no heaps of cash or hoards of grain, to keep no retinue, to have few friends and not one flatterer. What," demands Barrow, "what is the harm of

* BARROW's Sermon on Contentment.

this?"—What indeed is the harm to him who confidently reposes on the superintending providence of the Almighty, and knows that the contingencies of fortune are, in his hands, the instruments of our spiritual instruction—"that he giveth and taketh away"—that he can restore as he has reduced, and that "all things work together for the good of those that love him*."

The Christian inherits a consolation for every calamity.—In the languor of disease, in the severest paroxysms of pain, in the slow advances of a consuming and inevitable decay, he still possesses, in the promises of everlasting glory, a region whither the aspirations of his heart may wing their way and be at rest; and he can still fortify his soul with patience by the contemplation of those bright ex-

* Romans, ch. viii. v. 28.

amples of suffering and enduring virtue, which of old were written for his instruction in the oracles of God*. In the constrained retirement of the sick bed he communes with his heart; and, as his conscience testifies of its lingering corruptions, he confesses the mercy and the justice of his chastisement. He holily avails himself of the religious uses of his adversity; it prospers his advancement towards perfection. His affections attach themselves to heaven, as they are removed from every possibility of indulgence upon earth; and the assurances of the faith are strengthened, as the faculties of life are wasted. "He is no longer in

* What human arguments could have supplied Collins with the support he derived from the use of the Bible, when, in the lucid intervals of insanity, his delicate and gentle mind—

"Sought on one book its troubled thoughts to rest,
"And wisely deemed the book of God the best?"—

COLLINS' *Epitaph*, by Hayley.

the flesh but in the spirit*." "Let wild beasts tear him," says Tertullian†, "let their feet trample on him, let the cross suspend him, a praying Christian can endure any thing while his hands are stretched towards his God." Exalted by the fervours of his devotion, the disciple of the Saviour lies calmly upon the rack of his disease, and, like the blessed saints and martyrs, bears gently with every bodily oppression, conscious that these "light afflictions, which are but for a moment," may work for him, as for St. Paul, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory‡."

The Christian inherits a consolation for every calamity. Are his attachments wronged? is his honest confidence betrayed? is his undoubting generosity

* Romans, ch. viii. v. 9.

† Quoted in MILNER'S *Church History*, vol. i. p. 284.—Octavo edition.

‡ 2 Corinthians, ch. iv. v. 17.

deceived?—Still he is not deserted. He can rely upon the love of his Creator and his Redeemer, who are ever affectionately near him, and who assure to him, in heavenly communion, an indemnity for every injury, and a bright atonement for every ingratitude of man. Does jealousy traduce his motives? do ignorance or malice misapprehend his purposes?—He can dispense with the approval of the world. His conduct is not exposed to its inspection. His actions are not dependant on its censure. His life is submitted only to the judgment of his conscience and his God; and, if these sacred and unerring arbiters acquit him, he is contented to await the dispersion of the clouds of calumny, till that portentous hour, when, with the revelation of the secrets of all hearts, his innocence shall for ever be declared before the judgment-seat of the glorified Redeemer.

The Christian inherits a consolation for every calamity.—If the breast of man be wrung with contrition for offences into which he was betrayed by the levity of youth or the violence of passion, by the seduction of evil counsels or the persuasion of unhappy associations, there is no other relief, that can possibly be imagined for the anguish of the repentant heart, than that which is mercifully afforded in the redemption of Jesus.—I am perfectly aware, that "never to reproach the crimes of others, or repent one's own*," has been delivered among the institutes of infidel philosophy by one of its most applauded teachers; but, however great its depravity may be, human nature is tempered by an instinctive benevolence; and there are few, who have been

* "Ne rien reprocher aux autres, ne se repentir de rien: voilà, les premiers pas vers la sagesse."—DIDEROT *Lettre à M. L.*—GRIMM's *Corréspondance*, tom. ii. p. 62.

educated in the vicinity of Christian manners, and have lived within the influence of Christian principles, whose hearts are hard enough to receive this last and most enduring polish of ungodliness. Until Infidelity shall be ascendant; and society totally depraved by the consequent prevalence of lawless passions and iniquitous examples, there are not many who will be capable of attaining so scholar-like a proficiency in the groves and porticoes of atheism, as to maintain their bad tranquillity undisturbed, when brought to a conviction of their sin by some of its more impressive and awakening remonstrances.—It is true that the apprehension of punishment is the most rigorous avenger of iniquity; that the stings of conscience are but unproductive and transitory emotions, unless they are confirmed by the expectation of an eternal retribution; that by the irreligious the apathy of reprobation is respected as the serenity of wisdom; but, till the sinner has attained that state, till his breast is hardened, beyond the obduracy of ordinary vice, by the total abandonment of the grace of God, it is impossible that his soul should not thrill with horror in situations, which bring the miserable consequences of his guilt distinctly and unequivocally to his view, by the presence of the ruin he has occasioned.—As long as the wicked is susceptible of compassion, he must also be susceptible of remorse; as long as he has a tear to shed for any sorrows but his own, his conscience will never fail reproaching him for the sorrows that he has himself inflicted upon others.—Could the sensualist, when he accidentally encountered the altered being whose beauty had instigated

his designs, whose affections he had coldly and deliberately won, whose innocence he had betrayed to crime, and whose crime he had abandoned to gravitate to lower and to lower depths of infamy and woe:—I would seek no other example among the infinite varieties of sin, and of misery the consequence of sin,—but could the sensualist, when his miserable and forsaken victim stood before him in all the squalidness of disease and poverty, and wasted by the premature decay of sorrow and of sin;—could the sensualist in such a moment suppress the rising emotions of contrition, and fortify his heart by the counsels of his selfishness, and sustain the constancy of vice by the inhuman maxims of his philosophy?—I am not one of those who support the modern heresy of opinion, and entertain any very favourable estimate

of the dignity and the excellence of humanity; but I believe that such an admonition, presented unexpectedly to the sinner in the midst of his own careless and triumphant iniquity, would strike an arrow to the soul, which would adhere with a barbed point, and there rankle and mortify for ever.—His memory would become deeply and permanently impressed with an image which would rise before him in the vision of the night, and haunt the brightest scenes of dissipation, and recur as the inevitable pain to aggravate the dejection of every moment of lassitude or of disease. He would in vain endeavour, under the weight of this spiritual affliction, to discover some oblivious antidote that might restore the depression of vice to the hilarity of virtue. He would in vain repeat, that in his seduction he had only followed the direction of a passion which nature had made impetuous,

which his instructors had warranted by their precepts, and which mankind had authorized by their example; that in his desertion he had only again obeyed the suggestions of his heart, and acted in correspondence with the dictates of the new philosophy, which disdained that the liberty of man should be constrained by any vows or obligations to constancy, after the caprice of his inclinations had annulled the covenant; he would in vain exclaim, that the whole course and tenor of his conduct was defensible by much argument, and was supported by innumerable precedents, and had never suffered any condemnation, but from the commandments of God and the holiness of religion, from the prejudices of priests and the scruples of women, and from the sorrows and the disease and the desolation of its victims.—While a single spark of natural sympathy remained; while any

sentiment of compassion still resisted the contagion of evil actions and of evil counsels, such an immediate perception of the wretchedness he had wrought would penetrate the soul of the guilty, and alarm his sense of justice, and instruct his understanding to deduce from the consciousness of sin the apprehensions of a judgment.—But be it so:—he is stricken with contrition;—his conscience is oppressed, and his heart agitated;—but his contrition is no more than an unprofitable sense of pain.—If in the touch of pity the last, faint, lingering illuminations of the Spirit still plead with him against his crimes, there is another monitor in his heart which tells him that atonement is impossible; that reform is only effective for the future; that no human exertions can make a reparation for the past; and that if sin has reduced him to repentance, despair should

urge him back again to sin.—This is the constant language of the transgressing heart, and it is universally supported by the counsels of his associates. For the despondency that follows upon crime they are ignorant of any other succour than the intoxication of debauchery and riot.—They have no remedy to propose for the remorse of conscience except the continuance of the sin that caused it. But are these the intimations of the Gospel?—Oh! no:—far otherwise. It declares that there is a peace for his despair, which is accessible by the oracles of his God;—that there is a refuge in the mount of crucifixion;—that there is a safety which emanates from the Cross.—Christianity calls upon the guilty for the tears of his repentance, and tells him that in these is hope;—it calls upon him for the reparation of his offences, and tells him that in

these is hope;—it reveals to him the abundant fountain of all hope in the mysteries of revelation, in the mercy of the Creator, in the atonement of his Redeemer, and in the mediation of the glorified Messiah.

The Christian inherits a consolation for every calamity.—Unless we ourselves are summoned prematurely to the grave, it has been determined, by an irresistible decree of Providence, that we must witness the dissolution of many to whom we have been attached by the ties of kindred blood, by the similarity of tastes and sentiments, by the recollections of their virtues and their kindness, by the long and uninterrupted habits of familiarity, or by their companionship with our most favourite pleasures and most interesting pursuits.—There are who can endure these separations, who mingle no

gentler feelings of benevolence with the intercourse of their companions, who, secure behind the impenetrable protection of their selfishness, can calmly speculate on the opportunities which their deaths shall open to the purposes of their avarice or their ambition, and can see them swept into the grave with as philosophic an apathy as one might gaze upon the departure of the day, or mark the scattering of the leaves of autumn. When, therefore, in the death of friends, these pay the penalty which is universally demanded for the happiness which their society has afforded, there is no necessity of any religious arguments to administer to them a consolation.—There are others—and of such perhaps is the large majority of mankind—whose natural sensibilities are suppressed beneath the weight of various occupations, and are

only awakened to a transient consciousness of being in some moment of more violent or extraordinary excitement; and these, to-day, follow weeping behind the corse of the departed, and then look down into the grave, and then dash away the tear, and then every melancholy reflection on their loss is dissipated by the more urgent and immediate interests of the morrow:—and neither do these feel the necessity of any support from the suggestions of religion.—But there is yet another class, whose souls are more exquisitely wrought, and vibrate to the touch of sorrow with a thrill of longer and of deeper feeling. There are real mourners, who cannot thus readily eradicate the traces of affection, who cannot erect the monumental marble to spread abroad the memory of virtues, which they themselves have committed to oblivion.—

There are to whom all the treasures of existence, which can be squandered on them by the lavish hand of fortune, operate as painful accessories to affliction, when bereaved of the companionship of those they love. There are to whom the customary sables, which the world may bear about in mockery "to midnight dances and the public show," do not darken with deceitful indications, but present the faint and inexpressive images of a sadness that casts its shadows upon the heart. And to these the shaft of death strikes doubly. It kills in its aim and its recoil. The wound by which one is slain rankles in the breast of another; and wherever he may flee to dispel the sense of desolation, an icy hand conducts him; he inhales every where the chilling vapours of the tomb; the knowledge of his existence is reported to him by a

steady and even flow of sorrow; there seems no brightness in the sun, which to him burns and does not comfort; his food does not nourish, his sleep does not refresh him; his mind reflects its darkness upon every object that addresses him; and if, in the accidental intercourse of society, he is withdrawn a moment from the more distinct remembrance of his grief, a vague and uncertain feeling of depression, reproaches the involuntary smile, and re-awakens him to the assurance of his wretchedness and his desertion.—But, when the mind thus feeds upon the poison that threatens its destruction, and the broken heart thus loves to entertain its sorrow, as a companion dearer to it than any other thing which survives upon the earth, there is, indeed, a demand and a necessity for the consolations of the faith.—To what

other succour can the miserable address himself?—What alleviation can the light of reason offer?—Man has no counsels to propose to his affliction which do not shock the sacredness of his recollections, by requiring an oblivion of the past, or which are not impossible to the instinctive constancy of every holier and purer spirit, by demanding the adoption of new objects of attachment. But, while these things jar upon the ear of the afflicted, and sound repulsive to the tenderness of his sorrow, the Gospel affectionately pleads with him in a voice that thrills in unison with all his sad and cherished and prevalent emotions. Christianity has none of that hard and dreary stoicism which St. Paul denounced as the "want of natural affection*." It touches gently on his sorrows; it speaks with compassion to the

* Romans, ch. i.

dejected, and looks down with reverence on his grief; it tells him, that he may retain the remembrance of his loss—that to cast it from the mind were to annul the merciful designs for which the Eternal had inflicted the calamity—that he may grieve, "but not as one without hope*." —And, while the religion of the Saviour thus mildly and emphatically addresses him, it administers a glorious hope, which supplies the void and solitude of his heart, which confirms his spirit with the grace of patience, and which renders his affliction another motive to religious vigilance and exertion, by proposing in the re-union beyond the grave a more affecting stimulant to virtue, and a more immediate interest in contemplating the beatitude of the elect†."

* 1 Corinthians, ch. xv.

† Perhaps the best illustration of the state of mind, which I have attempted to describe, is to be found in the example

But, while the Christian thus inherits, in the instructions of the Gospel, those motives to fortitude and resignation, which,

of Beattie.—The blow that leaves us desolate on earth may slowly destroy us, or, in minds that have perhaps an hereditary tendency to insanity, may put the diseased principle in action. These are infirmities of nature—which follow as necessarily as " the quivering of the flesh where the pincers tear." But Christianity mitigates the agony, while the wound is working its immediate event. The following extracts from the letters of Beattie speak of themselves all that I would say.—His only surviving child had just breathed his last. He writes to Sir William Forbes, " our plans relating to Montague are all at an end, I am sorry to give you the pain of being informed, that he died this morning at five—" here follows an account of his pious dissolution. Beattie concludes—" I would have written to Mr. Arbuthnot, but have many things to mind, and but indifferent health. However, I heartily acquiesce in the dispensations of Providence which are all good and wise."—In another letter he says,—" A deep gloom hangs upon me, and disables all my faculties; and thoughts so strange sometimes occur to me, as to make me 'fear that I am not,' as Lear says, 'in my perfect mind.'—But, I thank God, I am entirely resigned to the divine will."—Campbell has said, speaking of Lord Lyttleton's Monody, " that devotion teaches a man not to be sorry." This is an extraordinary assertion from one who has in another place so well expressed the spirit of Christian sorrow. Campbell's poetry is, in this instance, more

under all the numerous accidents of his perilous condition, may moderate the pressure of calamity, and convert them into the means of holiness and improvement, and of that joy which springs from the perception of improvement, it must always be remembered that his strength is not alone attributable to the mere na-

truly Christian than his prose. " The spirit of the white man's heaven forbids not him to weep." The critic states that religion robs the monody of its beauty, " because nature, sorrow, and tenderness, are the true genius of such things."—Nature, sorrow, and tenderness, are also the genius of Christian affliction: neither can I conceive them to be rendered less worthy objects of poetic imitation, because the nature of the mourner has been refined by the lessons of revelation; and his distress is as a visitation from on high; and his tenderness is enhanced by religious cultivation. The hope of a future re-union after death would constrain the wildness and the distraction of his sorrow; but grief is never so affecting as when its vehement demonstrations are suppressed. We then know that the afflicted person apprehends the fulness of his distress. The calm allows an opportunity for sympathy. Clamorous grief is as delirium or insanity; and we are too much alarmed for the physical consequences of so violent a passion, to feel any interest in the calamity that occasioned it.

tural effects of consolation, which such elevated and inspiring arguments might produce; but that there is accessible to him in the graces of the Holy Spirit of God the faculties of a super-human patience and the energies of a divine resistance.

When St. Paul speaks of man as being composed "of body, soul, and spirit*", he uses the language of Plato, of Zeno, and of Pythagoras. The threefold nature of our existence was probably delivered to the Gentiles with other scattered truths and lingering notices of traditionary revelation. But, thus separated and scattered, the fragments of eternal wisdom were valueless to the possessor. The knowledge, like music to the deaf, or the glow of morning to the blind, was excellent in itself, but void from the imper-

* Thessalonians, ch. v. ver. 1.—See Macknight's note on the verse.

fection of the being to whom it was delivered.—The soul, which is the seat of his passions and his appetites; the body, which is the abode and subject of the soul, may be considered as his human properties, and for those, by his human means, he has the ability of providing. But the spirit, which is to man his pre-eminence above the creatures, his principle of immortal life, his connecting link with the host of angels, is inaccessible to his reach, and impervious to his instruction. It is designed as the light, the vigour and the strength of his inferior qualities, but it is from above that its accessions of strength and of vigour and of light are to be received. Its ethereal essence is incapable of any alliance with those material creatures, with which we are conversant on earth. It is an inspiration from heaven, and by influences

from heaven only can it be visited or cherished. It is an impulse of divinity, and can entertain communion with no existences which are inferior to its God. As the human soul is blank without the aid of the senses to inform it, so is the immortal spirit without the assistance of revelation. As there are all the particles of light confined in the recesses of the darkest cavern, which without the action of the sun are destitute of all their efficacy and motion, so does the spirit lie inert and dull and faint in the absence of those invigorating principles of religious faith and hope, which the Gospel, and the Gospel only, can communicate. As long as the philosopher of this world was prosperous, this deficiency was little felt. Aristotle names piety among the attributes of good-fortune*.—Imagining that

* Ευτυχια φιλοθεος.

the treasures of the earth were evidences of divine favour, the spirit of the heathen, in the hours of security or peace, might delight itself in sentiments of gratitude, and expatiate in its proper elements of devotion and of praise. But, in the visitations of affliction, when the body was stricken with disease, or the soul was wrung with anguish; when the voice of counsel was wasted on the deafening agony of pain, and only irritated the aching sensibilities of sorrow; when the holier and the purer portion of his nature should have asserted its pre-eminence, and, firm in its impassive divinity, have controlled the tributary sensations of the body and the inferior affections of the soul; when it should have commanded the resignation of the carnal man, by emphatic remonstrances and pathetic intimations from on high:—then, in the

hour of severer trial, he was left alone, defenceless and forlorn; he was shorn of his strength; the God within him was sleeping and could not be awakened;—No:—say rather it was sunk into despair. Philosophy had informed it, with no arguments.—Instead of aiding the properties of his human nature in the endurance of calamity, his spirit was itself bowed down by the oppression of their burthen. The interruption of its happiness was as the abandonment of its God, and uttering unnatural blasphemies against that heaven to which it was allied, it aggravated the sense of earthly sorrow by the bitterness of religious despondency*.—To this more

* "Hippocrates said, that although *poor men used to murmur against God*, yet rich men would be offering sacrifices to the Deity, whose beneficiaries they are."—BISHOP TAYLOR'S *Sermon on the Mercy of God's Judgments.* "I hate the very Gods, who have hitherto been so very profuse in their favours to me," says Cicero, speaking of the death of his daughter in a letter to Atticus.

elevated endowment of our being Christianity appeals. It is by the spirit that all our eternal interests are apprehended and achieved—that we love the author of our being—that we "eschew evil and do good"—that we overmaster the seductions of the heart—that we avail ourselves of the privileges of our immortality. Christianity restores the spirit to its rank and efficacy, informs it with lofty and important instances, invigorates and renews and augments its energies, and re-establishes its legitimate dominion over the low and animal qualities of our nature. It is these alone that are penetrable by the disasters and the solicitudes of this life; and strong in faith, and aided by the powers of the Gospel, the spirit can cry peace to their inferior agitations,—as Jesus did to the winds and to the sea,—and they are pacified, as the ele-

ments were calmed. Christ is the only succour of the wretched—he is equally a Saviour in heaven and on earth. His religion is peculiarly the religion of the miserable.—" Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest*."—This is the promise of the Gospel, and never has it falsified its covenant. Its disciples, like St. Paul, may be " troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed†." In every calamity they find a consolation and a support; for still the Spirit of Christ " beareth witness with their spirits that they are the children of God‡," and subdues the throes of nature with communications of that heavenly " peace which passeth un-

* St. Matthew, ch. xi. v. 28.
† 2 Corinthians, ch. iv. ver. 8, 9.
‡ Romans, ch. viii. ver. 16.

derstanding*," and which is alone derivative from Him " which is and which was and which is to come†."

But I would again revert to the point from which we started. I would again recall the attention of the reader to that valuable admission of Rousseau, which declares, that " the expectation of another life constitutes in this the only consolation of the miserable." To minister to grief on any other principle has always defeated the ingenuity and exceeded the capacity of man. Destroy the hopes and the promises of religion, and the minds of the wretched are abandoned to roam abroad over the measureless wastes of their despair; to weep like Solon over his child, and to weep in vain, and to weep the more, because it is in vain they weep.—Infidelity offers them, indeed, that

* Philippians, ch. iv. v. 7. † Revelations, ch. i. v. 4.

solitary resource which in the ancient world was vaunted as the last relief for every disquietude, whether of mind or heart, of poverty or of disgrace. Like wayward children they may refuse the benefits that remain to them, in petulant resentment of the benefit that they have lost. They still are masters of their existence, and by suicide they may at any moment dismiss themselves of their afflictions*.—This is the dreary port, in which the godless are taught to look for their repose, when the storms of life beat hardest. But it is a harbour which none but minds of the firmest temperament can make. Such men as Cato or as Brutus, with that blind and "savage jealousy of disgrace that somewhat savours nobly," may, perhaps, inspire a Portia, by the examples of her

* Suicide is recommended by nearly all the modern infidel writers.

father and her husband, to attempt a violent deliverance from the accumulated calamities of life. But this guilty and miserable method of escape is superfluous to the many. It is repulsive to their instincts. The natural apprehensions of the heart withhold them from the refuge that is offered.—The poet* of atheism may mock their miseries, and insult them for enduring their misfortunes; and he may point out to them the graves that yawn for their reception; but they recoil with horror from the view, and, bowed down by the burthen of their sorrows, they will rather choose to toil beneath the unmitigated weight, than anticipate that tremendous annihilation which his philosophy proposes as their asylum.

* A violent death is the last refuge of the Epicureans as well as of the Stoics. "This," says Lucretius, "is the distinguishing character of a genuine son of our sect, that he will not endure to live in exile, in want, and disgrace."—BENTLEY'S *Confutation of Atheism.*

Chapter II.

Sect. III.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE ENJOYMENT OF WORLDLY PROSPERITY.

All the exertions of the unbeliever must necessarily be directed to the attainment of the treasures of the world. These are his only objects of interest, of affection, of pursuit. He has no motive to diligence but the desire of enriching himself with the rewards of pleasure or ambition. He has no source of gratification independent of sensuality or distinction. Pleasure and ambition are the passions which maintain an entire ascendency over the heart of unregenerated man, and which begin to exercise their tyranny as soon as he has

delivered himself from that condition of abject poverty and depression, which allows no scope for their operation, and engrosses every faculty of the understanding in providing by the daily labour for the daily bread.

The caprice or the ingenuity of the human mind may multiply the modes of pursuit and of indulgence; but every line of worldly conduct is actuated by one or the other of these inclinations, and proposes the gratification of its claims as the result. The infidel may seek to soothe his selfishness either by the medium of his senses or his vanity. He may either become the votary of pleasure, and, however he may refine away its grossness, rank himself as the companion of the vulgar sensualist, who drowns his intellects and depraves his sentiments in the loathsome abominations of the tavern and the

bagnio; or he may enlist himself under the banners of ambition, and make experiment of the envy, the solicitude, and the malignity that are stirring among that busy and incongruous multitude, in which the trophies of the warrior, and the laurels of the poet and the sage, are united in unseemly contact with the fopperies of the frivolous and the motley of the buffoon.—Whatever benefit these things may be capable of affording is fairly open to his endeavours, and perhaps may recompense his assiduity; but to this the man, who separates himself from the hopes and the motives of religion, is absolutely confined by the poverty of the human heart, and the limited range of its affections. If he be dissatisfied with the measure of enjoyment, which these sources may supply, he murmurs against the destiny of his creation, and requires, for

the completion of his happiness, some wider range of faculties, and some more ample modification of existence.

With nothing but the favours of pleasure and ambition to excite or to reward his perseverance, the unbeliever must be content to suffer the anxieties of privation, the labours of acquisition, and the frequent disappointment occasioned by the lubricity with which they elude the hand that is just closed to grasp them. In the absence of these possessions life must necessarily be restless and disturbed. Whether the objects of his pursuit are possessed of a real and a substantial worth, or whether they are recommended by a fictitious and delusive splendour;—whether the advantages which they promise to bestow are inherent in the things themselves, or the mere idle flourishes of the imagination, is perfectly imma-

terial to the happiness of the man who has not yet been admitted to the privilege of making a personal experiment of their worth or their defects. If it be once imagined that they constitute the sovereign blessings of existence, his mind will inevitably be vext and agitated in their absence by a painful consciousness of privation. Whether they may or may not avail to enhance the felicity of the affluent; the want of them will exist as a subject of permanent affliction to the indigent. The unbeliever, who is deprived of wealth and of distinction, is separated from that which he esteems as indispensable to the enjoyment of his residence on earth; and, anxious as this condition of murmuring and discontent—of restlessness and jealousy—of solicitude and competition, may appear, this condition is the most favourable that he,

who is without God in the world, can possibly expect. The pursuit is more tolerable than the possession. "Man never is, but always to be blest," says Pope; and that age of more than youthful credulity, in which he yet believed that the recompenses of pleasure or ambition might overpay the toil by which they are secured;—that luxury might soothe the sense, and pre-eminence exalt the spirit;—that the world might possibly contain some treasures which were worthy of being coveted and sought and won, is the period on which he will look back with envy, when his efforts shall have wrought their consummation, and his hopes encountered their severest disappointment in the apparent fruition of their desires. In either event the exertions of the godless tend to an unprofitable conclusion. If he fail, the attempt without the deed corrodes the

heart with the sense of wasted faculties, and overcasts the character with that pale and invidious moroseness, which so frequently assoils the dignity of age, and renders it as obnoxious to others as burthensome to itself. If he be successful, he only finds a change of ill and a new manner of disquietude;—he has yet to encounter the inconveniences that accompany possession;—he has to leran the depreciations of riches, the dissatisfaction of enjoyment, and the anxieties of pre-eminence. These are proved to be infinitely greater than are ever calculated upon during the ardour of pursuit and the excitement of desire. Those who have profited most largely of the delights and of the glories of the world have informed us, by the confessions which their disappointments have extorted, that such things are wholly

irrelevant to the purposes for which they are so diligently sought; and that—like some distant city, which to the traveller appears a glittering assemblage of temples and of palaces, and only discloses to the inhabitant the obscurity of its tall and narrow streets, and the wretchedness of its airless alleys,—they assume a visionary beauty, which tortures the imagination of the indigent, but fades away at the approach of the more successful adventurer who has advanced near enough to achieve them.

Without recurring to the instances of those who may be regarded as the victims of immoderate indulgence—without considering those martyrs to sensuality who have purchased, by a youth of dissolute excess, a premature, diseased and irreverent old age,—I should say, that it were impossible for any individual,

possessed of the least quickness of perception, to be admitted to the glittering resorts of dissipation, without discovering that those persons are guilty of a most miserable miscalculation, who there sow upon the golden and the barren sands of pleasure, and expect to reap in happiness the increase of their harvest. The casual visitor will find among the frequenters of such scenes, that the smile is habitual and constrained, and acknowledges no sympathy with any native gaiety of heart.—He will perceive that the glittering repartee of their conversation, which appears so captivating to the uninitiated ear, is a mere affair of convention and routine, to which their companions afford the subject, and spleen supplies the wit, and fashion gives the phrase and the expression; in which an idle and prying curiosity sustains the part of quickness of observation; in

which ill-nature passes for the nerve, and insinuation for the delicacy, of satire; and which, however it may relieve the vacuity of indolence by the excitement of malignant emotions, acknowledges no relationship with the liberal and honest flow of genuine hilarity.—He will discover, that the spirits, overtasked by the exorbitant demand of a forced and continued exercise, repair their exhaustion in the intervals of solitude by a proportionate languor and depression; and that they require the stimulus of wine or opium to brace their enfeebled energies to the endurance of those amusements which habit has rendered necessary and satiety oppressive.—He will perceive, that all those diseases of the imagination, which circulate from the heart and from the brain, by channels too imperceptible for the reach of human remedies, are engendered amid the abundance which sup-

plies the caprices of desire with too immediate a facility of indulgence. He will learn, that even the continuance of ease is irksome to the innate activity of the human faculties; that it is expressed in indolent lamentations over the burthen and calamities of life; that it strives to satisfy those mighty energies, which are weary of sloth and incapacitated from any honourable endeavour by the painful suspenses of the gaming-table, or the wicked agitations of adulterous love; and that, after exhausting every variety of innocent gratification and polite iniquity, it has not unfrequently compelled its victims to seek protection in a voluntary grave against the languors of their delicacy and their refinement*.

* "Cogita quamdiu eadem feceris; mori velle non tantum fortis, aut miser, sed etiam *fastidiosus* potest,"—says Seneca; and the truth of his remark may be read in the *Life of Alfieri*, and in a book almost as true to nature, Miss EDGEWORTH'S *Ennui*.

That happiness which prosperity refuses to the votary of pleasure is not conferred on the votary of ambition. After toiling through honour and dishonour, and good report and evil report, with a perseverance that declares the greatness of his nature in the perversion of its faculties;—after the anxious day and the sleepless night have raised him to that desired eminence, "whose top to climb is certain falling, or so slippery, the fears as bad as falling," the ambitious painfully discovers that he has been studious of his bane, and "made himself thrice a servant, a servant to the state, a servant to form, and a servant to business: so that he has no freedom, either in his person, or in his actions, or in his time*." Such was the result of Lord Bacon's experience; and thousands have born witness to the

* LORD BACON'S *Essay on Great Place*.

correctness of his report.—The ambitious finds in his success that his cares have become complicated, almost beyond the possibility of any human superintendence. —The number of his enemies are increased by their jealousy of his superiority. —No gratitude can secure his friends.— Benefits only tend to excite in them impracticable desires, which refusal converts into malignity.—His exaltation only exposes him as the aim of envy, and the fair mark for censure, and the public theme of calumny. It also deprives him of the richer portion of his anticipated reward; and placing him in more immediate contact with the evil passions of mankind, teaches him, by the detection of their selfishness and venality, to despise the recompense of popular admiration, for which his labours were undertaken and endured.

"Great men had need to borrow other men's opinions to think themselves happy, for if they judge by their own feelings they shall not find it*."—This remark extends to every species of success, whether in arts or in arms, in politics or in literature. Alexander pining for new worlds to conquer, Buonaparte "s'ennuyant de cette vieille Europe†," intimate with sufficient certainty, that the complacency which results from victory is inadequate to allay in the breast of the warrior the diseased avidity of conquest.—If any species of success were exempt from the inconveniences and dissatisfactions of ambition, one might expect to find the man of letters in possession of that enviable distinction. He pursues his object in the

* LORD BACON'S *Essay on Great Place*.

† His reason for attacking Russia.—MADAME DE STAEL *on the French Revolution*, vol. ii. p. 353.

seclusion of his chamber, without any of that hostile collision, by which, in other situations, the individual endeavours to exalt himself by the depression of his compeers. His task is undertaken for the amusement or the instruction of mankind; and, if worthily completed, it would appear that the successful author had none of the alloys of reputation to encounter, but might leisurely commit himself to the enjoyment of an unadulterated fame, and receive the honourable recompense of his industry from the gratitude of a people whom his efforts had delighted or informed.—But these speculations are contradicted by the public acknowledgments of those who are best calculated to decide on their justice or their falsehood.—Not to mention that Ennui, which has been denounced as "the inexorable

tyrant of every soul that thinks, and against which wisdom is less efficient than folly*:"—not to mention the weariness with which the mind toils heavily along upon the conclusion of a work, which was ardently begun and despondingly continued:—not to mention the accidents that accompany publication, the vexation of ignorant praise and of frivolous censure, the silence or the misapprehension of criticism, the witticisms of those whose talents are sufficient to detect the superficial errors of a work, but incapable of appreciating the difficulties, or the skill, or the graces of its execution;—not to mention these inferior troubles, which disturb the tranquillity that is promised by a life of literature, we find that the very distinction and the

* L'Ennui ce triste tyran de toutes les âmes qui pensent, contre lequel la sagesse peut moins que la folie.—BUFFON *sur l'Homme.*

praise, for which all this anxiety is encountered, are despised and overlooked as valueless the moment they are obtained and weighed and measured and appreciated. The complaints of Johnson and Rousseau we will reject as of no authority. They, perhaps, inherited a complexional discontent which made them morbidly sensible to the gall and bitterness of every condition. But Shakspeare,—who was blest with every faculty of the understanding most equally proportioned, and most aptly blended; who employed them to bright issues; and who, when the seed was sown and the harvest ripe, perceived the vanity of the produce, and scorned the toil of reaping, and left his works to the gathering of strange hands, and derived no other fruit from his celebrity than the melancholy reflection of having "made

himself a motley to the view*:" but Pope,—of whose mind good sense was the most striking characteristic, whose few opponents were silenced by the admiration of the wisest and the best, whose fame was constantly returning to him in dedication and flattery and the applause of theatres rising at his entrance, and who, at the conclusion of his career, forgot these coveted distinctions, and declared, that "the life† of a wit is a warfare upon earth; and that the spirit of the learned world is such, that to attempt to serve it in any way, one must have the constancy of a martyr, and a resolution to suffer for its sake:"—surely these

* Sonnet 110.—

"Alas! 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
"And made myself a motley to the view"—

All the sonnets express a carelessness of fame whenever the topic falls in his way, and his neglect of his works proves that he was no hypocrite in these sentiments.

† Preface to his collected Works.

examples speak with most forcible conviction, that the applauses of mankind, which so many hours are laboriously wasted to obtain, are less than superfluous to our happiness; and that Buffon did not speak the sentiments of a solitary individual, but of the whole body of illustrious and celebrated persons, when he pronounced,—in a sentence to which Lord Byron* has assented, and which Sir Walter Scott† has paraphrased:

* Knowledge is not happiness, and science,
But an exchange of ignorance for that
Which is another kind of ignorance.—MANFRED.

† The parallel passage is in *Rokeby*—It is one of Sir Walter Scott's most beautiful common-places:—

"Ere the youth strip him for the race,
Shew the conditions of the chase,
Two sisters by the goal are set,
Cold Disappointment and Regret;
One disenchants the winner's eyes,
And strips of all its worth the prize.
While one augments its gaudy show,
More to enhance the loser's woe.
The victor sees his fairy gold
Transformed, when won, to drossy mould;
But still the vanquished mourns his loss,
And rues as gold, that glittering dross."

"Que la gloire, ce puissant mobile de toutes les grandes âmes, et qu'on voyait de loin comme un but éclatant, qu'on s'efforçait d'atteindre par des actions brillantes et des travaux utiles, n'est plus qu'un objet sans attraits pour ceux qui en ont approché, et un fantôme vain et trompeur pour les autres qui sont restés dans l'éloignement."

There is no exemption from the universal scheme of disappointment. No accumulation can satiate the desires of the heart; and yet the least excess beyond the limits that nature has appointed overcharges the weakness of those organs by which the desires of the heart are to be fulfilled. The insatiable passion always exceeds in its demands the restricted powers of those corporeal faculties which are appointed to minister to its claims.—Even from those whose con-

ditions have been most lavishly endowed by the partial prodigality of fortune; who have been permitted to select, to vary and to combine, all that is most exquisite and prized among the blandishments of pleasure and the glories of ambition; who have stood upon the earth as the favourites of destiny with all the treasures of the earth, wealth, power, fame, beauty, honour, cast down before their feet and subservient to their disposal:—still, even from these, it is declared, that all united are imperfect and defective, void and inefficient; and our compassion is entreated for the splendid sufferers in the same language of querulous and monotonous disappointment.—"Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity."—Man hastens to the resorts of sensuality to relieve the cravings of his inferior nature; and his appetites are nourished by his indulgence, and

enhanced by his concessions. He aspires to pre-eminence; he attempts the tumults of ambition; and he surrounds himself with a pageantry of cares that multiply the anxieties of his day, and put to flight the timid slumbers of his pillow.—"Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity."—He proves that the allurements of the earth are valueless, yet he still submits to their attraction, till his passion, increasing in its importunity, becomes the tyrant of his reason and his will;—till it assumes a savage despotism, and enforces compliance with its exactions, and demands as its enormous tribute the security and the health and the welfare of existence.—"Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity."—Still the sated and melancholy voluptuary is dragged unwillingly along, by the compulsion of his lust, or of his gluttony, to the participation of vices that revolt him;

—still, though disabused of all the flattering expectations of his heart, the ambitious yearns after the clamour and the gaze of multitudes, while the acclamations of the people bewilder and astound the ear to which they are addressed, and while he himself is grieving beneath the burthen of the insignia that provokes their ignorant and tumultuous admiration. —"Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." —Such was the important moral, which, amid all the splendid exaggerations of their fortunes, was uttered by Severus* and by Solomon† from the thrones of Rome and of Jerusalem. From their painful elevation, from the pomp of courts, from the obedience of nations, from the submission of tributary states, from the incense of flattery, from the tranquillity of unrivalled power, from the contemplation

* Omnia fui et nihil expedit. † Ecclesiastes, ch. xii. v. 8.

of accumulating opulence, they derived this simple and invariable conclusion, that "all is vanity,"—that the cup of pleasure only sparkles at the brim,—and that the sun, which seems to shine so brightly on the snows of the mountain-top, warms only in the valley beneath.

It is irrelevant to my present purpose minutely to investigate the causes of that lassitude and discontent, which, in the worldly mind, appear to be invariably connected with the acquisition of the treasures of the world. It is acknowledged on every side, that they frustrate the purposes for which they are desired.—Perhaps the disappointment may be occasioned by the anxieties that accompany prosperity, and which are inseparable from possession, though they are very rarely calculated upon in the ardour of pursuit:—or, perhaps, it may be attri-

buted to the original propensity which nature has implanted in the heart, as a perpetual impulse to exertion, which, according to Montaigne*, "abstracts our attention from the enjoyment of the present to amuse us with the promises of the future," and which disturbs the imagination with its superfluous activity as soon as we have reaped the harvests of the earth, and are conscious of no ulterior prospects to occupy the restlessness of the anticipating faculty of our minds:—or, perhaps, a more worthy and elevated cause may be discovered in the vastness of the human soul which, created for eternity, and instinct with immortal energies, is impatient of those attain-

* "Nous ne sommes jamais chez nous; nous sommes toujours audelà. La crainte, le désir, l'espérance nous élance vers l'avenir, et nous dérobent le sentiment et la considération de ce qui est, pour nous amuser à ce qui sera."—MONTAIGNE, liv. i. chap. 3.

ments that are less imperishable than itself, and, designed to contemplate and adore the infinite perfections of its Author, in vain endeavours, in the absence of religious hope, to supply the aching void of sentiment by any combination of those objects which in themselves are limited and defective.

But whether the dissatisfaction that the soul experiences, amid the most affluent accumulation of temporalities, be derived particularly from any one of the causes I have recounted, or from an union of the whole, it is evident that the Christian is exempted from their operation, by the motives of his conduct, the object of his desires, and the aim of his exertions.—If others, at the brightest and most luxuriant crisis of their fortunes, lament over the unexpected solicitudes of a state which they had anticipated as the conclusion of their anxiety and their toil, the disciple

of the Redeemer has no such miscalculations to detect. All the difficulties of his task are honestly exposed to his inspection. They are connected with his first, rude and inexperienced efforts; and they disappear as he gradually acquires the dominion of his passions, and obtains the habit and facility of virtue.—If others open to themselves a new source of infelicity in the very fruition of their earthly prospects, and, after attaining the accomplishment of their desires, become distrest from vacuity of occupation; the object of the Christian's emulation, alluring from beyond the grave, interests the prospective activity of the mind, by a pursuit as enduring as his existence, and which constantly encourages his perseverance by livelier presentiments of joy.—If others are opprest and agitated by the restless consciousness of faculties inadequately employed, and of energies unworthily

consumed, the faithful disciple of Christ is delivered from those occasions of disquietude; for his affections, his hopes and his exertions, are strenuously directed to the achievement of an end, as infinite as his capacities, as eternal as his nature, as blest as the destiny of angels, and as glorious as the throne of God.

But, with these advantages immediately resulting from the nature of his pursuit, and which he possesses as an additional and exclusive interest in his existence, the Christian derives a real increase of happiness from those accessions of temporal prosperity, which to others only communicate a toil of insipid entertainment, and a burthen of unprofitable splendour.—Those acquisitions of fame or wealth, of place or honour, which to the children of the world are only golden in expectation, and prove worse than tinsel on possession, to the Christian

really do contribute something of substantial gratification and valuable enjoyment.

"All things work together for the good of those*" whose lives are religiously devoted to the service of the Almighty; and, among the innumerable privileges which the Deity has appointed as the indefeasible inheritance of those that love him, he has ordained, that the righteous should achieve by virtue the ends which are ineffectually pursued by vice; that, while they renounce themselves, and only seek to glorify their God, by promoting the benefit of others, they should fall undesignedly upon that happiness which escapes the solicitous exertions of the selfish; that they should exhaust the sweets which are attached to the delights and the glories of the world, and abandon all the dregs and the bitterness of the cup

* Romans, ch. viii. v. 28.

to be drained by the sensualist, the ambitious and the voluptuary:—whatever is really valuable in the acquisitions of pleasure or of success, may be enumerated among the uncovenanted and supervenient recompenses of that godliness, which, says the Apostle of the Gentiles, is "profitable unto all things*."

Though the objects which excite and frustrate the affections of the ungodly heart are of themselves insufficient to our happiness, they are very far from meriting the reproach of utter worthlessness with which their votaries would condemn them in the bitterness of their disappointment or their satiety. According to the corrupt and perverted purposes for which they are generally sought, they are unable to fulfil the expectations that are awakened by them. They are not happiness, but may be rendered the means of

* 1 Tim. ch. iv. v. 8.

happiness.—When the Christian, wholly occupied in his immediate duties, with a generous indifference and an honest carelessness of the event to which they may conduct him, passes onward in the direct and the undeviating path of right, without any other motive to his exertions than a devout solicitude to perform the commandments of his God; and to confirm the happiness of his immortality:—when the Christian, thus holily and importantly employed, permits himself in the hour of vacancy to participate in any of those pleasures and amusements which the benevolence of the Creator has so liberally strewn about the path of our pilgrimage, he comes with a suddenness and a freshness to the enjoyment, by which the zest of all its valuable qualities is heightened and enhanced. The innocence of the unburthened heart leaves his bosom free for the play and swell of the emotions of

happiness. His mind, unoppressed by any painful recollections, surrenders itself with a boyish confidence to the caprices of the imagination. He has not prepared for himself a disappointment by any of those over-coloured and exaggerated anticipations which torment the impatience of the inactive, and defeat fruition, and render the reality insipid. The restraints of diligence confer a sweetness on the liberty of relaxation. The temperance, which, with an amiable severity, interposes against every indulgence, that is not virtuously required to restore the spring and vigour of the faculties, recalls him to the important duties of his station, before he has approached the limits at which excess is punished in satiety; and leaves him, with all the healthy and simple tastes of nature unimpaired, again to recreate himself, with the same innocence, with the same viva-

city, and with the same susceptibility of delight, whenever the cessation of labour may allow no dishonourable opportunity of amusement.—With regard, therefore, to the ordinary pleasures and relaxations of society, the Christian, by the felicitous interchange of toil and rest, each relieving and heightening the other, inherits a more ample measure of gratification: from his abridged and temperate permission, than the voluptuary receives from an indulgence that is delivered of every restraint of religion and of morality and of prudence.—The Christian expatiates in a fair enclosure of which the boundaries are artificially concealed, and, forbearing to approach the interdicted limits, he looks around with gratitude and content upon his sphere of pleasure, and is delighted with its imaginary extent; while the voluptuary, disclaiming every religious restriction,

is impelled by the impetuosity of his desires to the utmost verge of its confines, and, discovering the narrowness of his range, and the paucity of his resources, impatiently beats his breast against the extreme barrier, oppressed by the satiety of the body, and agitated by the insatiability of the passions.

But, if the devout disciple of the Redeemer, who, in the purity of his faith, mingles no austerities of superstition with the beauty of his godliness, and "so uses the world as not abusing it," possesses the superiority over the sensualist in the enjoyment of those gratifications, which may be enumerated among the pleasures of sense; there is another and a more elevated class of pleasures which may almost be named as his peculiar and exclusive property—I mean, the pleasures which are excited by works of art and imagination.—Others may very fairly

estimate the dexterity of their execution. They may decide on the proportions of the statuary;—on the expression of the poet;—on the forms and tints, the arrangement and the shadows of the painter. They may measure the qualities of the artist by an accurate comparison of his productions, with those of the most celebrated masters of antiquity. They may calculate his excellencies and his defects, and appoint his rank upon the schedule of renown. They may survey with a cultivated eye, and approve with an elaborate precision. But this frigid and artificial skill of discerning between the valuable and the void, is wholly independent of any perception of the delight which the artist was desirous of inspiring. It is a mere cold operation of the intellect unbiassed by any emotions of the heart, distinct from any sentiment of beauty, and destitute of any, even the slightest,

sympathy with the genius or inspiration of the creative mind. The pleasure which is received by this kind of critical approval, from the finest combination of forms, or the most melting harmony, or the most splendid bursts of poetic enthusiasm, consists in the gratification of personal vanity, in the sense of superior knowledge, in the display of technical discrimination, and in the exercise of a delegated authority to arbitrate for the opinions of the multitude.—This estimation of the works of art, which is rather the intercourse of acquaintance than of affection, is consistent with the narrowness or the depravity of the mind, and the grossest corruption of the heart.—But there is a higher method of appreciation—the appreciation of taste and feeling.—There are to whom these things appeal with a resistless emphasis; over whom they exercise a magic potency;

with whom they seem to hold a silent and an eloquent and a deep communion; whom they touch with all the varying emotions, that obey the call and are subservient to the dominion of the poet or the painter, whom they move to tears of involuntary pity, or chill with terror, or excite by the virtuous glow of indignation. The mere cold and vulgar knowledge of art is as distinct from this genuine sensibility of its powers, as the perception of the minute philosopher, who looks upon the tints of the iris, and resolves its glories into the refraction of the sun-beams on the drops of the falling shower, differs from the holier and loftier sentiment of the man, who, dismissing from his mind the concurrence of secondary causes, as he casts his eyes upon the bow in the heavens, is warned of its religious intimations, and awakened to the contemplation of the mercies of his God.—

This deeper and more intimate apprehension of the works of genius is the result of character and disposition. The delight is correspondent to the sensibility of the heart, the vividness of its emotions, and its benevolent willingness to admire. The grateful excitement, which the efforts of the artist, the musician, or the poet are calculated to produce, is in proportion to the healthy tenderness of our moral sense, and the spirituality of our affections.—As "faith purifies the heart," as it subdues the predominance of the senses, as it abridges the ascendency of selfishness, as it cherishes the kind and gentle affections of our nature, it prepares and elevates the soul for the enjoyment of the pleasures of the imagination. "Since I have known God in a saving manner," says Martyn, the saint and the apostle of our times, "painting, poetry,

and music have had charms unknown to me before. I have received what I suppose to be a taste for them; for religion has refined my mind, and made me more susceptible of impressions from the sublime and beautiful*."—Let not the voluptuary despise this abundant source of gratification. His contempt for the pleasures of the imagination is as if the blind should ridicule the blessings and the glories of the light. He has deprived himself of the means of appreciating their value. Their charms are apprehended by an internal sense, of which he has deadened the perceptions; and, amid the delirium of that riot, in which his health of body and energies of mind, his prosperity on earth and his hopes of heaven are dissipated, he has become incapable of estimating those innocent, unobtrusive and intellectual enjoyments which are so dearly prized by the disciple

* *Memoir of the Rev. Henry Martyn.*

of the Redeemer, and which augment the happiness of his life, while they advance the interests of his immortality.

Thus eminently favoured with respect to the pleasures of existence, it must also be remembered that the Christian may possibly become possessed of opulence and distinction.—Though he scorns the petty arts by which patronage is conciliated to the undeserving, the policy of cunning, of flattery and intrigue; though he is above availing himself of that subserviency to the great which seeks the shortest and the easiest road to riches and advancement, still his disadvantages, in the competitions of the world, are not so insurmountable as the children of the world may be tempted to conceive.—Success may be the honest recompense of his exertions, and, if he does succeed, prosperity is recommended to him by circum-

stances, which do not promise any increase of happiness to others. As it formed no part of his anticipated reward, or, at all events, was but loosely calculated upon among the possible contingencies of his human pilgrimage, he enjoys whatever benefit it may afford with that predisposition to be pleased, which is excited by the presence of any sudden and unexpected acquisition. As his conscience acquits him of every base compliance or dishonourable stratagem, the possession of wealth or fame, of honour or of power, while it is gratefully acknowledged among the liberalities of Providence, may, without presumption, be considered as an encouragement to religious hope, as an earnest of his eternal recompense, and as an indication of the Almighty's favourable reception of his obedience.—The reputation in which there is no falsehood or hy-

pocrisy to be detected, which is honestly obtained by strenuous and continued efforts, which is guiltless of those collusions that occasionally raise the undeserving to the distinction of a transient and anxious notoriety, communicates to the Christian's soul a delightful encouragement to exertion, and that innocent complacency of mind, which the Almighty has mercifully attached to the contemplation of our prosperous endeavours. Acting on the principle of duty, for the instruction or the improvement of his fellow-creatures, the fame which remunerates his diligence informs him by the voice of public gratitude that his diligence has not been superfluously employed. The honours to which he may arrive can add but little to the dignity of his virtue,—for his actions constitute his best nobility,—but that he has attained them, revives their lustre, restores them to popular re-

spect, enhances in the imagination of every young aspirant the value of their acquisition, and delivers an example to mankind that invigorates the influence of morals, by conspicuously illustrating the distinction and the reverence to which they lead. All those importunate cares and complicated transactions, which are classed by others among the evils of pre-eminence, are considered by the man whose breast is animated by the affections of the Gospel among its most valuable privileges and endowments. They constitute the very rewards for which he is contented to endure the anxieties, the decorations, and the publicity of his elevation. With the love of God and man predominating within him, his station, and the important duties of his station, present the master passion of his heart with more advantageous opportunities of gratification, with a more extensive range of use-

fulness, and with more ample facilities of benevolence.—And at the close of all: when old age comes over him; when he is no longer capable of mingling in the active negotiations of the busy, and his infirmities shall counsel his retirement, that slow and lingering residue of life, which to the unbeliever is a useless and unprofitable void, a burthen that hangs heavily about him, and for which he wants an object and an occupation, still retains for the faithful disciple of the Saviour all that is essential and important in the interests of human existence. The care of his salvation still continues. It is no longer "to be worked out with fear and trembling," amid the haunts of the ambitious and the seductions of power, but in a more appropriate field of action, and in duties more correspondent to the weakness and the reverence of age. He has secured to himself an hour of

meditation, ere he fall into the silence of the grave. He has withdrawn from the interests of time, that he may be wholly occupied with the interests of eternity. He has surrendered the toil of life into younger and abler hands; and in self-examination, in acts of piety and charity and devotion, in eradicating the last lingering affections of the earthly man, he dedicates the serene conclusion of his days to the service of his God; and departs from the concerns of this life, like the sun in its decline, which,—after spreading an invigorating warmth about the earth, and prospering the industry of man, and looking down upon the tumult of occupation,—sinks at eve, in silent majesty behind the mountains, and casts upwards to the heavens the golden radiance of its departing light.

PART II.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED BY THE UNAIDED POWERS OF THE REASON.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS NOT DISCOVERABLE BY REASON.

"It were less difficult," says Plutarch, "to build a city in the air, than to constitute a state without a belief in the existence of the Gods*."—And to this maxim of the speculative philosopher, may be added the confirmation of Necker's experience, who declares that "no man can have taken any active part in public affairs, or have observed mankind in their constant state of rivalry and opposition, without perceiving that the wisest governments require the co-operation of some invisible influence, that may maintain a secret ascendency over the conscience†." This

* Plutarch contra Coloten.

† Necker *Importance des Opinions Religieuses.*—"On ne peut avoir pris un part active à la conduite des affaires publiues; on ne peut en avoir fait l'objet suivi de son atten-

supernatural support, which is so indispensable to the preservation of our happiness on earth, can only be derived from the popular belief in the existence of a superintending God and a state of future retribution. These are the great fundamental truths of which we are assured by revelation, to which every other doctrine or mystery of religion is subservient, and which, by whatever name the Deity may be invoked, or amid whatever circumstances the imagination may have feigned the distribution of his judgments, still remain, under every form of national faith, as the conservative principles of national tranquillity.—The fear of God and of a future judgment constitute those first, essential

tion; on ne peut avoir comparé les divers rapports de ce grand ensemble avec la disposition naturelle des esprits et des caractères; on ne peut enfin avoir observé les hommes dans leurs constantes rivalités, sans avoir apperçu combien les gouvernemens les plus sages ont besoin d'être secondés par l'influence du ressort invisible qui agit en secret sur les consciences."—Introduction, p. 3.

doctrines of religion, which Plato has declared it impossible to overthrow without violating the foundations of society*.

For these opinions to operate any extensive consequences on popular conduct, they must be entertained with a perfect assurance of their truth. It is not sufficient that they should be doubtfully regarded as uncertain, and speculative probabilities.—A strict compliance with the moral precepts of the Messiah has sometimes been demanded by the ministers of Revelation on motives of prudence and precaution, because the requisitions of the Gospel are easy to be accomplished, and its retributions may possibly be true. In a religious light these inducements are deceitful.—Such arguments to obedience are in opposition to the very terms of the Christian covenant; they hold a word of promise to the ear, which, if the revela-

* PLATO *de Legibus.*, 10.

tion be divine, will certainly be broken to the hopes; they dispense with the necessity and the efficacy of faith, by which alone the blessings of redemption can be apprehended; they omit the need of spiritual assistance to our infirmities; and they presume that a state of unsinning and meritorious obedience may be attained by fallen and unregenerated man, acting on his own ability, without any lofty principle or holy motive, from a cold and heartless calculation of chances, and a mercenary comparison of his present sacrifices with the value of his future contingencies.—There is surely no necessity for my repeating that these are neither the dispositions or the means by which the glories of the Christian's heaven are to be secured. But, admitting for a moment that those everlasting recompenses, which the Almighty has appointed as the reward of charity and faith, might be

accomplished, without the sanctification of any holier impulses, by a mere external compliance with the letter of the law, is it probable that any one, who entertained a suspicion of their truth, would be persuaded to make experiment of this formal method of obtaining them?—Can it be supposed that any unbeliever would be induced "to eschew the evil," to which his inclinations forcibly solicited him, and "to do the good," which his indolence or his interest opposed, by the supposition that his actions might *perhaps* be visible to the eye of his Creator, to whose judgments he *perhaps* might be accountable, in some state of undefinable retribution, which *perhaps* might be prepared beyond the grave?—Is it to be believed that any individual, actuated by the feelings and the sentiments of ordinary men, would be deterred from the commission of a sin, to which his unregenerated nature vio-

lently impelled him, by the recollection of such vague and inconclusive considerations?—No man would postpone the certain, tangible and immediate advantages of this world to the treasures of the next, if the joys of heaven were as problematical as they are remote, and as uncertain as they are viewless.—Such conduct would be to the highest degree irrational.—Unless the existence of a future state is an object of implicit and confident persuasion, it neither will or ought to be admitted as an inducement to the resignation of the interests and gratifications of the present. There are no maxims of human wisdom which would instruct us to abandon fruition for a doubtful hope; and reality for speculation. On the contrary, they would all direct us to avail ourselves of the present pleasure or emolument. They would exhort us to enjoy the rapid moments as they past; to secure, in a life so fragile, so evanescent and so dear, every indulgence that opportunity might offer, and to allow no dark conjectures of a possible hereafter to impede the liberal current of our inclinations.—The wisdom of the world would warn us to avoid every visionary apprehension, and exclaim to each of us, with the emphatic eloquence of the heathen moralist:

Sapias, vina liques et spatio brevi
Spem longam reseces: dum loquimur fugerit invida
Ætas, carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero *.

But, if it be requisite that the essential doctrines of religion should be received without suspicion, before they can be reasonably insisted upon as motives for the direction of the conduct, it is also necessary that they should be established by some sufficient arguments, which might powerfully impress the understanding, and

* HORACE, lib. i. Ode 11.

which might be continually recalled to recollection as encouragements to the faith of the virtuous, and as warnings to the negligence of the bad.—In times of rude and imperfect civilization such arguments would not be needed. Hume has correctly said, that there exists in man "an universal propensity to believe*," and with Gibbon it may be added, that

* "The universal propensity to believe in invisible intelligent power, if not an original instinct being at least a general attendant of human nature, may be considered as a kind of mark or stamp which the divine workman has set upon his work."—*Natural History of Religion*, sect. 15.—That such an instinct exists Montesquieu considers as sufficiently proved by the single sentence which forms his chapter on the subject: —"L'Homme pieux et l'Athée parlent toujours de religion, l'un parle de ce qu'il aime et l'autre de ce qu'il craint."—*L'Esprit des Loix*. This impulse is frequently so imperious as to resist the withering impulse even of atheism itself. When the infatuated disciple has been instructed in the schools of sophistry, to "say in his heart there is no God," he has by no means delivered himself from every spiritual apprehension. The innate and instinctive principle of religious faith will employ itself on other objects; and he may be superstitious though he has ceased to be devout. Ammianus reports of his contemporaries, "that they discovered the most puerile credulity, while they impiously denied the existence of a celestial power."

this movement of instinctive faith is "so urgent in the vulgar that the fall of any system of mythology will most probably be succeeded by the introduction of some other mode of superstition*."—Speak to unenlightened man of a creating God, of a superintending and directing Providence, of an after-life of punishment or reward, and such sublime communications are heard with reverence, and admitted without suspicion. They are authenticated by his sense of weakness, by their harmony with his purest affections and his loftiest impulses, by his anxiety to penetrate the obscurities of the future. —"Often†," said a Thane in the idolatrous court of Edwin, while they discussed the policy of admitting the Chris-

* GIBBON'S *Decline and Fall*, ch. xvi. He mentions the decay of Paganism as a cause of the rapid extension of the Gospel.

† LINGARD'S *History of England*, vol. i. p. 92.

tian missionaries, "Often, O King, in the depth of winter, while you are feasting with your Thanes, and the fire is blazing on the hearth in the midst of the hall, you have seen a bird pelted by the storm enter at one door and escape at the other. During its passage it was visible; but whence it came, or whither it went, you knew not. Such to me appears the life of man. He walks the earth for a few years: but what precedes his birth, or what is to follow after his death, we cannot tell. Undoubtedly, if the new religion can unfold these important secrets, it must be worthy our attention."—The Gospel did elucidate these mysterious questions; it tranquillized this anxiety of doubt; it declared the origin, the conditions and the destiny of human existence; and the half-enlightened people discovered the evidences

of its truth in the instinctive claims and aspirations of nature, and demanded no stronger reasons for the faith which was in them.

But, as we improve in science, these convictions of the heart appear too indefinite to satisfy the understanding. To a certain extent Rousseau was justified in affirming, that "L'Homme qui pense est un animal dépravé*." From the tree of knowledge he gathers the fruit of good and evil.—As he cultivates his intellectual faculties, he learns to mistrust his instincts. The original impressions of his mind appear to him as prepossessions to be eradicated, rather than as intimations to be religiously respected. The existence of a God, or of a future state, obtains no credit with refined and educated man, on account of the universality of its reception and his own tendency to

* *Discours sur l'Origine et Fondement de l'Inégalité parmi les Hommes.*

subscribe to the belief. He attributes the general consent to the force of popular prejudice rather than to the persuasions of the still small voice of the Deity within. He will submit to the suggestions neither of fear or hope, unless the event which they anticipate be confirmed by arguments that may warrant his expectations. He only consents to that which is demonstrated. He distrusts the inspirations of nature. He endeavours to investigate their secret and mysterious movements by the light of a philosophy, before which they shrink, and perish.—He imitates the crime, and he is visited with the punishment of Psyche.

As long as the being of a God and the retributions of eternity are connected with a divine revelation, as in the case of Christianity, the reason finds itself in possession of the means of satisfying its doubts. The evidences of their truth are

investigated and decided upon with the consideration of the arguments that prove the existence, the miracles and the inspiration of the teacher who delivered them. They become as it were points of history, and are established by the same testimonies as are required for the confirmation of any other historical relation. But, when this ground of confidence is withdrawn, the understanding is left to wander over the illimitable sea of speculation, and seek some other foundation on which they may be raised.—The reason must then put its faculties to the proof. It must try whether it "can by searching find out God." It must separate the two predominant, essential articles of religious faith into a variety of consecutive propositions, and endeavour, one by one, to discover for them a satisfactory demonstration.—Let us examine what success

the reason might anticipate for itself in this difficult and indispensable investigation.

OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE DEITY.

Is there a God?—It appears impossible to look upward on the glory of the heavens, and around us on the beauty and fertility of the earth, and entertain a doubt of the existence of a contriving and creating power. It appears consistent with our ordinary experience to suppose that such effects must have proceeded from a cause; and, as there is an admirable correspondence and design discoverable in the component parts, it again appears reasonable to suppose that they received their origin from the hand of an intelligent Creator. These conjectures are authorized by revelation; and to the mind, which Christianity has predisposed for their reception, they assume the cha-

racter of self-evident propositions. Informed of his existence and his attributes by the benevolence of the Divinity himself, we find the testimonies of his being in the wonders and the beauties of creation, and imagine, that the knowledge might be naturally deduced from the presence of those objects, by which the truth of the revealed fact is corroborated. But we no sooner cease to acknowledge the sacred authority of religion, than those arguments, which we had regarded as conclusive, appear to be suddenly divested of their force and their persuasion. The propositions on which we had relied as indisputable axioms are degraded into problematical conjectures.—Is there a God?—We can advance no reason for the support of this belief, which has not been continually adduced and controverted, and adduced and controverted again.—Is there a God?—In the

discussion of this question there are those who estimate the probabilities as favourable to such an hypothesis; there are those who consider them as inclining to the contrary supposition; and again, there are others who, like D'Alembert*, regard the arguments on either side as so equally and indiscriminately poised, that they are sensible of no preponderance, and are left bewildered in a state of philosophical uncertainty. — Is there a God?—If any natural aspirations of the soul, if any gratitude for the important privileges of life, if any consciousness of weakness, or desire of protection, or dread of annihilation shall prepossess the heart with a persuasion of his existence, we must learn to prevaricate with our sentiments, and studiously conceal our faith from the de-

* J'ai assez connu d'Alembert pour affirmer qu'il était sceptique en tout, les mathematiques exceptées. Il n'aurait pas plus prononcé qu'il n'y avait point de religion qu'il n'aurait prononcé qu'il y a un Dieu.—LA HARPE.

tection of the mighty masters of unbelief. Such an avowal would render us obnoxious to the persecution of enmity and ridicule and contempt. It would subject us to infinite oppression. We should be derided as beings who had fallen upon an unpropitious age; and who yet retained, in the society of the wise, the superstitions of the ignorant. We should incur the imputation of that second childishness, with which Diderot reproached the acknowledged theism of Voltaire*. We should be stunned with such clamorous upbraidings as were vociferated against La Harpe†, when La Lande and his disciples were heard glorying in their ungodliness, and asserting that atheism was the only true philosophy.—We should be

* "Le pauvre Voltaire radote un peu, il avouât l'autre jour qu'il croyait à l'être de Dieu."—DIDEROT *Corréspondance*.

† See the Note to La Harpe's Introduction of his Volumes,—*De la Philosophie du dix-huitième siècle*.

pursued with such shouts of insulting imprecation as those which reverberated through the hall of the Institute, when the eloquent St. Pierre* announced his principles of faith, and which followed the old man with tumultuous violence

* In the year 1798, at a meeting of the Institute, St. Pierre had been charged by the class of morals to make a report upon the Memoirs which had been written on the prize question, "What institutions are the most proper to form the basis of public morals?"—When at the conclusion of his report he announced his own religious principles, a cry of fury was heard from all parts of the hall: some jested, and asked when he had seen God, and what was his form; others derided his credulity; the most moderate addressed him with expressions of contempt. From ridicule they proceeded to outrage; they insulted his age; they charged him with dotage and superstition, and threatened to expel him from an assembly of which he had rendered himself unworthy. There were some who carried their madness so far as to challenge him to a duel, in order to prove, at the point of the sword, that there was NO GOD. He vainly attempted to make himself heard amid the tumult. They refused to listen to him; and Cabanis, in a transport of rage, cried out, "I swear there is no God, and I demand that his name be never again pronounced within these walls."—St. Pierre would hear no more; but saying calmly to this last opponent, "Your master, Mirabeau, would have blushed at the words you have uttered," retired without waiting a reply; and the assembly continued to debate not if there were a God, but if they would allow his name to be mentioned within their walls.

after he had escaped the fury of his opponents, and left the enraged Cabanis swearing that there was no God, and demanding that his name might never again be pronounced within the walls of the Assembly.—Where is the Deist, who in the face of such a perilous opposition will not tremble to venture on the profession of his belief?—Will he not learn to blush at his own ignorant credulity?—Will he not be ashamed of his adherence to so antiquated a sentiment, when he finds that his obnoxious faith is exploded as a prejudice by even the very lowest of the people; that atheism is the favourite despair of our alleys and our prison-houses; that even Ings and Thistlewood conspired without the apprehension of an avenging Deity; and that the rude assassin of the Duke de Berri, familiar with the easy arguments of ungodliness, scorned to dread the retributions of a Creator, of whose

existence he was not sufficiently assured*? —Who on so speculative a question will voluntarily involve himself in all the solicitudes of controversy, and assert the confidence of his religious dependance, while he is superciliously informed by the youngest of the unbelievers, that "the being of a God is a mere veil woven by philosophical conceit, to hide the ignorance of philosophers even from themselves," and "of which every reflecting mind must acknowledge a deficiency of proof†?"

* When the murderer of the Duke de Berri was reminded of an avenging God, he replied, "Dieu n'est qu'un mot; il n'est jamais venu sur la terre."—"Cette parole,"—says Mennais, "est bien propre, sous plus d'un rapport, à faire naître de profondes réflexions. Dans l'esprit de ce misérable, l'existence de Dieu se liait à sa venue sur la terre. Il n'était pas venu, selon lui, donc, il n'existait pas. Tant il est vrai qu'il faut aux peuples un Dieu *réellement présent*, un Dieu qui se soit manifesté d'une manière sensible, qui ait *venu* parmi les hommes et *conversé* avec eux. Il n'y a point de déisme pour les nations."—MENNAIS *sur la Religion*, vol. ii. p. 21.

† *Queen Mab*, p. 128 of the Notes.

OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE DEITY.

It appears then that the reason is not capable of affording such indisputable proofs of the being of a God, as would warrant our proceeding to deduce from the certainty of his existence any motive for the regulation of the conduct.—The unassisted mind stumbles at the very threshold of the inquiry.—But let it be imagined, for a moment, that all mankind should coincide in the reception of this truth, and agree in deprecating any farther discussion of the question, still the reason has made but a very inconsiderable advance towards the establishment of the most material opinion of our religion.—It may admit, as fact, what it acknowledges itself incompetent to prove, and confess, that there is a Divinity above us. But it is necessary to prescribe the attributes of this Divinity; and in what

region of the world are the people to be discovered who have been enabled, by the simple light of nature, to ascend to the conception of his perfections?—Of what has the unassisted mind been capable but of inventing some tremendous Ashtoreth or some hideous Juggernaut? —It has made a wild assemblage of the circumstances that are most appalling to the instincts of our nature, and conceived that it had approximated the resemblance of the Deity, and endowed him with fit attributes, and addressed him with appropriate offerings, when it had raised his image of a colossal and terrific magnitude; when it had ascribed to his nature the exaggerated violence of human passion; when it had worshipped him with libations of human blood and the shrieks of expiring victims; when it had collected about his temple the objects that weigh heaviest on the imagination and strike a

chill and horror to the soul.—Perhaps it may be alleged that there are exceptions to this account.—There are exceptions. Men have varied in the qualities and the dispositions that they have attributed to their idols. They have painted them after the pictures of their own minds; and, occasionally, they have deified effeminacy and lust, instead of ferocity and rapine. —Or it may be said, that just and elevated conceptions of the greatness and the power of the Almighty were entertained by several of the ancient philosophers; who were indebted to no other aids for their discoveries than the common faculties of the understanding.—Most certainly, they were in possession of a very extraordinary knowledge of the divine nature. St. Paul alleges it as one of his severest accusations against them, that, when "they knew God they glorified

him not as God, neither were thankful*." —But, though the writings of Plato or of Xenophon, of Cicero or of Seneca, bear witness to the unity and spirituality and perfection of the Creator,—it must be remembered, that such opinions were but the uncertain conjectures of a few, and opposed by the plausible speculations of others; that they were cautiously advanced in private among the friends and disciples of those who professed them, and externally abjured, by a scrupulous compliance with the rites and ceremonies of idolatry; and it also must be remembered, that the simple fact of such opinions being entertained, can by no means be admitted as a proof that they were self-acquired.

"Deism, or the principles of natural worship," says Dryden, a man not ill-

* Romans, ch. i. v. 21.

calculated to appoint the limits by which the unaided powers of the intellect are circumscribed,—"Deism, or the principles of natural worship, are only the faint remnants or dying flames of revealed religion in the posterity of Noah; and our modern philosophers, nay, and some of our philosophizing divines, have too much exalted the faculties of our souls, when they have maintained that, by their force, mankind has been able to find out that there is one supreme Agent, or intellectual Being, which we call God; that praise and prayer are his due worship; and the rest of those deducements, which I am confident are the remote effects of revelation, and unattainable by our discourse, I mean as simply considered, and without the benefit of divine illumination: so that we have not lifted up ourselves to God by the weak pinions of our reason,

but he has been pleased to descend to us; and what Socrates said of him, what Plato writ, and the rest of the heathen philosophers of several nations, is all no more than the twilight of revelation, after the sun of it was set in the race of Noah. That there is something above us, some principle of motion, our reason can apprehend, though it cannot discover what it is by its own virtue. And indeed it is very improbable that we, who by the strength of our faculties cannot enter into the knowledge of any being, not so much as of our own, should be able to find out by them that supreme nature which we cannot otherwise define than by saying it is Infinite; as if infinite were definable, or infinity a subject for our narrow understanding. They who would prove religion by reason do but weaken the cause which they endeavour to support: it is to

take away the pillars from our faith, and to prop it only with a twig; it is to design a tower like that of Babel, which, if it were possible (as it is not) to reach heaven, would come to nothing by the confusion of the workmen: for every man is building a several way, impotently conceited of his own model and his own materials. Reason is always striving, and always at a loss; and of necessity it must so come to pass, while it is exercised about that which is not its proper object*."

What Dryden has here asserted is authorized by the admissions of the very persons to whom he has alluded, and whose superior knowledge had appeared to cast suspicion on his theory. Those great and highly-gifted teachers of the heathen world, who best perceived the falsehood of their national superstitions, and, amid the surrounding pesti-

* Preface to the *Religio Laici*.

lence of idolatry, were preserved from the general contagion by the apprehension of a purer Deity, never arrogated to themselves any merit of discovery. They confessed that they had derived their knowledge from tradition. "There is a tradition," says Plato, "that one God once governed all the universe*."—"There is a tradition," says Aristotle, "received from of old among all men, that God is the creator and preserver of all things; and that God, being one, received a variety of names according to the variety of effects of which he is the cause†."—And what was this universal tradition from which the idea of the unity of the Godhead was derived but the faint relics of revelation?—what was it but the lingering traces of the Almighty's earliest dispensations, remaining with the descend-

* PLATO *Polit.* Quoted by Mitford in the religion of the Greeks.

† ARISTOTLE *de Mundo*, 6 & 7. Quoted by Mitford.

ants of Noah?—The tints of that rainbow-light which sealed God's covenant with the Patriarch was still dimly reflected upon the clouds of their national idolatry; and some exalted minds caught a glimpse of the departing beam, and followed it as the cynosure of their inquiries.

OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

But the persuasion of the existence of the Deity, however sublime the qualities which we may attribute to his nature, is perfectly unimportant for every religious purpose, unless we are at the same time persuaded, that he looks down with an eye of constant observation on his creatures, and is interested in the actions, and regulates the occurrences of their lives. Deism is as injurious in its influences as atheism itself, unless it be connected with an entire dependance on the superintending providence of its God.—The Gospel assures us that this intimate

connexion really does subsist between the Creator and his works; that "the very hairs of our head are numbered*;" that "not a sparrow falls to the ground" without the knowledge and the permission of the Almighty:—and, enlightened, as we are, by the instructions of revelation, with the knowledge of those probationary conditions attached to our residence on earth, we can perceive in the vicissitudes of our pilgrimage the directing counsels of his wisdom; and we can trace in the interchange of joy and grief, of happiness and calamity, the immediate interposition of our heavenly Father awarding to his children the liberalities of parental love, or the chastisements of parental authority, with a view to the purification of the soul, and the interests of their eternal destination. But, if mankind had been left to discover for

* St. Matthew, ch. x. verses 29, 30.

themselves the knowledge of this important truth, it is scarcely possible that they should arrive at so cheering and salutary a conclusion. That the Deity—if indeed they should determine that there is a Deity—that the Deity is wise and powerful may, perhaps, be read in the exquisite variety, and the admirable proportions of the universe; but whether he continues to extend over the operations of his hand the protection of his providence, or has dismissed the world, to roll its inhabitants along through the regions of illimitable space, without any farther concern for their prosperity or their affliction, is a problem of the most uncertain and difficult solution. "Allowing," says Hume, "that God is the Author of the universe, it follows that he possesses that precise degree of power, intelligence and benevolence, which appears in its workmanship: but nothing farther can ever be

proved, except we call in the assistance of exaggeration and flattery to supply the defects of argument and reasoning. So far as the traces of any attributes appear, so far we may conclude that these attributes exist*." Such is the rule prescribed by the great master of modern unbelief to guide the investigations of those who would meditate the nature of the Almighty. The rule is of itself most excellent and judicious. It is consistent with the soundest principles of philosophy. The reason would not be justified in adopting any other method of decision; and, if it be applied to the examination of the existence or the non-existence of Divine Providence, it will lead us to reject the supposition of any particular interference with the occurrences of the earth.—In contemplating the works of the Creator, we discover, that he has

* *Essay on Providence and a Future State.*

established certain general and necessary laws, which, though liable to partial deviations, are sufficiently fixed and permanent to ensure the regularity of the universe;—we find that man is animated with peculiar inclinations, of which the temperate gratification is productive of corporeal strength and mental complacency, while the immoderate indulgence is punished by the after-penalties of intellectual and bodily disease;—we find that his understanding is endowed with admirable faculties, and that the continued and strenuous exertion of its powers is most frequently successful in procuring an equivalent proportion of those advantages to which its labours are designed;—we find that prudence is generally successful, imprudence generally unfortunate; that virtue is generally rewarded, vice generally defeated; that "the race is generally to the swift, and the battle gene-

rally to the strong;" and, if this process be occasionally interrupted, the reason would only receive from the triumphs of the unworthy, or the reverses of the deserving, the confirmation of that simple truth, which is declared by the ungenial spring or by the blighted harvest, that the laws of nature are admirable in their extensive effects, but are susceptible of partial variations, and may be thwarted by contravening accidents.—To the eye of unenlightened man every one of these exceptions affords an argument and an example against the agency and the direction of Divine Providence. The present and particular interposition of the Deity with the transactions of the earth is not only discredited by the apparent blemishes, but by the very arrangement and regularity and beauty of the creation. As the philosopher meditates the scenes and circumstances around him; as he

compares the general order with the occasional defects; from the order he discovers, that the Author of the universe has appointed from the beginning a system of wise and salutary laws for its direction; and from the defects he learns, that the mighty Sovereign by whom they were imposed does not condescend to disturb the serenity of his power, by inspecting their operations, or counteracting the evil contingencies, that may arise from their collision*.

OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

But, having annihilated all prospect of

* Such is the conclusion of Hume, in the Essay I have lately quoted; and also of Lord Bolingbroke, who says, that "God has given his human creatures the materials of physical and moral happiness in the physical and moral constitution of things. He has given them faculties and powers, necessary to collect and apply these materials. This the Creator has done for us. What we shall do for ourselves he has left to the freedom of our elections. This is the plan of divine wisdom: and we know nothing more particular, and indeed nothing more at all of the dispensations of Providence than this."—LORD BOLINGBROKE'S *Works*, vol. v. p. 473, 474, quoted by Leland.

divine protection during our residence on earth, the reason may, perhaps, have the ability of consoling us for the calamities of life, by disclosing the hopes of an immortality. It may, perhaps, be able to reveal to us a hereafter, in which every evil shall be repaired, and a glorious atonement be provided for every inequality in our earthly destiny.—Alas!—if we have no other grounds of confidence in the existence of a future state than those which may be afforded by the arguments of man, most faint and wavering and uncertain must be our expectation of its event.—What are the testimonies to which the mere human teacher would refer us for the proofs of the immortality of the soul?—Cicero has asserted, that the opinion is universally maintained among the different nations of the world; and that the unanimous consent ought to be respected as an inward intimation from the

voice of nature*.—But to this it may be objected, that though the belief is common, it is by no means universal; that the slightest exception from the universality of its influence desecrates all its pretensions to oracular sanctity, and represents its unsupported adoption, rather as a weakness of superstition than an impulse of inspiration;—and that, even if the argument were valid, as it failed to impress conviction on the mind of the instructor, it cannot be expected to address itself with any very persuasive emphasis to the understandings of his disciples.—When, in his change of character, Cicero forgot the conclusions of the philosopher in

* "Omni autem in re consensio omnium gentium lex naturæ putanda est. Quis est igitur qui suorum mortem primum non eo lugeat, quod eos orbatos vitæ commodis arbitretur? Tolle hanc opinionem: luctum sustuleris. Nemo enim mœret suo incommodo. Dolent fortasse, et anguntur: sed illa lugubris lamentatio fletusque mœrens ex eo est, quod eum quem dileximus vitæ commodis privatum arbitramur, idque sentire. Atque hoc ita sentimus natura duce, nulla ratione nullaque doctrina."—CICERO, *Tus. Dis.*, lib. i. c. 13.

the enthusiasm of the advocate*;—when he was heard declaiming against the faith in the future existence of the soul, with all the force of his overwhelming ridicule, amid the applauses of the Roman people, who does not perceive, that it would have been a most insufficient answer to have recalled his own arguments to his recollection; a most ineffectual means of silencing his opposition to remind the enlightened orator of an enlightened nation, that the opinion he despised was prevalent in the woods of Germany, and traditionary in the hymns of the Druids?

We are sometimes told to find, in the longing after immortality, and in the soul's shrinking back upon itself and starting at destruction, the suggestions of a divinity within the breast, and the intimations of eternity†; but may we

* CICERO *pro Cluentio*, cap. 6.

† I need not say that the allusion here is to the magnificent verses of Addison, at the opening of the 5th act of *Cato*.

not be permitted to doubt the truth and the correctness of the interpretation, which is here attributed to the emotions of the heart?—May we not conceive that the pride of man has prejudiced his judgment?—May we not suspect that he has imagined the movements of an eternal spirit in that universal attachment to existence which the wisdom of the Almighty has implanted in his creatures to prevent their abandoning the state to which his providence has appointed them?—May we not presume that this boasted indication of a deathless nature is nothing more than the movement of a principle which is common to all animated things, and which in man has become educated and refined, till, dreading a total separation from the scenes which a long familiarity has rendered dear, he is solicitous that some memorial of his being should survive among them, and

longs to commit the recollection of his wisdom or his virtue or his valour to the earth, as he would leave the pledge of his attachment with a friend at parting?

Others would call upon us to receive the testimonies of our immortality in the return of the morning, in the reviving fertility of the spring, in the awakening from sleep, in the changes of the summer insect; but what conviction can be discovered in such faint analogies?—The reasonings which are raised upon such frail foundations inform us of no truth, but that man has trembled to encounter the cold obstructions of the grave, that, in his eagerness to be persuaded of the eternity of his nature, he has caught at every circumstance which might yield support to his visionary hopes, and mistaken the metaphors that might illustrate, for evidences that might confirm them.

Again we are directed to trace the indications of a deathless spirit, in the energy and the perfection of the mental faculties.—But when we are told that nothing superior to the memory and the invention can be imagined, even in the nature of the Divinity himself*; that, in comprehending by their means the design and the system of the creation, we participate in the attributes of its author; and that these faculties must necessarily be eternal as a part and an emanation of the eternal God†, though a hope may be

* "Quid est enim memoria rerum et verborum? quid porro inventio? profecto id, quo nec in Deo quicquam majus, intelligi potest."—*Tus. Dis.*, lib. i. c. 26.

† "Quorum astrorum conversiones omnesque motus qui animo vidit, is docuit similem animum suum ejus esse, qui ea fabricatus esset in cœlo. Nam cum Archimedes lunæ, solis, quinque errantium motus in sphæram illigavit, effecit idem quod ille, qui Timæo mundum ædificavit, Platonis Deus; ut tarditate et celeritate dissimillimos motus una regeret conversio. Quod si in hoc mundo fieri sine Deo non potest, ne in sphærâ quidem eosdem motus Archimedes sine divino ingenio potuisset imitari."—*Tus. Dis.*, lib. i. c. 25.

"Quidquid est illud, quod sentit, quod sapit, quod vivit, quod viget, cœleste et divinum, ob eamque rem æternum sit necesse est."—*Tus. Dis.*, lib. i. c. 27.

excited by the suggestion, that hope is mingled with emotions of the most anxious and painful incredulity;—for, if the memory and the invention be thus eternal as they are excellent, why do they partake of the infirmities of the body?—why fail they with the failure of the corporeal strength?—why do they decay with the energies of the animal and inferior nature?—why do they not increase in vivacity and quickness and apprehension as they return nearer and nearer to their source?—why do they not spring forth, as they approximate the grave, with an ardent and exulting eagerness to rejoin the fountain of their inspiration?

Surely these things very powerfully advocate the cause of those who would represent the principle of life as solely originating in and depending on the organization of the body.—If the faculties of

the soul be thus intimately connected with the health and the vigour of the form it animates; if the tenderest attachments and the most rooted enmities, the attainments of the understanding and the affections of the heart, may for ever be erased by the ravages of the malady that paralyzes the bodily members; if "the ideas, like the children of our youth, often die before us, and our minds represent to us those tombs to which we are approaching, where, though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away*;" do not these phenomena announce to us, with all the force of corroborating facts, and to which we have nothing to oppose but vague and indefinite aspirations, that the soul and the body are inseparable and the same—that the theory of the materialist, however

* LOCKE *on the Understanding*, book ii. ch. 14.

repulsive it may be to our hopes and to our pride, is most consistent with actual experience—that life proceeds from the apt conformation and connexion of the members—as the light from the taper, and the music from the lyre—and that they originate and flourish and decay together? This is the conclusion that thousands have adopted from the contemplation of the circumstances and conditions of our nature; and, if their sentiments be correct, there is one dreary consequence which must inevitably succeed. If the lessons of the Materialist be true, existence ceases with the beating of the pulse; and is for ever stopt with the current of the blood.—Reasoning on human principles, it is impossible to disunite the theory, by which life is considered as the result of organization, from the corollary, that life is therefore as perishable as the organs of which it is the result.—As far

as the intelligence of man can discover the connexion that subsists between the cause and the effect, these things appear to be inseparable; but we are no sooner informed, by revelation, of the immortality of the soul, than the opinions of the materialist become divorced from those malignant consequences, which might, under other circumstances, be anticipated from their adoption. To the christian such speculations are perhaps unprofitable; but they are innocent speculations. He knows, on the authority of his faith, that the Almighty will recompense his obedience with the eternal felicity of heaven; that his body is the temple of the living God; and whether the principle of his mere animal existence be material or immaterial, is perfectly indifferent to him; for the important fact of his immortality is not a question of corporeal organi-

zation but of divine benevolence and power*.

It has occasionally been my lot to fall in contact with individuals, who have professed deistical opinions, and, though such persons are generally found to be rather

* Materialism is peculiarly current in the modern schools of medicine and anatomy. There is no assignable reason why anatomists by profession should be more capable of forming a decision on this intricate and mysterious question than others who are less conversant with their science; but, as they appear to have arrogated to themselves a right to arbitrate on this occasion, and to infer, from their superior knowledge of the organs of the body, that they must necessarily possess a deeper insight into the properties of the mind, it may be right to intimate, that they are by no means unanimous in their opinions; and that the most distinguished have refused the sanction of their names to the system by which the body and the soul are thus confounded.—A few weeks before his death, Boerhaave said to his friend the Rev. Mr. Schultens, that, "he had never doubted of the spiritual and immaterial nature of the soul; but declared that he had lately a kind of experimental certainty of the distinction between corporeal and thinking substances, which mere reason and philosophy cannot afford, and opportunities of contemplating the wonderful and inexplicable union of soul and body, which nothing but long sickness can give. This he illustrated by a description of the effects which the infirmities of his body had upon his faculties, which yet they did not so oppress or vanquish, but his soul was always master of itself, and always resigned to the pleasure of its Maker." JOHNSON'S *Life of Boerhaave*.

ostentatious in the communication of their sentiments, I never remember—even in a single instance—to have encountered among them any firm or confident reliance on the future existence of the soul. Many regard such a state as possible, and even as highly probable,—for there is a contagious influence in opinion, and every man involuntarily imbibes something of the expectations and the persuasions of his companions,—but I never heard of any one of them who professed himself to be satisfied of his future destination. The unbeliever, residing in the hourly habits of familiarity with christians, and in the constant observation of their religious hope, receives an authority in their assurance of an hereafter, which seems to accredit the probability of its occurrence, and induces him to suspect the arguments that oppose it. He doubts, but he does not deny, the immortality of his nature;

he entertains a tenderness for the belief of his childhood; he hesitates in the admission of the reasonings, by which it is impugned; he indirectly derives a hope from the prevalence of the Gospel, that moderates the miserable suggestions of his deism. The modern infidel receives involuntarily a kind of cheering confidence from the faith of others, which were unattainable by any inquiry of the unassisted intellect: but that the respect, the reverence, the half-persuasion of the truth of this christian doctrine, which is manifested by many separatists from christianity, is an unacknowledged operation of the faith, is demonstrated by the undeviating experience of antiquity, and by the unanimous consent of those who had most diligently speculated on this momentous subject previously to the incarnation of the Messiah. Socrates is represented as confessing, that the mortality

of the soul was the generally received opinion of the people *; "A future state was not believed," says Bolingbroke, "by the philosophers, not even by Plato and Pythagoras, though they talked of it†. The belief was ridiculed by Cicero in the public forum‡, and scorned by Cæsar in the open senate§. Even those in whom the will—that eloquent and persuasive advocate in the direction of the judgment—was prepossessed in favour of the opinion, acknowledged, that the arguments on which it was grounded were insufficient to authorize any reliance on its truth. "The opinions of some," said Cicero to his friend Atticus, "convey a hope, that the soul may exist independent of the body, and ascend to heaven as to its home:—if perchance this sentiment

* *Phædo.*
† BOLINGBROKE's *works*, vol. v. p. 513.
‡ *Pro Cluentio.* cap. 61.
§ *Sallust* de Bello Catilin.

should delight you*."—There are few things more melancholy than the reply. It indicates the incapacity of the unaided reason. It proclaims the solicitude of the healthy and unperverted heart, under the oppression of that burthen of religious uncertainty by which we are afflicted, when abandoned to our natural sources of information, and bereaved of those divine communications of which it is impiety to suspect the truth. Atticus would have been content with error:—he would have blessed the falsehood that deceived him into hope:—whether the soul were instinct with immortality or destined to annihilation, he would have been satisfied, could he but have cheered the period of his consciousness on earth by the persuasion—even by the vain persuasion—of its being animated with an everlasting prin-

* 1. *Tus. Dis.* xi. Reliquorum sententiæ spem afferunt, si te hoc forte delectat, posse animos cum è corporibus excesserint, in cœlum quasi in domicilium suum pervenire.

ciple. "Me vero delectat: idque primùm ita esse velim; deinde etiamsi non sit mihi persuaderi tamen velim*." And yet, with this ardent and ingenuous desire of conviction, what benefit did he derive from the study of the volumes in which it was attempted to establish the belief? Of Plato—the revered, the enlightened, the immortal Plato—with whom Cicero considered it more honourable to err than to be right with others—he declares, that he had often dwelt upon his pages and followed him in his splendid speculations; but that all his studies had been attended with the most unprofitable results. As long as the volume was in his hand, he assented to the conclusions of the teacher; but when the fascination of his eloquence was withdrawn, and he meditated on the immortality of the soul, in the solitude of his chamber, all his previous assent was

* *Tus. Dis.* xi.

dissipated.—"Lexi me herculé et quidem sæpius, sed nescio quomodo, dum lego, assentior, cum posui librum, et mecum ipse de immortalitate cœpi cogitare, assentio illa omnis elabitur." And if the arguments which the human reason could supply were found insufficient to impress any permanent conviction upon the mind of one, who was earnestly solicitous of being convinced, and to whom the prospects of eternity might promise to recompense a life of virtue with an after-payment of imperishable joy; what effect could they be expected to operate upon the understandings of those, whose impurity of life had demoralized the affections, and deadened every holier impulse, and debased every nobler aspiration, of the soul? What interest would induce the worldly and the base to inquire into the reality of a state of being, which threatened to deprive their disembodied spirits of

all those sensual gratifications, which they esteemed as the privileges and the prerogatives of existence? What powerful prepossessions would deter them from the admission, of an opinion, that instructed them to tremble at the anticipation of a destiny, in which the bitterness of privation might *possibly* be enhanced by the exaction of the penalties of crime?

Of a future Retribution.

When I mention the future punishment of the guilty as only a possible consequence of the immortality of the soul, it must be remarked, that the present sentiments of mankind appear to have connected two events, that are by no means necessarily united, and have accustomed us to employ the terms, "a future judgment" and a "future state," as the synonymous indications of inseparable circumstances. They are so to the disciple of the Messiah; but the moment we withdraw our

faith from the instructions which his revelation has so mercifully communicated, the whole system of religious opinions becomes scattered and disunited; and, after we have discovered, that there may or may not be a divinity, that there may or may not be a superintending providence, that there may or may not be a life beyond the grave; it is still demanded of us to establish, by the authority of our reason, that that not impossible, but doubtful, state of being is accompanied with any recompense for the virtuous, or any inflictions for the guilty. The few, the very few, of those who in the heathen world admitted the belief in the immortality of our nature, had entirely divested the opinion of all its salutary apprehensions*. The only argument which could

* "Fortasse etiam inexorabiles judices Minos et Rhadamanthus; apud quos nec te L. Crassus defendet, nec M. Antonius: nec, quoniam apud Græcos judices res agetur, poteris adhibere Demosthenem: tibi ipsi pro te erit maxima corona

be adduced to authorize such a persuasion must be derived from the attributes of the Creator;—if the Almighty is more holy and more just than he is exhibited in the ordinary operations of nature, there may, indeed, be some grounds for entertaining such awful and important views of our eternal destination. But this indeed would be difficult to establish.—I revert to the unobjectionable maxim of Hume: "Allowing that God is the author of the universe, it follows that he possesses that precise degree of power, intelligence and benevolence, which appears in its workmanship; but nothing farther

causa dicenda. Hæc fortasse metuis, et idcirco mortem censes esse sempiternum malum.

"A. Adeone me delirare censes, ut ista esse credam?"

Tus. Dis. l. 1. c. 5, 6.

"The truth is," says Plato, in the first Book de Legibus, "to determine or establish any thing certain about these matters, in the midst of so many doubts and disputations, is the work of God only." "In this life," says Socrates, in the Phædon of Plato, "it is either absolutely impossible or extremely difficult, to arrive at a clear knowledge of this matter."

can be proved." All then that the reason can perform, is, to collect the attributes of their author from the consideration of the scenes and circumstances around us; and, unless the various volume of creation be perused by the light and interpretation of the Gospel, we should only find, from the sufferings of the innocent, that the Deity does not delight in virtue, and from the triumph of the wicked, that sin may be committed with impunity.—That indiscriminate distribution of the benefits of life, from which the christian derives his evidence in favour of a future judgment, to the mind of one, whose inquiries were only directed by the principles of human investigation, instead of pleading as testimonies in favour of a retribution after death, would only be advanced as arguments to impugn the righteousness of God. "There is one event to the evil

and the good*," says Solomon; and the disciple of the Gospel, assisted in his meditations on the events of time by the illuminations of the sacred volume, perceives that we are here living in a state of trial, that this apparent neglect of the Divinity is perfectly reconcileable with his mercy and his wisdom; and that a day shall arrive, in which his justice will be manifested by his "discerning between the righteous and the wicked." "There is one event to the evil and the good," the wise and the scribes and the disputers of this world would exclaim; and they would add, "the Creator is therefore regardless of our actions; it were idle to presume, that he would delay the inflictions of his wrath; we are informed by the daily experience of our lives, that he does not "discern;" and

* Ecclesiastes, chap. ix, v. 2.

we may therefore legitimately conclude, that he never will "discern between the righteous and the wicked."

Such is the course of argument, that is most generally maintained by those who separate themselves from the direction of the Gospel;—but it is useless to speak further on this head:—before the reason can be required to occupy itself upon a subject of such mysterious and intricate speculation as the probability of a future retribution, which may punish the vicious and reward the virtuous, it is first necessary that we should inform ourselves of the real nature of virtue and of vice.

OF A MORAL RULE OF ACTION.

On this most important subject, it is necessary that mankind should be enlightened by some superior instruction. Each individual cannot traffic on his pri-

vate stock of reason. For the stock of each man is small, and he must refer himself to some foreign source of information; but the moment he quits the pale of Christianity, the duties of morality become for him as uncertain and problematical as the articles of religious faith. "How miserable," exclaims Beccaria, "is the condition of the human mind! to which the most distant and least essential matters, the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, are more distinctly known than the most interesting truths of morality, which are always fluctuating as they happen to be driven by the gales of passion, or received or transmitted by ignorance*." "I have no intention," says Hume, "to exalt the Moderns at the expense of the Ancients. I only mean to represent the uncertainty of all those judgments concerning charac-

* Beccaria *on Honour.*

ter; and to convince you that fashion, vogue, custom, and law, are the chief foundations of all moral determinations. The Athenians were a civilized, intelligent people, if ever there were one; and yet their man of merit might, in this age, be held in horror and execration. The French are also, without doubt, a very civilized intelligent people, and yet their man of merit might, with the Athenians, be an object of the highest contempt and ridicule, and even hatred*." If we desire to be informed of our duty, we can only inquire of the philosophers, whom Rousseau has justly and sarcastically described as being only right upon the single point, in which they all agree, their contempt and ridicule of each other†. Hume acknow-

* HUME's *Dialogue*.

† "Si vous pesez leurs raisons, ils n'en ont que pour détruire; si vous comptez les voix chacun se réduit à la sienne: ils ne s'accordent que pour disputer."— *Emile*, tom. iii. p. 27.

ledges that the bounds of virtue and vice cannot be determined*; and there is scarcely a single virtue that has not been encountered by a systematic opponent; or a single vice that has not been exalted by the recommendations of its advocate.

I shall not refer to the darker ages of antiquity for my examples, but to the illuminati of the modern schools of infidelity. Condorcet justifies the gross licentiousness of Voltaire's infamous poem, ridicules the condemning it as affected and austere, and reproaches the excessive value which is attached to purity of manners†. Diderot rejects all moral distinctions of conduct, and declares that if a constant silence had been maintained upon the subject, the ideas of virtue and of vice would have been unknown to us ‡; and sanctions the

* *Essay on Refinement.*

† In the *Life of Voltaire* he speaks against "l'affectation de l'austérite dans les mœurs," and "le prix excessif qu'on attache à leur pureté."

‡ "Il me semble, que si jusqu'à ce jour, on eût gardé le

wildness of the passions, by exalting them as the indications of intellectual superiority*. Frederick the Great wrote an essay in praise of thieving, a crime which an anonymous author has not only defended, but theoretically illustrated and explained†. Voltaire had his eulogies for the Empress Catherine, after she had murdered her husband and usurped his empire ‡. Hume has given the most exten-

silence sur les mœurs nous en serions encore à savoir ce que c'est que la vertu, ce que c'est que la vice."—*Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron*, tom. ii. p. 84.

* " Les passions sobres font des hommes communs."—*Pensées Philosophiques.*

† The books here alluded to I never met with; they were supposed to have been written by Brissot, and were entitled, *La Théorie du Vol*, and *L'Apologie du Vol.* They are mentioned by Mennais, vol. i. p. 375.

‡ I transcribe on this subject a passage from one of Horace Walpole's Letters to Madame du Deffand; " Voltaire me fait horreur avec sa Catherine; le beau sujet de badinage que l'assassinat d'un mari, et l'usurpateur de son trône!" " Il n'est pas mal," dit-il, " qu'on ait *une faute* à réparer :" " Eh! comment répare-t-on un meurtre? Est-ce en retenant des poëtes à ses gages? En payant des historiens mercenaires, et en soudoyant des philosophes ridicules à mille lieues de son pays? Ce sont ces âmes viles qui chantent un Auguste, et se taisent sur ses proscriptions."—*Letters*, vol. i. pages 148 and 149.

sive license to debauchery, by condemning celibacy, self-denial, and humility*, and by asserting that no indulgence, however sensual, can in itself be criminal †. He has declared that adultery must be practised, if we would possess ourselves of all the advantages of life; and in his comparative estimate of crime, has considered it as more venial than drunkenness ‡;—but however, according to his principles, it is not possible that any distinction should be made between the actions of the best and the worst of men, for " *if there be any such thing as sin*," he boldly pronounces God to be the author of it§. Freret instructs us, that all ideas of justice and injustice, of virtue and vice, of glory and infamy, are purely arbitrary, and dependant on cus-

* *Principles of Morals*, 9th section.

† *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals*, 9th sect.—" Let us consider what we call vicious luxury. No gratification, however sensual, can of itself be esteemed vicious."

‡ *Essay on Refinement in the Arts.*

§ See the conclusion of the essay on *Liberty and Necessity.*

tom *. Helvetius assures us, that it little imports whether men are vicious, if they are but enlightened †. A community of wives, incest, and unnatural crimes, have each successively and collectively been recommended to the adoption of mankind; and that no vice, to which the violence of passion might hurry the infuriated, might be in want of its palliation and excuse, even the preying upon human flesh was seriously defended by Brissot, at the time that the Deity was desecrated in the capital of France, and the representative of human reason, in the worthy emblem of a naked prostitute, was impiously exalted upon his altars.—There is no species of enormity which has not, in some period, and among some nations, been respected as honourable; there is

* *Letter of Thrasybulus.*

† HELVETIUS *on Man*, vol. i. p. 27. These two last citations are from the notes of Mr. Rennell's admirable pamphlet on Scepticism.

no species of abomination, which the human race may not gradually be induced to tolerate, to practise, and to applaud, when abandoned to the guidance of their own deteriorated intellect, to the impulses of passion, and to the counsels of what is now considered an unprejudiced and liberal philosophy.

All those more mysterious and spiritual instructions of the Gospel, which are so fruitful of consolation and support, are necessarily beyond the reach of human reason. Even those two first and most simple questions of religion, which are connected with the existence of a God and a state of future retribution, and which are absolutely essential to the happiness of mankind, are undiscoverable by our unassisted efforts. They are points on which revelation only can enlighten us; but by revelation we disdain to be enlightened. We are too proud to submit

the understanding to the direction of a teacher, who challenges our implicit obedience and consent by the right of his divine infallibility. We will not bear that the mind should continue in a state of pupillage; and we fly from assurance to speculation, that we may gratify our pride by the sense of intellectual independence. Impatient of the superiority of the Gospel, we leave certainty for doubt, and truth for error. We address ourselves to the reason, which, says Bayle, "is a principle of destruction, and not of edification; which is only capable of creating difficulties, and of eternizing disputes*"—and, after infinite labour of meditation, we arrive at the desperate conclusion, that the being of a God is doubtful; that his attributes are uncertain;

* "La raison humaine est un principe de déstruction et non pas d'édification; elle n'est propre qu'à former des doutes et à se tourner à droite et à gauche pour éterniser une dispute."—*Dict. Crit. Art. Manichéens*, Note D.

that the existence of a superintending Providence is inconsistent with our experience; that the immortality of the soul is supported by slight testimonies and insufficient arguments; that a state of future retribution is still more problematical and vague; that the nature of virtue and of vice is as arbitrary as the caprices of the taste; and that the sum of all religious knowledge is comprised in the apprehension of this solitary truth: "MAN IS BORN AND SHALL DIE."

PART III.

IN THE ABSENCE OF CHRISTIAN OPINIONS THE REASON COULD SUGGEST NO SUBSTITUTES TO SUPPLY THEIR LOSS.

THE WANT OF CHRISTIAN OPINIONS IS IRREMEDIABLE.

We have seen in the first, and the larger, division of these volumes, that those articles of religious faith and duty, which are inculcated by the Gospel revelation, are essential to the happiness of mankind. We have subsequently shewn that unless the Almighty had been mercifully pleased to communicate to his creatures the knowledge of these important truths, they could not have been established by the unassisted efforts of our reason. If, therefore, the enemies of Christianity should ever prove successful in their endeavours for the extirpation of our faith, we must be content to be bereaved of all these animating

prospects of immortality, from which the mind derives its only efficient arguments of consolation, for the decay of the faculties of life, for the oppression of adversity, for the disappointment of authorized expectations, for the ingratitude, the inconstancy or the malevolence of our fellow-creatures, and for the death of those we love.—Under these inevitable contingencies of human existence, the absence of the lessons of revelation would be irreparable. Nothing of human imagination could recompense the afflicted for the privation of their religious hope, or supply to them that devout and cheering confidence of supplication, with which the Gospel encourages them to address their sorrows to the compassion of their Saviour and their God.—Here it is manifest, that the loss of Christianity would be irremediable. —But, perhaps, the invention may not be found

equally defective in its attempts to provide for the peace and security of society. It may not have the ability of counselling the affections, and inspiring tranquillity to the secret soul, and the inward emotions of the breast; but it may be able to produce a superficial calm, and allay every external symptom of irritation; it may be capable, perhaps, of devising a succedaneum, which, in the failure of more venerable restraints, may preclude the passions from exhibiting their violence, intervene as a moderator in the struggles of opposing interests, and defend the social column from being overthrown and trampled under foot in the tumultuous competitions of selfishness.

There are three several expedients to which our attention has been directed by the enemies of religion, as sufficient of themselves to preserve mankind in the

practice of the reciprocal obligations of morality. It has been conceived that the restraints and sanctions of Christianity might be supplied by the apprehension of the LAWS, or by the perception of SELF-INTEREST, or by the silent influence of OPINION. That these are very potent agents in promoting the harmony of society, it is impossible to controvert: and it also seems equally impossible to deny, that they are indebted for much, if not the whole, of their energy and virtue to the prevalent ascendency of the Gospel, which has inspired a milder spirit into the enactments of the legislator; which has instructed every individual to contemplate his everlasting interests in his exertions for the interests of others, and which has given to popular opinion its direction and its justice, its weight and its stability.—If these views should be suspected of partiality, it must, at all events, be allowed, that these vaunted substitutes for religion exist at the present moment, with whatever force and potency they respectively possess; that we are actually making an experiment of their efficacy; that their influence, if not augmented, is certainly not impaired by the presence of Christianity, and could not be increased by its abolition; that as they have not succeeded in securing the happiness of mankind, aided as they now are by their union with religion, it would be idle to expect any more favourable result from the operation of their single and diminished powers; that nothing, therefore, could be gained by eradicating from the public mind the convictions of the faith, and that much might probably be forfeited with the loss of them.—Immeasurable, indeed, that loss would be; and its magnitude would be very inadequately estimated by any statement of

the imperfections which are inseparable from those variable inducements to duty, and those weak restraints from crime, to which we should be reduced by the extirpation of the Gospel.

In the course of our previous reflections so much has already been anticipated on the futility of those mere human motives to duty which exist independently of religion, that nothing more remains for me to perform, than to exhibit in one brief and connected view an abstract of their vices and their imperfections.

OF LAWS.

It is with the powerful that the establishment of an equal code of laws must necessarily originate, and on them its preservation and stability must depend. But without some religious argument to persuade them to so great and magnanimous an effort, it is difficult to conceive any

inducement by which they could be actuated to mitigate the claims of power, and concede to their dependants that participation of their privileges, which is connected with impartial laws and an equal distribution of justice. In the natural course of things those effects are to be anticipated which were universal in the times antecedent to the Christian revelation, when "all checks were on the inferior to restrain him to the duty of submission, and none on the superior to engage him to the reciprocal duties of gentleness and humanity*."

But supposing that some unimaginable motive should compel the powerful to silence the suggestions of selfishness, and attempt a scheme of enlarged and equitable legislation, how many difficulties would arise to deter him from an undertaking, which appears to baffle the ingenuity

* HUME'S *Essay on the Populousness of the Ancient Nations.*

of man. So many remote and collateral effects are to be considered and provided for, that the reason seems incapable of foreseeing all the possible consequences, and finding a security against the evil operations, of its enactments. Ordinances that flatter our expectations with promises of the most favourable results, have frequently been proved on trial to maintain a direction diametrically opposite to the good thus designed*. Laws framed for the support of virtue have often conducted to the encouragement of vice†. It is only by experience that the beneficial or malignant tendency of any particular act of

* As in the instance of our own Poor Laws.

† "No great or flourishing state could ever punish fornication in such a manner as its ill influence on society was confessed to deserve; because it was always found that a severe restraint on this opened the way to worser crimes."—WARBURTON'S *Divine Legation*, book i. sect. 2.—There are offences in which the very publicity afforded by the detection, the trial, and the punishment, conduces to increase the frequency of their repetition: and into which men are more seduced by the example, than they are deterred by the punishment, of the culprits.

the legislator can with certainty be discerned. And, should the result be evil, the success of the proposed amendment will be retarded by those innumerable obstacles which are opposed to every design for ameliorating the actual condition of mankind by the slowness, the prepossessions, the selfishness, and the indolence of those on whom its adoption rests; and, when eventually ratified and confirmed, it may still, in some unexpected manner, be found equally injurious or destructive in its consequences.

Having decided upon the actions which may be rendered subject to the authority of the magistrate, without engendering a greater injury than that which it is attempted to repair, another difficulty arises in apportioning the degrees of punishment, with which each particular transgression shall be visited. This is a matter that demands the utmost delicacy and

discrimination. An error here, either on the side of rigour or of lenity, silently operates as a repeal of the ordinance itself. The apprehension of a light and trivial penalty, will not deter the guilty from perpetrating an offence to which his inclinations strongly tempt him; and the imposition of an excessive retribution, will work on the compassion of the injured, and dissuade him from the prosecution of the offender.

The law is limited in its sphere of action. Many crimes which are most inimical to the general happiness of man, are placed beyond the reach of its correction. Ingratitude to benefactors, austerity to dependants, unkindness to children, disrespect to parents, violation of confidence, perfidious counsels, calumnious insinuations, the too rigid exaction of our rights, the flattering of superiors, the pursuit of responsible situations by

one who is conscious of his ignorance or incapacity, partiality or indolence in the depositaries of important trusts:—in fine, all transgressions against those obligations, which have been named by moralists *the imperfect duties*, from the very circumstance of their eluding the jurisdiction of every earthly tribunal, and which are most intimately connected with our social and domestic happiness, must be permitted to pass without penalty or reproach. They are too various, subtile and mutable in their nature to be capable of legal definition, and are too private to admit the scrutiny of the magistrate.

When the legislator has promulgated his ordinances, his unauthorized condemnation of an action can never inspire the breast with that secret dread and horror of committing it, which is excited by the religious apprehensions of violating the will of the Almighty. His denunciation

has no more authority over the conscience, than the unsupported and questionable opinion of any other individual. It cannot impress the mind of the offender with those enduring feelings of contrition, which might deter him from the repetition of his crime; it cannot agitate his thoughts by day and his dreams by night; it cannot fill the soul with those implacable agonies of remorse which have so often urged the penitent to seek a relief for the burthen of his heart, in the penance of a voluntary restitution.

The only impediment to offence would be the possibility of detection. Iniquity itself would be deprived of all its guilt and shame. The chances of discovery would be compared with the emoluments of success; and sin would rather be regarded as a gaming hazard, than as a moral enormity. To young, inconsiderate, and adventurous spirits, the prohibition

would almost appeal as an inducement to transgression. It would address their love of enterprise with the probability of gain and the excitement of danger. Sin and shame would be disunited, vice and virtue would be synonymous with detection and escape. While animated, as all men are, with that confidence in their own good fortune, which is an universal instinct of human nature, peril would operate as a temptation to offence, and impunity as an encouragement to its repetition.

However wisely the laws may be constituted, there can be no reliance on the certainty and justice of their distribution; the criminal will frequently be acquitted, from default of evidence; the innocent will often be betrayed to pay the penalties of guilt, by fortuitous coincidences and by the unhappy combination of suspicious circumstances.

The determinations of the judgment-seat are capable of being corrupted by the favour or the venality of the magistrate; and, in the absence of every religious control on his authority, where is the impediment which shall prevent him from regulating his decisions by the dictates of interest or of favour?—What inducement shall persuade him to extend the unbought protection of his tribunal to the poor and to the weak; to the victim of powerful oppression, or the martyr of popular malignity?

The laws are themselves subservient to the control of public morals; and as the execution of them is committed to the discretion of human agents, no ordinance will ever remain in force that is not correspondent with the prevailing disposition and the actual character of the people. The severity of our penal code—without any interference of the legislator—is moderated in its exercise by the gentler spirit which Christianity has infused into the hearts of those, who assist in the distribution of its ordinances. As public virtue may thus effect the reformation of an evil in the national institutions, in the same manner, public vice may also desecrate and repeal the wisest and the most salutary institutions of the legislator. In Rome, "the corruption of manners destroyed the censorship, which was itself established to destroy the corruption of manners; for, when this corruption became general, the censor lost his power*."

Such are the weaknesses and the defects that attend the efforts of all human legislators. "The operation of the wisest laws," says Gibbon, "is imperfect and precarious. They seldom inspire virtue, they cannot always restrain vice. Their power is insufficient to prohibit all that

* MONTESQUIEU, *Esprit des Loix*, liv. 23. c. 21.

they condemn, nor can they always punish the actions they prohibit:"—and "under these discouraging circumstances," he continues, "a prudent magistrate, must observe with pleasure, the ascendency of a religion, which diffuses among the people a pure, benevolent, and universal system of ethics, adapted to every duty and condition of life; recommended as the rule and reason of the supreme Deity, and enforced by the sanction of eternal rewards and punishments*."

OF SELF-INTEREST.

Another expedient which has been considered capable of supplying the want of the christian motives to duty, has been discovered in the connexion which is imagined to subsist between the interests of society and of every particular member of the body. "The good of the

* *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xx.

individual," says Montesquieu, "is always to be found in the good of the community*;" and D'Alembert has so far extended the proposition as to declare, that "the proper apprehension of our own interest, is the principle of all moral obligations†."—It is conceived that the just apprehension of this alliance between virtue and self-interest might be sufficient to maintain mankind in the practice of their moral duties.—If there really did exist this reciprocal and intimate relation between the public and the private good, the progress of the human race towards that state of perfectibility, of which it has been supposed

* "L'intérêt des particuliers se trouve toujours dans l'intérêt commun."—*L'Histoire des Troglodites.*

† "La solution de toutes ces questions, qui tiennent à la morale, aboutit toujours, par plus ou moins de branches, à un tronc commun, à notre intérêt bien entendu, principe de toutes les obligations."—D'ALEMBERT, *Eclaircissement sur les Elém. de Philos.*

susceptible, would be rapidly achieved; and the few impediments that oppose its march, would be cast aside with very little difficulty of exertion. It would only be necessary to inform the public mind upon a subject of which it has always manifested a particular avidity of instruction:—it would only be requisite to inform the multitude of the readiest and the easiest way of promoting their worldly advantage, and general happiness and virtue would be produced, as a collateral consequence, from the dissemination of the maxims of selfishness.—But, unfortunately, this connexion does not in reality subsist.—There is, on the contrary, a constant strife and opposition between the interests of the society and the individual; and, though it is certainly for the benefit of each particular person, that the actions of all others should be

confined within the bounds of the strictest equity, and regulated by a spirit of benevolence and forbearance;—it is equally for his advantage, that he should be himself exempted from all such narrow and visionary limitations, and assume the outward demonstrations of a generous, liberal, and disinterested conduct, while he secretly preys upon the innocence and credulity of his companions.—The good of the public and the individual are so far from being united, that they are in a state of constant opposition. The very business and movement of existence, is maintained by the excitement of their competition.—The disunion that subsists between them, is manifest by the examples of the highest and the lowest orders of society.—The painful and imperious duty, which is demanded of the persons who are raised to situ-

ations of important trust, and who conscientiously meditate the discharge of them, is to sacrifice their private aggrandizement and attachments; to postpone partiality to justice; to relinquish the opportunity of conferring wealth on their family and their friends; and to bestow on more deserving strangers those favours of patronage, which others, who are careless of the public, and only solicitous of their own advantage, divert into less meritorious channels, that the emolument may flow back upon themselves. That the inferior classes of society consider their interests as separate from the interest of their superiors, is evident from the consideration of this simple fact. Government, which is the natural defender of social order,—and which is destined by its peculiar functions, to provide for the prosperity and

the happiness of the community, is compelled to address itself to the aid of force to secure the execution of even its wisest and most salutary purposes.—It is the foe of many, while it acts in the name, and on the authority, of all.

It has been so continually repeated, that the interests of the monarch and the people are the same, that we have yielded our consent to the assertion as if it were an established and indisputable axiom of political philosophy.—But, unless Christianity interfere to cast the weight of its authority into the scale of their reciprocal duties, and instruct the parties to seek the accomplishment of their eternal hopes, by their sacrifices for the benefit of others, I am unable to perceive any traces of this amicable relation. It appears to me, on the contrary, that from every worldly view of their respective situations, they are placed in a state

of natural collision and hostility.—It is the interest of the monarch—and the more enlarged and enlightened his designs for the benefit of his empire, so much the more it is his interest—to possess himself of that arbitrary command over the wealth and services of his subjects, which will ensure facility to the execution of his purposes.—It is the interest of the people, that the actions of the monarch should be so limited and constrained by the ascendency of the laws, as effectually to defend their personal property and freedom from the possibility of all tyrannous encroachment.—It is the interest of the monarch to invalidate the powers, it is the interest of the subject to strengthen the powers, of the constitution; and these things are manifestly incompatible.

But if personal interest does not promise to afford any security for the per-

formance of our civil duties, it is still less likely to provide for the fulfilment of our private obligations.

If self-interest or expediency be admitted as the foundation of morals, it would necessarily be adopted as the only rational and legitimate motive of action; and by the extended influence of such a principle, all distinction between vice and virtue would be levelled and confused. If self-interest be the rule of conduct, successful sin is wisdom; unsuccessful sin is folly. The offender is convicted of a miscalculation; but is obnoxious to no imputation of guilt. Whatever the deed may be, in the perpetration of it he seeks his immediate interest; he acts in compliance with his principles; and, if he fail of his object, he may claim pity for his disappointment, but he can deserve neither reproach or punishment from his

fellow competitors in the race of selfishness.

The authorizing personal expediency as an honourable motive of action would destroy all confidence between man and man.—There could be no mutual dependance on the honour of friends and colleagues; no reliance on the fidelity of servants. As long as *honesty was the best policy*, it would be practised in obedience to the principle of utility; and when it failed to be politic, would, with an equal indifference, be violated to preserve consistency with the same miserable and demoralizing ethics. Hume, one of the chief assertors of expediency as the foundation of morals, has recorded his admission of this truth. He has acknowledged that, "according to the imperfect way in which human affairs are conducted, a sensible knave, in particular incidents, may think that an act of iniquity or infidelity will make a considerable addition to his fortune, without causing any considerable breach in the social union and confederacy. That honesty is the best policy, may be a good general rule, but is liable to many exceptions: and he, it may, perhaps, be thought, conducts himself with most wisdom who observes the general rule and takes advantage of all the exceptions*."

The evil results to be anticipated from the dissemination of such an ignoble institute of life and conduct, is not confined to pecuniary transactions. Every predominant passion or inclination instructs its slave to pursue his interest in the gratification of its claims. He must be cautious of overstepping the just limits of temperance or prudence;—of inducing any injury to his fortune or his health;—

* *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals*, Sec. ix.

of incurring any severe affliction as the after-consequence of his excesses. According to the selfish estimate of good and evil, he will regard his actions with censure or approbation in proportion to the injury which they threaten to himself, and not from their effects upon society. With Hume, he will consider adultery, which only strikes at the mental peace and the domestic happiness of his friend, as an act of inferior criminality to intoxication, which may originate a disease within himself*. All that the votary of selfishness is called upon to contemplate, in the access of passion, is the speediest, and the safest method of fruition.—If he be tempted by his lust, his principles would authorize the seduction of its object, and

* "If libertine love, or even infidelity to the marriage-bed, be more frequent in polite ages, when it is often regarded only as a piece of gallantry; drunkenness on the other hand is much less common. A vice more odious and pernicious both to mind and body."—*Essay on Refinement in the Arts.*

direct the subsequent desertion of its victim.

Another malignant consequence which would ensue from the adoption of the selfish system of morals, would be the annihilation of all private friendships. Mistrust, jealousy, and doubt would be cast over every society. Affection would be checked and blighted by the suspicion, which either party would entertain, of some intended machination in the other. The intercourse of companions would be disturbed by the constant apprehensions of deceit. Each would dread lest the external appearances of cordiality were assumed for the concealment of some darker purpose; lest—as Frederick the Great behaved towards Voltaire,—the pretended friend should first exhaust the juice of the orange, and then dismiss himself of the rind*.

* La Metrie informed the king, that the courtiers were

Another inevitable result, would be the destruction of all gratitude for past kindness and consideration for former services. It is the interest of every individual to avail himself of all the advantages that can be extracted from the benevolence of his fellow-creatures, and never be seduced into any personal sacrifices, but by the expectation of some usurious return. The ability to assist would conciliate a temporary respect; but this respect would be diminished as the ability became impaired.—On the same principle, by which expediency is wisdom, consideration for the weak or the distressed is folly:—if selfishness be virtue, an unproductive gratitude is vice.

It is allowed by Hume, that these arguments are incapable of refutation—"I

jealous of Voltaire's favour. "'Laissez faire,' lui dit le roi, 'on presse l'orange et on la jette quand on a avalé le jus.' La Metrie ne manqua pas de me rendre ce bel apophthègme, digne de Denis de Syracuse."—*Mémoires de Voltaire écrits par lui-même.*

confess," he says, "that if any man think that this reasoning much requires an answer, it will be a little difficult to find any, which will to him appear satisfactory and convincing. If his heart rebel not against such pernicious maxims; if he feel no reluctance to the thoughts of such villany or baseness, he has lost a considerable motive to virtue, and we may expect, that his practice will be answerable to his speculation. But in all ingenuous natures, the antipathy to treachery and roguery is too strong to be counterbalanced by any views of profit or pecuniary advantage*."—It is then acknowledged, that according to the theory, by which self-interest is laid as the foundation of our reciprocal duties and obligations, no restraint would be imposed on the excesses of that large portion of society, whose dispositions are either ori-

* *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals*, sec. ix.

ginally base, or corrupted by circumstances; and who are conscious of no particular antipathy to lucrative falsehood, or profitable imposition.—But "the heart is to rebel."—Why should the heart rebel against offence, if this maxim were universally admitted?—The affections are exalted or depraved according to the instructions by which the mind is formed and moulded. If conscience be an inspiration of nature, its direction is received from education; and if it be informed that self-interest is the foundation and rule of virtue—as long as that interest is promoted—why should any anxiety of contrition resent the perpetration of a crime, which is only a more extensive and liberal application of the authorized principle of conduct?—It is impossible that any dignity of character, or elevation of sentiment, should resist the taint of so deteriorating an influence. Generosity,

gratitude, constancy, temperance, fidelity would be absorbed by a spirit of overweening selfishness. An universal prevalence would be given to those mean and easy and subservient ethics, which, if they secretly predominate in christian countries with the disingenuous and the sordid, are scrupulously concealed from observation, and are never openly adopted as the practical maxims of existence, by any but the very outcasts of society, the parasite, the swindler, the gamester, and the pick-pocket.—Virtue, dispossessed of every unearthly claim on our adoration, degraded from its native heaven, deprived of every sacred attribute, and coldly recommended to our approval like "some ingenious machine, a piece of furniture, or vestment*," for "its use and its convenience," would only be esteemed as long as it promised us some personal advan-

* HUME'S *Principles of Morals*, Sec. 2.

tage, and would be exchanged for profitable crime, when vice had clothed itself in the attractive character of expediency.

OF OPINION.

But it is, perhaps, imagined, that the deficiencies and imperfections of the more palpable substitutes for Christianity, may be remedied by the powerful influence of opinion; that the uncertain and precarious inspection of mankind, may replace the inevitable vigilance of the Almighty; that the desire of conciliating the approbation, and the timidity of encountering the censures, of the public, may effectually supersede the sanctions of religion, and supply the absence of those salutary hopes and fears, which, to the disciple of the Redeemer, connect his actions with an everlasting retribution. A very few observations will be sufficient to shew that these speculations are unfounded, and evince the futility of opinion, undirected

and unsupported by religious faith, as an instrument for the cultivation of virtue and the discouragement of crime.

Public opinion itself requires to be educated and formed: and, if the volume of revelation be annihilated, to what pure and uniform and uncontaminated sources shall it apply for the necessary instruction. If we turn to the pages of the philosophers, Montaigne assures us, that they are all polluted with obscenities *; and the human heart and mind are not of a temperament and disposition to separate between the good and evil, and to select the valuable and reject the base.

Public opinion has no certainty or consistency in its determinations. It applauds

* "En toutes les chambrées de la philosophie ancienne, ceci se trouvera, qu'un même ouvrier y publie des règles de tempérance et publie ensemble des écrits d'amour, et de débauche."—*Essais*, liv. iii. chap. 9. The same accusation may be imputed to the whole school of modern philosophers, from Voltaire to the authors of *The Liberal*.

to-day the very conduct that it may vilify to-morrow. It exists in a state of ceaseless mutability. It changes and fluctuates with every variation of manners and of customs. It is a part of "the fashion of this world," which, says the Apostle, "passeth away*;" and religion is absolutely requisite to confer upon it a fixedness and a stability.—"Il est necessaire à la société qu'il y ait quelque chose de fixe, et c'est la religion qui est quelque chose de fixe†."

Public opinion will often desecrate a virtue and consecrate a vice. The multitude is the organ by which its voice is rendered audible; and its decisions are corrupted by their habits and inclinations. Example intimidates and overawes its censures; and drunkenness, in times of

* 1 Cor. viii. 31.

† MONTESQUIEU, *Esprit des Loix*. liv. 26, ch. 2.

ruder manners, or licentious love, in times of greater civility and refinement, has rather met with encouragement than rebuke, from the determinations of opinion.

Public opinion, unless it be secured by the permanent convictions of the Gospel, like all other bodies in a rapid state of motion, is susceptible of being easily diverted from its lawful course. When the people have become satiated with a repetition of the truth, the ingenious sophistry will be received with eagerness, and adopted on the recommendation of its novelty. When the passions are excited, any precepts that coincide with their desires will be admitted without hesitation or dispute*. And when the applauses

* Il est inouï combien il est facile de faire prendre une bétise pour étendard au peuple le plus spirituel de la terre. C'est encore un de ces contrastes qui seraient tout-à-fait inexplicables, si la malheureuse France n'avait pas été dépouillée de religion et de morale par un enchaînement funeste de mauvais principes et d'évènemens malheureux. Sans

of the world are elevated to the view as the most desirable objects of emulation; if distinction can no longer be secured by the enforcement of righteousness, it will be sought by the extension of iniquity. Opinion will be destroyed in the eager competition for applause; and all the fair distinctions of truth and falsehood,—of good and evil,—of virtue and of vice, will be levelled in the tumultuous and unprincipled pursuit of notoriety.

To propose the gaze and acclamations of the multitude as the aim and purpose of our endeavours, and supersede the inducements of religious hope and fear, by the ambition of an earthly fame, and the apprehensions of an earthly censure, is to overthrow that true humility which is the basis of the Christian system, and the

religion, aucun homme n'est capable de sacrifice, et sans morale, personne ne parlant vrai, l'opinion publique est sans cesse égarée.—MAD. DE STAEL, *Dix Années d'Exil*, p. 100.

deep and firm foundation of all real virtue; it is to introduce an universal exhibition of showy qualities, and glittering accomplishments; to withdraw a man from the quiet and retiring duties of his home, and "set him on a stage; and to make him an artificial creature, with painted, theatric sentiments, fit only to be seen by the glare of candle-light, and formed to be contemplated at a due distance *." If public opinion is deified; vanity will be the prevailing disposition of its votaries, which, "if it be of little moment in a small degree, and conversant in little things, when full grown, assumes the character of the worst of vices, and is the occasional mimic of them all; it makes the whole man false; it leaves nothing sincere and trust-worthy about him, but his best qualities are poisoned and

* Letter to a Member of the National Assembly. 8vo edition of BURKE's *Works*, vol. vi. p. 34.

perverted by it, and operate exactly as his worst*."

From the consideration, then, of the defects which are inseparable from those mere human obligations to duty and restraints on crime, which are vaunted by the distinguished teachers of ungodliness, as adequate to maintain the order and the tranquillity of the universe, and replace the venerable sanctions of religion, we may perceive that their unsupported adoption would rather lead to injurious, than to beneficial, issues; that, instead of contributing their forces to the preservation of society, they would become distorted by the corruption of the passions, and conspire as enemies, where they were solicited as allies; that they themselves have need of instruction, assistance, and restraint from those sacred intimations

* Burke's Letter to a Member of the National Assembly, p. 31.

of the Gospel, which they have falsely been considered capable of superseding; and that the want of Christian opinions would, indeed, be irremediable by any substitutes, which could be devised by the ingenuity, or established by the authority, of man.

We have seen that the lessons of revelation, its morals and its sanctions, are essential to the happiness of man. We have shewn that the momentous truths which it communicates could not have been established by the unassisted faculties of the reason. We have shewn that the invention of mankind could suggest no substitute that could supply the void occasioned by the extirpation of the Gospel.

From this conclusion there results this most memorable and important reflection:

The man who would boldly and impiously extend the principles of infidelity, or countenance the desecration of the Gospel, advances in avowed hostility to the peace and order of human existence. He is the malignant foe of the monarch and the subject, of the rich and the poor, of our social confidence, of our domestic purity, and of the inward tranquillity of the heart. He is a conspirator against the happiness of his race. He rends the golden chain asunder, by which earth is linked with heaven. He severs the alliances by which man is united with his God. He endeavours to dispossess his fellow-creatures of those holier and sublimer qualities, which exalt their nature above the beasts that perish, and seeks to re-deliver them to the subjection of their bewildering appetites, and their vagrant and selfish inclinations. He attempts to urge his

kind into the track of a moral and intellectual debasement, where all civility and arts, justice and probity, constancy and tenderness, may perish in a common ruin, with those sacred aspirations of hope and sentiment, which have been awakened in the human soul by the commanding summons of the Redeemer.—Cities and villages have gradually collected about the spot in which the altar had been raised; they will be again deserted when the altar is destroyed.—That narrative of ancient song is not all a fable, which relates that the safety of the long-beleaguered city was inseparably attached to the preservation of the statue of its presiding god. There was here a precept of deep, of solemn, of invariable truth, concealed within a veil of superstitious fiction. In every nation, and to every people, religion is the energy of war, and the

security of peace*. FAITH is the true Palladium; and it can neither suffer increase or diminution in the affections of the people, but the happiness and prosperity of the people will be influenced with a sympathetic elevation or depression. Long and nobly did the bulwarks of Sion resist the forces of imperial hostility; and all the arts of war without, and disease and famine, the gaunt allies of the enemy, within, were ineffectual against the fortresses of the holy and devoted city, while the iniquities of Israel

* "The safety of all estates dependeth upon religion;—Religion, unfeignedly loved, perfecteth men's abilities unto all kinds of virtuous services in the commonwealth; men's desire is, in general, to hold no religion but the true; and whatsoever good effects do grow out of their religion, who embrace, instead of the true, a false, the roots thereof are certain sparks of the light of truth intermingled with the darkness of error, because no religion can wholly and only consist of untruths; we have reason to think, that all true virtues are to honour true religion as their parent, and all well-ordered commonwealths to love her as their chiefest stay."—HOOKER's *Works*, Oxford Edition, vol. ii. p. 12.

were unaccomplished, and while the guardian angels yet lingered in the temple. But, at length, the solemn stillness of the sanctuary was disturbed by the rushing of departing sounds, and the words of renouncing voices; and the cry that bore witness to the abandonment of the presiding spirits, announced the triumph of the enemies of Jerusalem.—Eradicate from the public mind the sentiment and convictions of Christianity;—permit that the lessons of unbelief should be universally disseminated and received;—and better were it for us, that our protecting ocean should swell above its limits, and sweep away the inhabitants of our land in a sudden and annihilating destruction; for that deluge would be a merciful deliverance; it would save us from years of wasting tumult and depopulating sin; it would accelerate an ine-

vitable fate, where delay would offer no enjoyment of existence, but only serve to agonize the sufferers with the increase and the protraction of wretchedness. Society subsists by the means and influence of religion. Without its salutary restraints on the wildness of the desires, the fair and beautiful and noble fabric of society—like a mountain wasted by subterraneous fires—would be inwardly consumed by the fervours of the passions. It would stand erect a little while, in the thin and hollow shell of its proportions; but would crumble into dust at the first collision of opposing interests, and leave the unpeopled world a dreary spectacle to the angels of good and evil—a thing of silence, and solitude, and desolation.

THE END.

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